

Practising the Dhamma with a View to Nibbana

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Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

Practising the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna

This book is dedicated to the people of Sri Lanka (who documented the Dhamma on palm leaves and preserved it for future generations), to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence. By the merit of this gift of Truth, may they have peace!

PRACTISING THE **DHAMMA**
WITH A VIEW TO **NIBBĀNA**



Radhika Abeyssekera

This book is for free distribution only

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Illustrations **Adrienne Bouchard Langlois**
The art of Adrienne Bouchard Langlois demonstrates complete integrity to her vision of life, a vision which encompasses our devout and worldly yearnings. Colour infused with joy, and lines leading to startling discoveries, are the hallmark of her work. The artist works in a wide range of media. Her art has been reproduced in the form of greeting cards, shirts, posters and book illustrations. A Canadian of the Roman Catholic faith, Adrienne Bouchard Langlois feels a strong desire to use her talent to help people of diverse faiths to grow spiritually.

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Practising the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna



*“Let an intelligent person come to me,
Sincere, honest, straightforward,
I shall instruct him and
point him towards the Dhamma,
So that practising
according to instruction,
Before long he would himself know,
and himself see.
Even so, indeed is freedom
from the direct bond,
That is from the bond of delusion.”*

Gotama Buddha
Majjhima Nikāya

*I gratefully acknowledge the Ottawa
Buddhist Association Newsletter for
providing this picture of the face of
the Buddha.*

Cover

Many people have asked me the significance of the flower and lamp on my cover and why I have it on the cover of all my books. It was after much thought that I decided upon this cover which I drew myself, for my books.

I selected this cover because I felt that it symbolized the essence of the teachings of the Buddha. The beautiful temple flower symbolizes impermanence. Today it is exquisitely beautiful and fragrant. Tomorrow it will be faded and withered. The Buddha taught the Dhamma because of the impermanence of all things, for it is this impermanence that results in suffering. Picking up a pinch of dust on the tip of His fingernail, the Buddha said:

*“Even if this much material form, brother, was unchanging
then the living of the holy life
for the total destruction of suffering
would not be set forth.”*

The lamp symbolizes the destruction of delusion and the attainment of Nibbāna or the movement from the darkness of ignorance to the light of enlightenment. The Buddha said:

*“Those that have destroyed delusion
and broken through the dense darkness
Will wander no more (in samsāra).”*

It is hoped that this cover will remind you of the impermanence of all things and inspire you to strive on with diligence for the radiant light (wisdom) of Nibbāna. In reading this book you will understand fully the meaning of my cover.

Foreword

When the Dhamma is unveiled it will shine more and more. This is a well-known fact regarding the Buddha Dhamma, which was emphasised by the Lord Buddha. Many ordinary people who have heard about the Buddha and His teaching do not have a full understanding of the real nature of the Buddha or the Dhamma.

It is a pleasure to read Mrs. Radhika Abeysekera's fourth book on Buddhism. She is a dedicated writer on Buddhism, as well as a teacher. In this book she has changed her style of writing. After an enormous amount of research she has documented the ancient Buddhist texts into English. And then, to bring to life the teachings of the Buddha, she has enhanced the text with quotations from the words of the Buddha. Western readers, and others who do not know much about the Lord Buddha's extraordinary determination and fortitude, are very fortunate to be able to read a comprehensive account of the Buddha's previous births and His effort for perfection, in a single volume.

Mrs. Abeysekera has also made an attempt to draw in the readers and encourage them in the practise of the Dhamma. Knowledge of the Dhamma, in itself, will not lead to emancipation. By using plain language that even an older child can understand, she has motivated the reader into the practise of the Dhamma.

One must read many Eastern books to study and learn the account that Mrs. Abeysekera discusses here. She has discussed issues that many ordinary readers do not know or even think about regarding the Lord Buddha. It is not

easy to appreciate and understand fully the value of the Dhamma or the Supremacy of the Buddha without having a good understanding of the extreme effort that goes into the making of a Fully Enlightened Buddha. This book is very helpful in answering many of the questions that arise when reading the life story of the Lord Buddha. Prince Siddhātha's announcement at birth and the seven steps He took can no longer be set aside as a legend. It also explains why (even though the potential exists) 'everybody' cannot be a Fully Enlightened Buddha, why there will not be more than one Supreme Buddha at a given time, and how diligently one must strive to attain emancipation.

Female readers may be interested to know that at the time of the Lord Buddha Purāna (Ancient) Dipankara (not to be confused with the Buddha Dipankara who gave the definite proclamation) the Bodhisatta Gotama was a female, and offered mustard oil lamps and made the aspiration to become a Buddha. And as a result of all the meritorious deeds performed 'she' became a Buddha.

It is one of our responsibilities to give the real teaching of the Buddha to those who wish to learn more about Him. Many believe that the Buddha was a kind of God or a divine being. Others believe that He was an ordinary human being. But in reality, the Lord Buddha was neither a human being nor a divine being. He was the Buddha. He had overcome ordinary human nature by performing good deeds and developing His wisdom over an infinite period of time.

To come to this world and to become the Buddha, He had to fulfill perfections for an extremely long time. We ordinary people have not performed such meritorious

actions. And therefore it is not appropriate to compare Prince Siddhāttha or the Buddha with ourselves. After enlightenment, the ascetic Gotama became an unusual personage who had overcome and gone beyond mundane life even though He was born as a human being. The Lord Buddha was supramundane. He was a King of Kings, a God of Gods and a Brahma of Brahmas. He himself once mentioned that as the Buddha, He was not a human, not a divine and not a non-human. He was the Buddha. There is no other word to introduce a Buddha to human beings than by using the word “Buddha”.

Mrs. Abeysekera explains the effort and meritorious deeds done by the Lord Buddha in His quest for enlightenment. It took our Bodhisatta an infinitely long period and extraordinary effort to complete the perfections. With tireless effort, courage, and determination He performed the meritorious deeds required to complete the ten perfections and acquired the wisdom necessary for Buddhahood. Then He remained in the Tusita heaven until the opportune moment for His last birth. On the invitation of the devas (divine beings) He was born as Prince Siddhāttha to fulfill His aspiration.

Prince Siddhāttha led a life of luxury. Then at the age of twenty-nine, in keeping with His aspirations, He gave up His beloved family, crown, and wealth to seek the path to the total destruction of suffering. As a mendicant, He studied under the greatest of teachers in search of the path to the total destruction of suffering. Not finding what He sought He set out on His own in search of the Truth.

It was a full-moon day in the month of Vesaka (May)

in the year 588 B.C. After a meal of rich milk rice served by a noble lady named Sujāta, the Bodhisatta tested His mind power by placing the bowl in the river and aspiring that the bowl float upstream. The bowl floated upstream. Encouraged, He began to meditate under a beautiful, shady tree, determined that He would not get up until He had realized the Truth.

In the first watch of the night, He attained the Jhānas (rapturous ecstasies) and gained the knowledge of reminiscence to see into His past lives (*pube nivasa'nussati nana*). He saw that in His previous birth He had been in the Tusita heaven. Then He investigated from where He had come to the Tusita heaven. He saw His past birth as King Vessantara, the wise man Mahausadha, King Silāva and many other past births.

Through this divine wisdom He realized that all living beings who have not eradicated their unwholesomeness will be reborn in *samsāra*. Gaining this knowledge He confirmed that living beings have a “re-becoming” or a rebirth.

In the second watch of the night He gained the knowledge of the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu ñāna*). With this knowledge He saw countless beings who were dying and re-becoming in *samsāra*. He saw that some who were dying in the human world were reborn in the heavens, while some were reborn in woeful states. Some who were dying in the heavens were reborn in the human world, while others were reborn in the woeful states. And some who were dying in the woeful states were having births in other woeful states, while some were reborn in happy planes. The Maha (great) Bodhisatta then contemplated on the reason for this

occurrence and the reason for having such changes in their reappearances.

The Theory of Kamma and Vipāka was realized by the Maha Bodhisatta in the middle watch of the night through the knowledge of the divine eye. He realised that intentional, unwholesome and wholesome actions (kamma) have reactions (vipaka). Unwholesomeness defiles the mind while wholesomeness purifies the mind, causing living beings to experience evil and good results. Unwholesome and wholesome deeds, that originate through action, speech, and mind result in bad or good experiences. This wisdom was not clear in this world before the achievement of the Maha Bodhisatta.

The Maha Bodhisatta began to analyse the life of a living being. When He was analyzing the life, He found that life originated depending upon the delusion of the individual. All unenlightened living beings were full of ignorance or not knowingness or what we call delusion (avijjā). In the third watch of the night, He realized the “Doctrine of Dependent Origination” (Paticca Samuppāda) and the knowledge for the elimination of delusion (āsavakkhaya ñāna).

He realized the origin of life and found that delusion arose not from outside but from within the individual. Life originates because of delusion. This is one of the most rare teachings in the world. After the disappearance of this teaching, this knowledge will not come back to this world until the appearance of another Lord Buddha.

The Maha Bodhisatta also realized how suffering (dukkha) originated. And He realized that if there is no craving, then there will be no suffering. If one can extinguish

craving there will be true happiness and the absence of suffering. *Thus He realized the Four Noble Truths.*

When the Maha Bodhisatta realized this, He knew that He had attained Full Enlightenment and that the results of all His previous actions would eliminate themselves after the passing away of His life. They would be active only while He lived.

This realization of wisdom resulted in His being addressed as the “Lord Buddha”. His teaching, which is timeless, was known as the Dhamma or the Truth. This realization brought real light to the blind world which was embroiled in the three defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion. This Truth can only be achieved by the wise. To gain wisdom one must cultivate the mind by practising insight meditation.

Mrs. Radhika Abeysekera’s attempt to explain this in plain English is very successful. Her experience in teaching children has assisted her in accomplishing this well despite the time she spends on household duties and office work.

We hope that all who work and lead a household life, will make an effort to achieve the goal of Nibbāna by following the teachings of the Lord Buddha. Out of compassion, the Lord Buddha preached what He had realized and paved the way for us to reach emancipation. Knowing that we have to suffer, why then should we delay in samsāra?

I am very happy to mention that all of Mrs. Abeysekera’s former books are very useful and popular among readers. This book discloses what ordinary Western students of Buddhism may not easily comprehend — **the Supremacy of the Lord Buddha, the unique opportunity we now have**

to practise the Dhamma, and the practise of the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna.

May the wholesome efforts of Mrs. Radhika Abeysekera be instrumental in future generations acquiring the knowledge required for their emancipation. May all living beings attain Nibbāna!

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Preface

The Gotama Buddha called His teachings Dhamma. Dhamma means the Law or the Truth. This Truth that the Buddha realized is not something that He invented; it is something He discovered through self-realization. It is a natural law that exists in this world like the law of gravity. It is, however, veiled from our view due to mankind's ignorance, hatred, and greed. The Dhamma must be realized by a Buddha. Then it must be proclaimed to the world for the benefit of men and Gods (Devas).

The Dhamma that the Buddha realized is not unique to Him. There were many Buddhas before Him who realized the Dhamma and there will be many Buddhas after Him who will realize the Dhamma. In each instance it is the same Dhamma or Law that They realize, for the Law, the Truth does not change. It remains veiled from view until a Supreme Buddha appears — a Supreme Buddha who realizes the Dhamma and teaches it for the benefit of all beings.

The Gotama Buddha was not a God. He never claimed to have divine powers or help from the Divine. The Buddha was a human being, a perfect human being who, over æons of time, perfected Himself through His own effort, so that He could realize the Law and teach it to men and Gods. In the Mahāvagga the Buddha said:

*“It is through unshaken perseverance that
I have reached the final goal and enlightenment
Through unceasing effort that
I have reached the peace supreme*

*If you also will strive unceasingly
You too will in time attain the highest goal of bliss."*

As such, the Truth is within the reach of every human being. If we strive unceasingly to develop wisdom, we too, like the Buddha, can attain the highest goal of bliss — Nibbāna.

We live in a fortunate period, for the Gotama Buddha has unveiled the darkness of ignorance and shown us the path to destroy hatred and greed. The Truth and the path to enlightenment are unveiled. Even though the Gotama Buddha is no longer with us, His Dhamma is with us for we have His Teachings to follow. We must now strive on with diligence so that each and every one of us can achieve our own liberation, our own enlightenment by realizing the Truth.

This book is divided into two parts that I have called "THE WHY" and "THE HOW". PART I shows you WHY you should practise the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna. It is designed to make you understand how rare is the appearance of a Buddha and how very fortunate you are to be born at a time when the teachings of a Buddha are available. It also shows you how difficult and rare it is to be born as a human being. It is designed to encourage you to strive on with diligence and concentrated, continuous effort. PART I, "THE WHY", is divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1 Explains how extremely difficult it is and how exceedingly long is the time it takes for a person to become a Buddha; what a formidable task it is; what determination it requires and what a remarkable person is a Buddha. It describes how rare is the appearance of a Buddha. It also shows

you how difficult it is to be born as a human being.

Chapter 2 Explains how relatively short a time the teachings of the Buddha, the Dhamma, will be with us. It brings to your attention clearly the enormous difference in time between how long it takes for a person to become a Buddha and how long His teachings remain in the world for the benefit of men and Gods.

Chapter 3 Explains that the Dhamma is within your reach. But that it is only through your own effort that it can be realized. It is only your own effort that will set you free. It illustrates to you that it is your effort that will help you to attain enlightenment.

Chapter 4 Introduces the three salient truths that the Buddha realized about the nature of all conditioned things:

Anicca (impermanence)

Dukkha (suffering)

Anatta (no permanent soul).

It brings to the reader's attention the true nature of life. It focuses on the truth of suffering and why there is suffering in this world. It brings your attention to the fact that suffering exists in this world because of the impermanence of conditioned phenomena and that only a Buddha can

show you the path to the total destruction and eradication of suffering. It concludes by explaining why we should be studying and practising the Dhamma now.

PART II concentrates on “How” one practises the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna. Once you have realized the urgency of practising the Dhamma, it is important to know how to practise the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna. “THE HOW” begins by introducing you to Nibbāna and the characteristics that must be destroyed to attain it, and then goes on to show how one destroys or eradicates each of these characteristics. It is designed to introduce the reader to the practice of the Dhamma with a view to enlightenment. PART II, “THE HOW”, is divided into two chapters.

Chapter 5 Explains Nibbāna and introduces the characteristics that must be destroyed to attain it:

Lobha (greed and attachment)

Dosa (ill-will and hatred)

Moha (delusion and ignorance).

Chapter 6 Illustrates the practise of the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna. It introduces:

Dana (generosity)

Sila (morality)

Bhāvanā (meditation).

It shows the development of wisdom through meditation on mental concentration (Samatha Meditation) and meditation

on insight (Vipassanā Meditation). The form of Samatha Meditation used is Awareness of Breathing Meditation (Ānāpāna Sati Meditation).

This book takes you through the entire path to Nibbāna. It introduces you to the practise of generosity, morality, mental concentration (development) and wisdom with a goal of Nibbāna as opposed to the practise of the Dhamma with a goal of heavenly birth. I hope that this book will encourage you in the practise of Vipassanā Meditation. It is not, however, designed to teach Vipassanā Meditation.

Readers who are inspired by this book and who wish to make meditation a part of their daily life are encouraged to contact one of the many centres that offer instruction on the Buddha's teaching of Vipassanā Meditation. The practise of meditation is best undertaken under the guidance of a learned monk or guru. Many forms of meditation are conducted under the guise of Vipassanā Meditation. The Buddha used Awareness of Breathing Meditation for the development of mental concentration (Samādhi) and Insight Meditation (Vipassanā) for the development of wisdom (Paññā). The practise of Samatha meditation is essential to the practise of meditation on insight. You could, however, choose any one of the different types of Samatha Meditation that best suits your temperament. Ensure that the meditation centre you use leads to the practise of the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the only path to Enlightenment. Meditation that is tied to the Noble Eightfold Path is the Vipassanā Meditation that was taught by the Buddha.

Often in Buddhist countries we introduce Buddhism to our children by starting with the life story of the Buddha,

His relatives and disciples. We then introduce His teachings by starting with generosity and morality and teach the Dhamma by using examples from Jataka stories, Dhamma Pada, Suttas, and through incidents that happened at the time of the Buddha. We enhance this teaching by taking the children to the temple and encouraging them to participate in the cultural and ritualistic aspects of Buddhism. The primary objective is to ensure that our children will grow up to be good citizens with sound moral principles. We hope that starting them young will result in their becoming compassionate, generous adults. We tend to postpone the practise of meditation to later stages of life — when we are older, when we have more free time, or perhaps, when we are retired.

The Buddha taught us to practise each of the steps of the Noble Eightfold Path concurrently. In other words, He said that to attain enlightenment we need to develop generosity, morality, mental concentration and wisdom. Good morality and a generous nature will ensure a happy life in this and in your next life. However, it will not, on its own, lead to Nibbāna.

It is difficult to change the attitudes and practises of the past. Inspired as I am with the teachings of the Buddha, I find it a challenge to discipline myself to daily meditation. But would this have been the case if I had been introduced to meditation as part of my daily routine at a young age? I believe that the time has come to introduce meditation to our children as part of their daily life. Not only will it help in their spiritual development, it will also help their education and health, as meditation enhances one's powers of concentration and reduces stress. Then at least in future generations,

Buddhists will practise generosity, morality, mental concentration and wisdom on a daily basis.

All religions teach morality and generosity. All parents want their children to grow up to be compassionate, generous and successful. If these were our only goals they could be achieved without becoming a Buddhist. Birth in the heavenly realms should not be the long-term goal of Buddhists. The Buddha has shown us clearly that even the extremely long and happy lives in the heavenly realms come to an end. The unique contribution that the Buddha made was to show us the path to the permanent destruction of suffering (dukkha). Generosity and morality are some of the components of the path. Mental discipline and wisdom, acquired through meditation, are required to complete the path. In fact, even though I am not an expert on meditation, I have been introducing meditation to non-Buddhist church groups on request. They may not have taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, but they too have been practising generosity and morality. With the introduction of meditation, they too will have the opportunity to traverse the entire path. The Buddha has shown us the path to the greatest treasure. He has shown us the path to enlightenment (Nibbāna), and it should not be restricted just to the followers of His teachings.

Think back and remember when the little prince Rāhula asked his father, the Buddha, for his inheritance. The Buddha did not give him wealth, His kingdom, or the crown. He gave a more valuable treasure. He showed Prince Rāhula the path to enlightenment. Many of us feel that enlightenment is a goal that can only be reached by a recluse or a monk who has given up the attachments and bonds of daily

life. It is easier for a monk as he has given up his attachment to family, wealth and possessions. Enlightenment, however, is not restricted to monks. Even at the time of the Buddha there were many lay persons who reached higher stages of spiritual development. Visākha, Anātha Pindika, and even the Buddha's own father, King Suddhodana, attained higher levels of spiritual development without renunciation. Enlightenment is possible for each and every one of you who follows in its entirety the Noble Path outlined by the Buddha.

For a parent, the most valuable 'possession' we have is our children. The greatest wealth on Earth is the Teaching of the Buddha. Should we not then be giving this wealth to our children? Do you not think we should be helping them to take the first step towards enlightenment now?

This book, as my previous book, *Questions and Answers in Buddhism — Volume I* is a collection of notes from the lessons I have taught my students. A parent or educator who is introducing this book to a child should ensure that it is done gradually, perhaps a section at a time. This is especially important as one reaches the latter chapters. My students had the advantage of being able to question the contents of these lessons, whereupon I added additional examples to clarify their doubts. They also had time to reflect and absorb the material before the next lesson, so that each lesson was well understood before we progressed to the next. This book builds on each preceding chapter and it is important that the student should have a complete understanding of a chapter before proceeding to the next.

As with my other books, this book is the result of the generosity and dedication of many persons. I wish to express

my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa (Mahā Thera) of the New York Buddhist Vihara for his invaluable contribution to this book. He has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to me since 1989 when he first visited Winnipeg. He has also written the foreword and checked the material in this book for accuracy. His continued support in my efforts to teach the Dhamma is greatly appreciated.

I also wish to thank Mrs. Vimala Wanigasekera, one of the elders of our community, for her contribution to the Jātaka (birth) stories included in this book. She patiently read the Jātaka stories which were written in very advanced Sinhala and simplified them so that I could understand them. Her contribution is greatly appreciated.

Once again, I have had the opportunity to have my book formatted by a professional graphic designer. My friend Jay Jorowski, has patiently transformed this book into a work of art with her expertise. Not only did she design the cover to reflect the importance of the lamp, flower and contents within, she also formatted the entire book. Her beautiful work is greatly appreciated.

My good friend, Adrienne Bouchard Langlois, has, as with my previous books, enriched this book with her careful editing. She has also illustrated the stories in this book with beautiful drawings. Her unique drawings have added a depth to the stories that could not be expressed in words alone.

Her support and friendship are a constant source of inspiration that give me the strength and encouragement I need for my writings. I am constantly grateful to her for the richness that she has brought into my life.

I also want to thank my family for their tremendous support in my efforts to teach the Dhamma. This book was made possible only because of the teamwork between my husband Sarath, our children, Chamal and Chayanika, and myself. Working together on the household duties gave me the free time I needed to complete this book.

May you all partake in the merit of this gift of Truth!

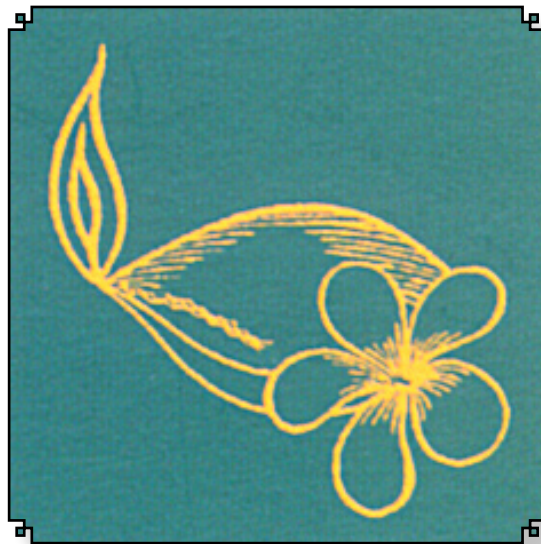
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Practising the Dhamma *with a View to Nibbāna*

COVER	6
FOREWORD	7
PREFACE	14

Part I Why should I Practise the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna?

Chapter 1

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE AND WHAT DOES ONE HAVE TO DO TO BECOME A BUDDHA?	27
THE ERA PRIOR TO THE MANO-PANIDHĀNA KĀLA	31
THE VACI-PANIDHĀNA KĀLA	38
THE TEN PERFECTIONS	50
THE SUPREME BUDDHA GOTAMA	88

Chapter 2

HOW WILL THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOTAMA BUDDHA END AND THAT OF THE METTEYYA BUDDHA BEGIN?	96
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ATTAINMENTS	97
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE METHOD	97
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LEARNING	98
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SYMBOLS	99
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE RELICS	100
THE ADVENT OF THE METTEYYA BUDDHA	100

Chapter 3

WAS THE BUDDHA A SAVIOUR?	109
---------------------------------	-----

Chapter 4

WHAT ARE THE THREE SALIENT TRUTHS THAT THE BUDDHA REALIZED
ABOUT THE NATURE OF ALL CONDITIONED PHENOMENA? 116

ALL CONDITIONED PHENOMENA ARE IMPERMANENT (ANICCA) 117

ALL CONDITIONED PHENOMENA ARE NOT SELF 119

ALL CONDITIONED PHENOMENA ARE SORROWFUL 128

Part II How should I Practise the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna?

Chapter 5

WHAT IS NIBBĀNA? 138

CRAVING THAT LEADS TO GREED, LUST & ATTACHMENT 139

CRAVING THAT LEADS TO ANGER, ILL-WILL & HATRED 145

DELUSION & IGNORANCE 147

Chapter 6

HOW SHOULD I PRACTISE THE DHAMMA WITH A VIEW TO NIBBĀNA? 156

CHANGING ONE'S BEHAVIOUR 156

GENEROSITY (DĀNA) FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF GREED & ATTACHMENT 160

MORALITY (SILA) FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ILL-WILL & HATRED 165

MEDITATION (BHAVANA) IN MENTAL DISCIPLINE & WISDOM,
FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF DELUSION & IGNORANCE 176

GLOSSARY 196

BIBLIOGRAPHY 199

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 200

OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR 201

DEDICATION OF MERIT 203

Part I

Why should I Practise the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna?



Chapter 1

How long does it take and what does one have to do to become a Buddha?

*“Rare is birth as a human being
Hard is the life of mortals
Hard is the hearing of the sublime Truth
Rare is the appearance of the Buddha.”*

Dhammapada 182

The Era

Most people are unaware of what a difficult and formidable task it is to become a Buddha. Sometimes Buddhists compare the Supreme Buddha to other mortals who have developed psychic powers, to those who have attained healing powers and the power to materialize holy ash and other phenomena. However, such persons are still worldlings (puthujjana). Their powers pale into insignificance when compared to the powers of a Supreme Buddha because the effort and degree of perfection required is incomparable. Such persons have not even entered the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. A Supreme Buddha cannot be compared with any man or God. He is an incomparable teacher of Gods and men (deva manussānam). The purpose of this lesson is to make you realize just how difficult it is and how long a

time it takes for one to become a Supreme Buddha. It is also for us to realize how fortunate we are, to be born when the teachings of the Buddha are still with us.

Many of us who have read the life story of the Buddha may think that it took the Ascetic Gotama six years to become the Buddha. **In actual fact it took our Buddha Gotama a period of three hundred thousand world cycles interspersed with twenty incalculable periods to reach enlightenment and become a Buddha.** It is almost impossible to fathom the time period this includes. “The Era” attempts to give the reader a notion of the enormous time span required for one to reach perfection and become a Buddha.

To understand this section it will be necessary to be familiar with the meaning of some pāli (language spoken by the Buddha) words I will use. They are:

Mahā kappa (kappa) or world cycle

Asankheyya or incalculable (infinite) period

The Buddha attempted to explain a world cycle as follows. Many, many years from the present time a destructive rainfall will take place, as a result of which the world system will come to an end. Then, after a long time, the world will re-evolve. And again, after a long period, another destructive rainfall will take place, destroying the world system. The period between the two destructive rainfalls is one world cycle. The Buddha has divided a world cycle into four sections.

Samvatta-kappa

Samvattatthāyi-kappa

Vivatta-kappa

Vivattatthāyi-kappa

These in turn are each subdivided into twenty anto-kappa (Sixty-four according to some texts).

Samvatta-kappa — The first period of a world cycle known as Samvattakappa is the very long period between the destructive rainfall and the appearance of seven suns, at which time the world system is entirely burnt up. This period is known as the period of chaos or the dissolved state.

Samvattatthāyi — The second period, which is known as Samvattatthāyi, is when the sky and heavens (firmament) both over and under the world are covered with thick dust and darkness. This long period is known as the period of continuation of chaos or continuation of the dissolved state.

Vivatta-kappa — The third period, known as Vivattakappa, starts with a productive rainfall and goes on evolving until the sun and moon begin to appear. This period is known as the long evolving period.

Vivattatthāyi — The fourth period, which starts when the sun and moon appear through the dust, is known as the Vivattatthāyi, the continuation of evolution, and goes on until the next destructive rainfall.

We are now in one of the twenty anto-kappa in the period known as Vivattatthāyi, the continuation of evolution. In each anto-kappa the lifespan of man rises to a very long period and again decreases to about ten years. We are now in a very fortunate period. Five Buddhas will be born in this world cycle (hence known as Mahā Bhadda Kappa). Four have already reigned. The era of the Mettiyya Buddha is yet to come.

Now, how does one fathom the time span or visualize the time span of one world cycle? *The Buddha said, "Suppose,*

O monks, that there was a huge rock of one solid mass with no cracks or crevices that was one yojana (7–14 miles) long, one yojana wide and one yojana high, and suppose that every hundred years a man were to come and rub this rock with a silk shawl, then that huge rock would wear off before one world cycle. Of such world cycles many have passed away. Many hundreds, many thousands, many hundred thousands.” Of course the silk scarf would wear off before the rock. The Buddha was using this beautiful simile so as to give us an idea of just how long a world cycle, or Mahā kappa, really is.

It is also interesting to read of the Buddha’s description of life on earth. Starting after the evolving period He says that a time comes when the earth is fully covered with water. Then, due to the heat of the sun, a cusp or thin film forms on the surface of the water, rather like the scum that is formed when rice is boiled. An asexual, fluid animal is evolved when the elements needed for life are present, that is, heat, moisture, air, etc. The next form of life He talks about are fungi. Incidentally, this description is similar to the description of evolution given by scientists. I have condensed the Buddha’s teachings drastically but I think this will give you some idea of the length of a world cycle or Mahā kappa.

An Asankheyya, or incalculable (infinite) period, is a period of so many world cycles that it could not be counted. In other words, it was longer than the known largest quantifiable number at the time of the Buddha. The term 20 *incalculable* is used because these periods were interspersed between the quantifiable Mahā kappa. Had these 20 incalculable periods been consecutive they would have been recorded as one incalculable period.

Some Buddhists think that it took our Buddha a period of four incalculable periods and 100,000 world cycles to attain Buddhahood. Here they are considering only the period after the Definite Proclamation by the Dipankara Buddha, the period in which the Bodhisatta completed the ten perfections known as the Kāya-panidāna kāla. In fact, it took the Bodhisatta a period of 300,000 world cycles interspersed with 20 incalculable periods to attain Buddhahood. This period includes the Mano-panidhāna kāla, Vaci-panidhāna kāla and the Kāya-panidhāna kāla. When you can visualize this time span you will marvel not only at the magnitude of the task but also at the fortitude and courage a Bodhisatta has to have to attain Supreme Buddhahood.

The Era Prior to the Mano-Panidhāna Kāla (Era prior to Mental Aspiration)

We will now go back a very, very long time to when our Buddha first aspired to Buddhahood. Over 300,000 world cycles and 20 incalculable periods ago our Buddha Gotama was born into a poor family. After his father died, he supported his mother with difficulty by selling firewood and vegetables. As it was difficult to survive on their income he decided to join a merchant ship on its way to Suwanna Bhumi. His mother, however, was reluctant to let him go alone. To please her, he got passage for both of them on the ship. One day, about a week after they set sail, a storm arose and the ship capsized. Most of the people drowned. The poor man valiantly swam in search of his mother. Then, risking



his life, he took his mother on his back and, with difficulty, swam to a distant land.

The grateful mother blessed her son by saying, “As you saved me from drowning in the sea, so may you be able some day to save other beings from all their suffering (be a Buddha).” The poor man too, inspired by his mother’s words made the first mental aspiration to Buddhahood. He thought, “May I some day save living beings by showing them the path for the destruction of suffering.” From this point onward He was known as the Bodhisatta — the one on His way to perfection, or the aspirant to Buddhahood.

The Bodhisatta then began the formidable task of perfecting Himself in the following ways known as the ten perfections or virtues (pāramitā):

Generosity — Dāna

Morality — Sila

Renunciation — Nekkhamma

Wisdom — Paññā

Effort — Viriya

Patience — Khanti

Truth — Sacca

Determination — Adhitthāna

Loving Kindness — Mettā

Equanimity — Upekkhā

I have selected two jātaka (previous lives of the Buddha) stories to relate from the time between this first mental aspiration and the first mental aspiration made by the Bodhisatta ‘Gotama’ in the presence of a Buddha. It is at this point, when the Bodhisatta first made the mental aspiration to Buddha-

hood in the presence of a Supreme Buddha, that the Manopanidhāna kāla period begins.

The first story tells of the time when the Bodhisatta was born as the son of the king of Benares. He was then known as **Sattutāpa**. After His father's death He was crowned as king. The king had a beautiful, trained elephant. On hearing that one of His parks had been destroyed by wild elephants, the king set out on His trained elephant to examine the damage. While He was examining the extent of the damage and talking to His ministers, His trained elephant caught the scent of a female elephant that had been there on the previous night. The trained elephant then broke loose and, leaving the mahout, ran into the jungle after the female elephant. A few days later, the elephant returned and the mahout explained to the king that his normally obedient elephant had charged and left because of the lust it felt for the female elephant.

The king reflected on this information and, feeling disgust at the effect of lust on His calm, mild, trained elephant, decided to give up sensual pleasures and become an ascetic. He gave up His worldly possessions and kingdom and took the life of a holy man. Even though it was only during the Kāyapanidhāna kāla that the Bodhisatta completed the perfection of renunciation, He started the practise of it at this point.

The second story relates how the Bodhisatta was born as a brahmin by the name of **Brahma Kumara**. At the age of sixteen He finished His education and took the life of an ascetic. He meditated at the foot of a mountain named Munda with His disciples, the chief of whom was the future Buddha Metteyya. One day when they were going out in search of fruit for their meal, the Bodhisatta saw a



starving tigress that had just given birth at the bottom of a cliff. Seeing that the hungry tigress was about to eat her cubs, He called His chief disciple and asked him to seek the carcass of a dead animal to feed the tigress. However, before His disciples could come back, the Bodhisatta saw the tigress ready to spring at her cubs. Making the mental aspiration of Buddhahood, He jumped from the cliff and let the hungry tigress devour Him, thereby saving the life of the cubs. Some think that it is this deed that resulted in the Buddha Gotama attaining Buddhahood prior to the Buddha Metteyya¹. Over 300,000 kappa and twenty incalculable periods ago the Bodhisatta started the practise of generosity. It was many, many years later, during the Kāya-panidhāna kāla, that He reached perfection in generosity (dāna).



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1. The period of the Kāya-panidhāna kāla varies depending on the method of training selected by the Buddha. It could be 4, 8 or 16 infinite periods along with the 100,000 world cycles. The Gotama Buddha selected Wisdom (Paññā), which resulted in a period of 4 infinite periods and 100,000 world cycles. Had He selected faith (Saddha–8) or effort (Viriya–16) as the method of attaining perfection, He would have taken a longer period to attain Buddhahood. The Metteyya Buddha selected effort.

The Mano-Panidhāna Kāla

(Era of Mental Aspiration)

Time in relation to present —

300,000 world cycles and twenty incalculable periods ago

Duration of period —

100,000 world cycles interspersed with 7 incalculable periods

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

King Atideva

Buddha at the time —

Brahma-Deva

The first period known as the Mano-panidhāna kāla, which lasted for a period of seven asankheyya and 100,000 Mahā kappa, was the period during which the Bodhisatta made the mental aspiration to Buddhahood in the presence of another Buddha. The period started at the time of the **Buddha Brahma-Deva**. At that time the Bodhisatta was born as **King Atideva**. He was looking out of His balcony in the palace when He saw the Buddha Brahma-Deva. The king immediately approached the Buddha, worshipped Him with jasmine flowers and made the mental aspiration to Buddhahood. He then built a monastery for the Buddha and provided Him and His monks with all that they required.

During this period, after the time of the Buddha Brahma-Deva, there were 125,000 Buddhas. Our Bodhisatta met every one of them and made the mental aspiration to Buddhahood in the presence of each Buddha after performing various meritorious acts.

Then passed a period of many world cycles during which there was no Buddha. The Bodhisatta was born as a man, attained the Jhāna, and was reborn in a brahma world.

The Vaci-Panidhāna Kāla

(Era of Verbal Aspiration)

Time in relation to present —

200,000 world cycles and thirteen incalculable periods ago

Duration of period —

100,000 world cycles interspersed with 9 incalculable periods

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

Prince Sāgara

Buddha at the time —

Purāna Gotama

The second period, known as the Vaci-panidhāna kāla, which lasted for a period of nine asankheyya and 100,000 Mahā kappa, was the period during which the Bodhisatta made the verbal aspiration to Buddhahood in the presence of another Buddha. This period started at the time of the **Buddha Purāna Gotama**. After His life span in the Brahma world was completed, the Bodhisatta was reborn as **Prince Sāgara** into a royal family in the city of Dhannavati. After His education was completed He was crowned as a universal monarch.

At this time there was a king named Yasanivāsa and a queen named Vimalā who ruled the City of Sirinivāsa. Their son gave up the royal life in search of Buddhahood and

fourteen days later attained enlightenment. He was known as the **Gotama Buddha**, now called Purāna (Elder) Gotama Buddha. When Prince Sāgara heard that the Buddha Gotama was visiting Dhannavati He was enraptured and, leaving His palace, went to pay homage to the Buddha. Then, having built a monastery for the Buddha and provided Him with all requisites, He made the first verbal aspiration to Buddhahood. The Bodhisatta said, “Lord, by these meritorious deeds, may I, like you, be born into a family known as Sakyan and be known as Gotama, like you, and may I attain Buddhahood some day in the future.” The Purāna Gotama Buddha then prophesied, “If you fulfill all the perfections, you will surely achieve your desire and attain Buddhahood.” Thus our Bodhisatta made the first verbal aspiration and received the first indefinite prophecy. He then gave up His kingdom and became a disciple of the Purāna Gotama Buddha.

During this period there were 38,700 Buddhas and our Bodhisatta met each and every one of them, made the verbal aspiration in their presence, and received the indefinite prophecy from each Buddha.

Time in relation to present —

100,000 world cycles and four incalculable periods ago

Duration of period left —

last Mahā Kappa of Vaci-panidhāna kāla

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

Universal Monarch Sudassana

Buddha at the time —

Tanhankara

During the last Mahā kappa of the Vaci-panidhāna kāla, in the city of Pupphavati, reigned a king named Sunanda and a Queen named Sunandā Devi. They had a son named **Tanhankara** who gave up his kingdom, and, after practising the virtues for a week, attained enlightenment. At that time our Bodhisatta was born as a universal monarch named **Sudassana** in the city of Surindavati. Seeing the Buddha Tanhankara, King Sudassana performed many meritorious deeds and made the verbal aspiration to Buddhahood. Again He received the indefinite prophecy. He then gave up His kingdom and became a disciple of the Tanhankara Buddha.

Time in relation to present —

100,000 world cycles and four incalculable periods ago

Duration of period left —

last Mahā Kappa of Vaci-panidhāna kāla

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

Somanassa the ascetic

Buddha at the time —

Medhankara

In the succeeding anto-kappa, in the city of Mekhalā, reigned a King named Sudeva and a Queen named Yasodharā. They had a son named **Medhankara** who gave up his kingdom and practised the virtues and attained enlightenment. At that time our Bodhisatta was born into the family of a priest and was named **Somanassa** after the city in which He lived. Somanassa offered alms to the Buddha and built rooms for

meditation, then joined as a disciple of Buddha Medhankara. Again, He made the verbal aspiration to Buddhahood and received the indefinite prophecy.

Time in relation to present —

100,000 world cycles and four incalculable periods ago

Duration of period left

last Mahā Kappa of Vaci-panidhāna kāla

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

Yasavanta the ascetic

Buddha at the time —

Saranankara

In the next anto-kappa, in the city of Vipula, reigned a King named Sumangala and a Queen named Yasavathi. They had a son named **Saranankara** who gave up his kingdom and practised the virtues and attained enlightenment. At that time our Bodhisatta was born into the family of a priest and was named **Yasavanta**. He built many monasteries and provided the Buddha with milk rice and other necessities. He then made the verbal aspiration to Buddhahood and again received the indefinite prophecy. He then joined the order of monks, realized the Jhāna, and was born in the Brahma world.

Those of you who know the Sutta of the twenty-eight Buddhas will be familiar with these three Buddhas. Even at this point our Bodhisatta had not achieved the requirements necessary to receive the Definite Proclamation. All He had received from these Buddhas was the indefinite proclamation.

The Kāya-Panidhāna Kāla

(Era of action)

Time in relation to present —

100,000 world cycles and four incalculable periods ago

Duration of period —

100,000 world cycles interspersed with 4 incalculable periods

Bodhisatta Gotama then known as —

Sumedha the ascetic

Buddha at the time —

Dipankara

The third period, known as the Kāya-panidhāna kāla, which lasted for a period of four asankheyya and 100,000 Mahā kappa, was the period during which the Bodhisatta received the definite prophecy from another Buddha. This period started at the time of the **Buddha Dipankara**. At that time our Bodhisatta was born into the family of a priest and was named Sumedha. He had distributed all of His wealth among the poor and taken the life of an ascetic.

At that same time there was a king named Sumedha and a queen named Sumedhā who ruled the city of Rammavati. Their son gave up royal life and attained enlightenment. He was known as the **Dipankara Buddha**. On hearing that the Dipankara Buddha was visiting, the ascetic Sumedha started to decorate a stretch of the road on which the Buddha would be walking. However, the Dipankara Buddha arrived before Sumedha could get the road ready. A muddy stretch lay

ahead of the Buddha. Lying across the muddy road, Sumedha requested that the Dipankara Buddha and His retinue tread on him so as not to soil their feet. He then again made the verbal aspiration to Buddhahood. The Dipankara Buddha gave him eight handfuls of white jasmine flowers that represented the Noble Eightfold path that all Buddhas realize, and gave Him the definite prophecy. He said, “In the distant future you will be born into the Sakyan clan and will attain enlightenment as the Buddha Gotama.” From this point on, the Bodhisatta started in earnest to complete the ten virtues.

Eight conditions must be met in order to receive the definite prophecy (proclamation). They are as follows:

1. If one so wished one could at this point attain Arahantship and obtain one’s liberation from samsāra.
2. One must be a human being.
3. One must be a male.
4. One must come face to face with a living Buddha.
5. One must be an ascetic.
6. One must possess psychic powers (known as Attha-Samāpatti Jhāna-labhi).
7. One must be prepared to lay down one’s life for the Buddha.
8. One must have the strong determination to be a Buddha even though one knows that one might have to suffer as an animal, demon, etc., in an unhappy world. In other words, one has to suppress one’s attainment

of Arahantship with determination and remain in samsāra for the benefit of mankind and Gods.

At the time of the Buddha Dipankara, over 200,000 world cycles and sixteen incalculable periods after He made the first mental aspiration, our Bodhisatta met the eight requirements and received the definite proclamation.

The Bodhisatta's aspiration to become a Buddha was now a certainty. But even at this point, after countless years of practising generosity, morality, renunciation, truthfulness, etc., our Bodhisatta was a worldling (puthujjana). That is, He had not even reached the first stage of sainthood, Sottāpanna. However, if He so wished, He could now have won His liberation by gaining Arahantship. At this point He suppressed this achievement with determination and continued in samsāra to complete the ten virtues for the good of mankind. On that momentous day the ascetic Sumedha proclaimed thus:

*"Today if such were my desire,
I my corruptions might consume.
But why thus in an unknown guise,
Should I the Doctrine fruit secure?*

*Omniscience first will I achieve,
And be a **Buddha** in the world.
Why should I, a valorous man,
The ocean seek to cross alone?
Omniscience first will I achieve,
And men and Gods convey across."*

Knowing that there were many pitfalls between that time and the time when He would reach Supreme Buddhahood,

knowing that in samsāra He may through His action be born into one of the unhappy worlds, knowing He had the capability to reach salvation, the Bodhisatta Sumedha gave it up for us. He gave it up for the good of men and Gods.

During this period, known as the Kāya-panidhāna kāla, the Bodhisatta perfected Himself and retained the determination and aspiration to Buddhahood. The ten perfections — Dāna, Sila, Nekhamma, Paññā, Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adhittāna, Mettā and Upekkhā — the prerequisites to Buddhahood, were reached in this third stage known as the Kāya-panidhāna kāla.

As most Buddhists are familiar with the twenty-three Buddhas who followed the Dipankara Buddha, I am going to chronicle the past births of the Bodhisatta during the time of each of these Buddhas.

1. **Dipankara Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was born as the ascetic Sumedha and received the definite proclamation

After a period of one asankheyya there appeared:

2. **Kondanna Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Cakkavatti King named Vijitavi

After a period of one asankheyya there appeared:

3. **Mangala Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named Suruci
4. **Sumana Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Naga king named Atula
5. **Revata Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named Atideva

6. **Sobhita Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named Ajita

After a period of one asankheyya there appeared:

7. **Anomadassi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a leader of demons
8. **Paduma Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a lion
9. **Narada Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was an ascetic

After a period of one asankheyya there appeared:

10. **Padumuttara Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a man named Jatila (This period was 100,000 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 70,000 Mahā kappa there appeared:

11. **Sumedha Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a young man named Uttara (This period was 30,000 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 12, 000 Mahā kappa there appeared:

12. **Sujata Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a chakkavatti king (This period was 18,000 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
13. **Piyadassi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a young Brahmin named Kassapa
14. **Atthadassi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of Susima
15. **Dhammadassi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was the God Sakka

16. **Siddhatta Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of Mangala
17. **Tissa Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a king named Sujāta who later became an ascetic (This period was 92 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
18. **Phussa Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a king by the name of Vijitavi who later became a monk
19. **Vipassi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was the Naga king, Atula (This period was 91 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
20. **Sikhi Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a king named Arindama (This period was 31 Mahā kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
21. **Vessabhu Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was the king Sudassana who later became a monk (This period was one Mahā kappa before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
22. **Kakusandha Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a king named Sema (This period was in the same Mahā kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)
23. **Konagamana Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a king named Pabbata who later became a monk (This period was in the same Mahā kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)
24. **Kassapa Buddha** — The Bodhisatta was a Brahmin named Jotipāla (This period was in the same Mahā Kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

There were twenty-four Buddhas between the time of the definite prophecy and the time of the Gotama Buddha. Our Bodhisatta met each of these Buddhas and received the definite prophecy from each one. It was during the period between the Buddha Sobhita and the Buddha Anomadassi, in the dark period of one asankheheyya when there was no Dhamma, that the Bodhisatta erred.² He killed His brother to inherit the family wealth. The reason He erred was that He was still a worldling — a Bodhisatta who had been practising the ten perfections for æons and æons of time but was still a worldling with 1,500 impurities (kelesa) and the desires and greed of a worldling. This is why at the time of the Buddha Anomadassi He was a leader among the demons (Asuras). This is why He was a lion at the time of the Buddha Paduma. This is why He had to work His way up through the animal kingdom back to a human form. This is why there are many Jātaka stories where the Bodhisatta was an animal. And it was the residual effect of this action that caused the injury to His foot when Devadatta rolled the big rock at Gijjhakula to kill Him. Having given His limbs, His life in countless births, a Buddha has reached the saturation point in generosity and cannot be killed. However, the karmic result of that one action still affected the Buddha as a painful injury to His foot.

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2. Of the many unwholesome deeds the Bodhisatta Gotama committed during the Kāya-Panidhāna Kāla, twelve are noteworthy, as the results of these deeds were experienced even as the Buddha. The text does not specify which of the twelve was committed during this period. It is surmised that it was the killing of His brother, because this was one of the more serious unwholesome deeds, and also because the Buddha said that this was a dark period without a supreme Buddha. Seven of the other unwholesome deeds involved the insulting of a Buddha or the disciple of a Buddha. It is also possible that it was an unrelated unwholesome deed that spent itself entirely during the Kāya-Panidhāna Kāla.

Some among us might foolishly use this incident to justify our wrongdoings by thinking, "If a Bodhisatta can err, then what can you expect from us mortals?" These events should not be interpreted thus. We now have the Dhamma of the Gotama Buddha. We have no excuse to err. We should use this incident as a learning experience. How dangerous it is to be born at a time when there is no Dhamma in the world. How easy it is to err when you are born at a time when that which is immoral is considered moral. If you look at our century you will see that over time certain modes of conduct that were considered immoral are now in certain countries accepted as moral. The law of kamma, however, operates despite the ignorance of man. Certain religions condone the killing of animals. Destroying the life of a living being, human or animal, is an unwholesome act and when accompanied by intention, will set in motion the law of kamma. Those among us who have as their long-term goal heavenly birth should understand that even the extremely long and happy life spans in the heavens are impermanent. Rebirth could occur in any of the thirty-one planes of existence, perhaps in a human world devoid of the Dhamma. Then the chances of wrongdoing and subsequent birth in an unhappy plane are very high because we will not have the Dhamma of a Supreme Buddha to guide us.

Looking back at this period one can also see how long it took the Bodhisatta to regain birth as a human being. The Bodhisatta remained in the unhappy planes for an infinite number of years. The life span in some of these unhappy planes exceeds a world cycle. Also it is difficult to acquire merit in these planes of life and, as such, difficult to obtain

birth in a happy plane. The Buddha used this parable to explain how difficult it is to obtain birth as a human once you are born in an unhappy plane. He said, “If a ring were tossed about on the surface of a stormy sea, and if in that sea there lived a one-eyed turtle which came up to the surface once every hundred years, the likelihood of the turtle surfacing such that the ring would slip around its neck is greater than that of achieving birth as a human.”

I think you will now understand what a formidable task it is to be a Buddha, how determined and persevering one has to be to accomplish the task. Those of you who are familiar with the Jātaka stories know the effort that was required to complete the ten perfections — how the Bodhisatta gave up His wealth, His life, and ultimately His wife and children, to complete perfection in generosity; how many times He gave up His kingdom to achieve perfection in renunciation; how difficult it was to reach perfection in truth, patience, etc. If we compared the spiritual perfection of the Bodhisatta between the time of the Dipankara Buddha and the time He attained Buddhahood, it would be like comparing a grain of sand with a mountain bigger than the Himalayas. And yet, at that time, He had attained the eightfold mental absorptions (Attha Samāpatti Jhāna-labhi) and was capable of psychic powers and attaining Arahantship.

The Ten Perfections

During the Kāya-panidhāna kāla of 100,000 world cycles interspersed with 4 incalculable periods the Bodhisatta Gotama worked at completing the ten perfections (pāramitā),

namely:

Generosity	Dāna
Morality	Sila
Renunciation	Neckkhamma
Wisdom	Paññā
Effort	Viriya
Patience	Khanti
Truth	Sacca
Determination	Adhitthāna
Loving Kindness	Mettā
Equanimity	Upekkhā

Documented below are the past life stories explaining how the Bodhisatta Gotama attained perfection in each of the ten virtues. It should be noted that the Bodhisatta practised each of these ten in countless births to a degree that is incomprehensible to most mortals. Generosity was not just the giving away of His wealth and kingdom for the good of the world. It was the giving of His limbs, His life, and, ultimately, His beloved children and wife to reach perfection in generosity. Over æons and æons of time the Bodhisatta worked tirelessly, with determination and perseverance, to attain perfection in each of these ten areas.

1. Generosity — Vessantara Jātaka (birth story)

Many, many years ago in the country we now call India, was a city named Jetuttara. Jetuttara was ruled by a compassionate and righteous king named Sanjaya, who had a son named

Vessantara. Prince Vessantara, who was none other than our Bodhisatta, was a marvel of virtue and learning. Not only did He have all the qualities required for an heir-apparent, He was also compassionate and renowned for His practise of generosity.

The fame of Vessantara's generosity spread throughout the country. A jealous neighbouring king, hearing that the prince refused no one, sent his men in the garb of Brahmins to ask for His magnificent royal elephant. Now in those days the royal elephant was not only a valued status symbol that was selected with care, it was also a useful defence in times of war. Prince Vessantara, surprised to hear that a Brahmin needed the royal elephant, suspected that this was the trick of a jealous king. Having never refused anyone in need, He suppressed the thought that giving away the royal elephant was not politically astute by reflecting on the virtues of generosity. Lifting His golden pitcher high, He poured the water of donation on the Brahmin's hand as was the custom at that time, and handed over the richly decorated royal elephant.

When the people heard of Prince Vessantara's gift they became very angry. Claiming that He had gone too far in His practise of charity they asked that He be punished for this act which was not in keeping with political wisdom. Prince Vessantara was banished to the wild forest of Mount Vanka.

On hearing of His punishment, the Prince exclaimed, "The ministers do not understand the virtue of generosity. They do not understand that I would give away my eyes, my head, my life, for the good of another." Then slowly, in sadness, He walked towards His father and His wife, Prin-

cess Maddi, to bid them goodbye. Princess Maddi, however, felt that life without her Lord would be worse than death. Gathering their two children, Jāliya and Krishnajinā, she prepared to go into the wild forest with the Prince.

Giving everything they owned to the poor, the Prince and Princess and their children took to the forest in simple garments such as those worn by an ascetic. They lived off the fruits and herbs of the jungle and lived in harmony with the birds and animals. The children frolicked among the beautiful flowers and splashed in the streams. The Princess gathered fruit and nuts for their meals, whilst the Prince spent His time in meditation. They lived in happiness despite their lack of conventional wealth and comforts.

One day Princess Maddi had gone into the jungle to gather fruit and the Prince and the little ones were playing amidst the flowers in laughter when a travel-stained old Brahmin approached the Prince. Stating that his wife was now old and required the services of a younger person, he asked for the royal children. These words penetrated the Prince like a stab to the heart. But, reflecting on His aspiration to Buddhahood and the need for perfection in generosity, with a heavy heart, He agreed to the Brahmin's request.

Seeing the desolation in the eyes of His children, the Prince requested that the Brahmin wait for the Princess's return so that the children could bid farewell to their mother. The Brahmin refused, fearing that the Prince would change His mind in the presence of the Princess. Though the Prince assured the Brahmin that the Princess was His true helpmate and would support His decision despite her grief, the Brahmin was adamant in his demand.³

With tears that mingled with the water, the Prince handed over His children by pouring the water of donation over the Brahmin's hand. The ever-obedient children slowly took leave of their father by bowing low and saluting Him. The Prince was overwhelmed with grief when He saw the calm acceptance of His decision by His children. The separation from His children burned like a fire within. His head throbbed with pain as though a thousand knives pierced His skull. With the goal of Buddhahood in mind, the Prince subdued His pain and refrained from repenting of His gift.

When Princess Maddi came back from the forest, her arms laden with fruit, she knew that something was wrong. She did not hear the joyous cries and laughter of her children. They did not come running to her and embrace her as they usually did. Then she saw the Prince, His head bowed down with the weight of His sorrow, His face ashen with the strain of maintaining His resolve of non-repentance. Running towards Him she asked for the children. But the Prince could not speak. He looked at her with sorrowful eyes but no words could pass His lips.

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3. At the time of the Dipankara Buddha when the Bodhisatta (then known as Sumedha) received the definite proclamation, a lady of noble birth named Sumitra cut her hair and aspired that she would be His helpmate until He attained Buddhahood. This strong aspiration resulted in her being the Bodhisatta's consort and helpmate to Buddhahood during the entire period of the *Kāya-panidhāna kāla*. Princess Maddi, and later Princess Yasodharā, were none other than Sumitra. Throughout this period she actively helped the Bodhisatta in completing the ten virtues by supporting Him in every act of virtue. In fact, Princess Yasodharā's dying words reflected this devotion as she referred to the fact that she had been the wife of no other but Him during this entire period, and had helped Him to achieve in four infinite periods and one hundred thousand world cycles what other Buddhas take eight and sixteen infinite periods to achieve.

The distraught Princess ran about calling for her children, then fainted with grief. The Bodhisatta supported her body gently and sprinkled her face with cold water. He then spoke with agony of the supreme sacrifice of generosity made for the sake of humanity. The Princess calmed herself and, holding the hand of the Prince, knelt down in prayer to seek the help of the Devas for the welfare of their children. Having vowed to be His helpmate for æons of time, the Princess understood this act of supreme generosity and reflected that she would not have complained even if He had given her away in His quest for Omniscience.

The earth trembled and scented flowers rained over Him. The sound of heavenly music floated in the air as Sakka, the King of the Devas, looked on in awe and hailed the future Buddha. Then wishing to test Him further, Sakka disguised himself as an old man and said, "I have heard of your extraordinary generosity. Yesterday you gave your children away. Today I ask you for your wife who stands beside you like a heavenly goddess."

The Prince looked at the composed Princess as she walked slowly towards him. Then taking her hand and joining it with the hand of the old man, He poured the waters of donation. No anger or complaint was heard from the Princess, as she knew His mind. Through tear-filled eyes she looked on with love at her Lord, in gratitude that she had been able to help Him in His quest for perfection.

A brilliant light surpassing the radiance of the Devas illuminated the earth as Sakka regained His form as the King of the heavens and the Devas descended to earth to hail the future Buddha. Taking the Princess's hand, the King



of the heavens gently gave her back to the Prince saying: “Only those whose hearts are purified would understand this wonder. For the welfare of mankind, to seek perfection in generosity, He has practised unattachment to its fullest. Hail to the future Buddha.” After informing the Prince and Princess that they would be reunited with their children and King Sanjaya, Sakka the King of the heavens, ascended to His heavenly abode.

Generosity was the first of the ten virtues. But it Was the last one that the Bodhisatta completed. On completing the final virtue — generosity — Prince Vessantara exclaimed in joy:

*“This earth unconscious though she be,
and ignorant of joy or grief,
Even she then felt alms’ mighty power,
and shook and quaked full seven times.”*

After being reunited with His children and King Sanjaya, Prince Vessantara reigned over the kingdom of Jetuttara with compassion and righteousness. He had now completed the ten virtues required for Buddhahood. At death, Prince Vessantara was born in the Tusita Heaven as the God Setaketu to await the opportune time for His final birth as the Supreme Buddha.

2. Morality — Sankhapāla Jātaka

Many years ago the kingdom of Rājagaha was ruled by a righteous king named Magadha. When his son, Prince Duriyodha (the Bodhisatta) came of age, King Magadha handed

over the kingdom to Him. He then took the life of an ascetic and dwelled in a hermitage in the palace compound.

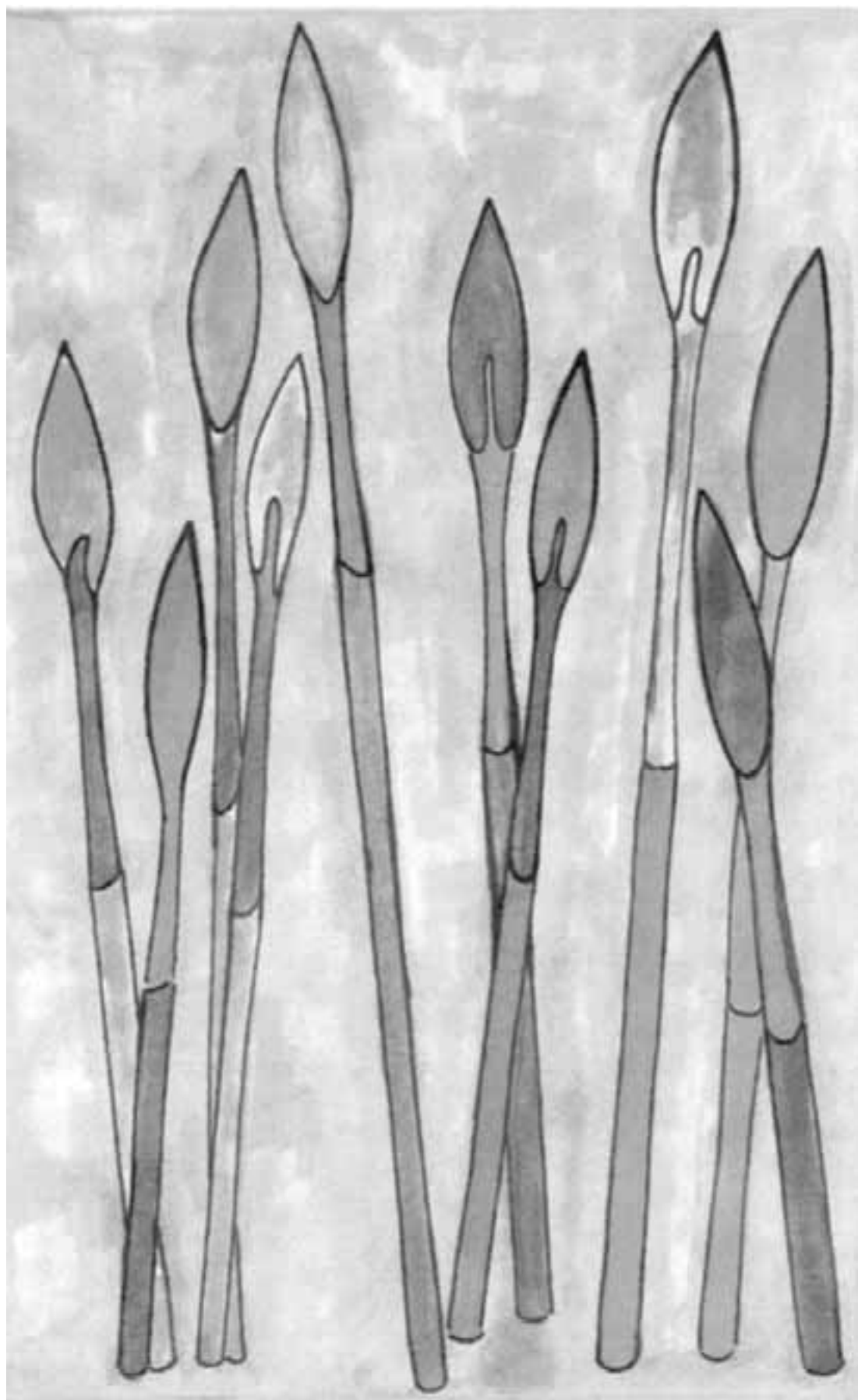
Prince Duriyodha, who was extremely fond of His father, visited him three to four times a day and showered him with gifts and luxuries. Feeling that the life of a true ascetic was not possible while living in the palace compound, the old king moved away. He moved to a far-away city named Mahinsaka and dwelled in a rock cave beside a beautiful lake named Sankhapala.

Before long the old king was respected by all as a great teacher. A Nāga King⁴ who lived nearby in a beautiful and luxurious kingdom often visited the former king to hear his teachings. One day when prince Duriyodha visited His father, He met the Nāga King and his entourage. Accepting the Nāga King's invitation, the Prince visited his beautiful kingdom. A strong desire arose in Him to live in this beautiful kingdom. At death Prince Duriyodha was reborn in the Nāga kingdom as a king by the name of Sankhapala.

King Sankhapala (the Bodhisatta) often dressed in simple robes and meditated in the nearby forest. One beautiful day, King Sankhapala changed his royal attire and dressed as a simple ascetic. He then ventured deep into the forest to meditate near the beautiful Sankhapala lake amidst the flowering blooms.

Some hunters, who had been hunting for days without finding any game, came across the King in deep meditation. Not recognizing the King, they decided that they would

4. Most versions translate Nāga literally as a snake. In these translations, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a king of snakes. However, Nāga is also a sect or gothra. In this story, it is translated as the king of the sect known as Nāga.



kill Him and eat His flesh as they had been without food for many days. Piercing Him with their pointed stakes, they took Him prisoner. They then tied His feet and hands together, and hung Him on a long stick by His feet. Placing the stick on their shoulders, they carried Him back to their camp.

The King's head, which dragged amidst the passing rocks and shrubs, was bruised and torn. His body, hacked by their hunting knives and stakes, burned with pain. Knowing that they had not recognised Him and that this was an act performed due to extreme hunger, the Bodhisatta remained calm. Radiating compassion and loving kindness towards His captors He bore His pain with calm, uttering not one word of anger or ill-will.

It was thus that a merchant by the name of Ālāra, who was travelling through the forest with his carts and oxen, saw the Bodhisatta. Filled with compassion on seeing the calm yet wounded 'ascetic', Ālāra gave the hunters gold and merchandise for His release. Ālāra then revived Him by gently washing and caring for His wounds. The King then explained to Ālāra that He was none other than King Sankhapala and took him back to the Nāga kingdom to reward him for his kindness and compassion. In observing the precepts throughout His ordeal, showing neither anger nor ill-will, the Bodhisatta completed the perfection of morality, whereupon He joyfully exclaimed:

*"They pierced me through with pointed stakes.
They hacked me with their hunting knives.
Notwithstanding such clumsiness, raged I not,
But kept the precepts to perfection."*

3. Renunciation — Culla Sutasoma Jātaka

Many years ago in the city of Sudassana there ruled a King by the name of Brahmadata. Our Bodhisatta was born as his son and was named Somanassa. Prince Somanassa was well known for His love of learning, wisdom and righteousness. When the Prince came of age, He married a beautiful princess named Chanda Devi. Before long the King handed over the kingdom to his Son, who won the hearts of His subjects through kindness and righteousness. The Prince, who was very fond of learning, was soon referred to as King Sutasoma, a name that was often used in referring to the very learned.

King Sutasoma decided that He would focus the first part of His life on the welfare of His subjects and kingdom, and the latter years on His spiritual development. With this in mind, He requested the royal barber to inform Him of the first gray hair that appeared on His head. One day the King was having His hair cut, when the barber detected a single gray hair. Cutting it out carefully he showed it to the King, who then decided that it was time for Him to renounce His kingdom and begin the practise of spiritual development. Handing over His kingdom to His younger brother, Prince Somadatta, King Sutasoma renounced His kingdom and wealth and took to the life of an ascetic. Prince Somadatta, Queen Chanda Devi, and the people of the kingdom implored the popular King to remain. But the King, who was now determined to live a spiritual life, refused to change His mind.

Prince Somadatta reluctantly took over the kingdom and duties of the Royal palace. But things were just not the same. The young prince missed his older brother, whom

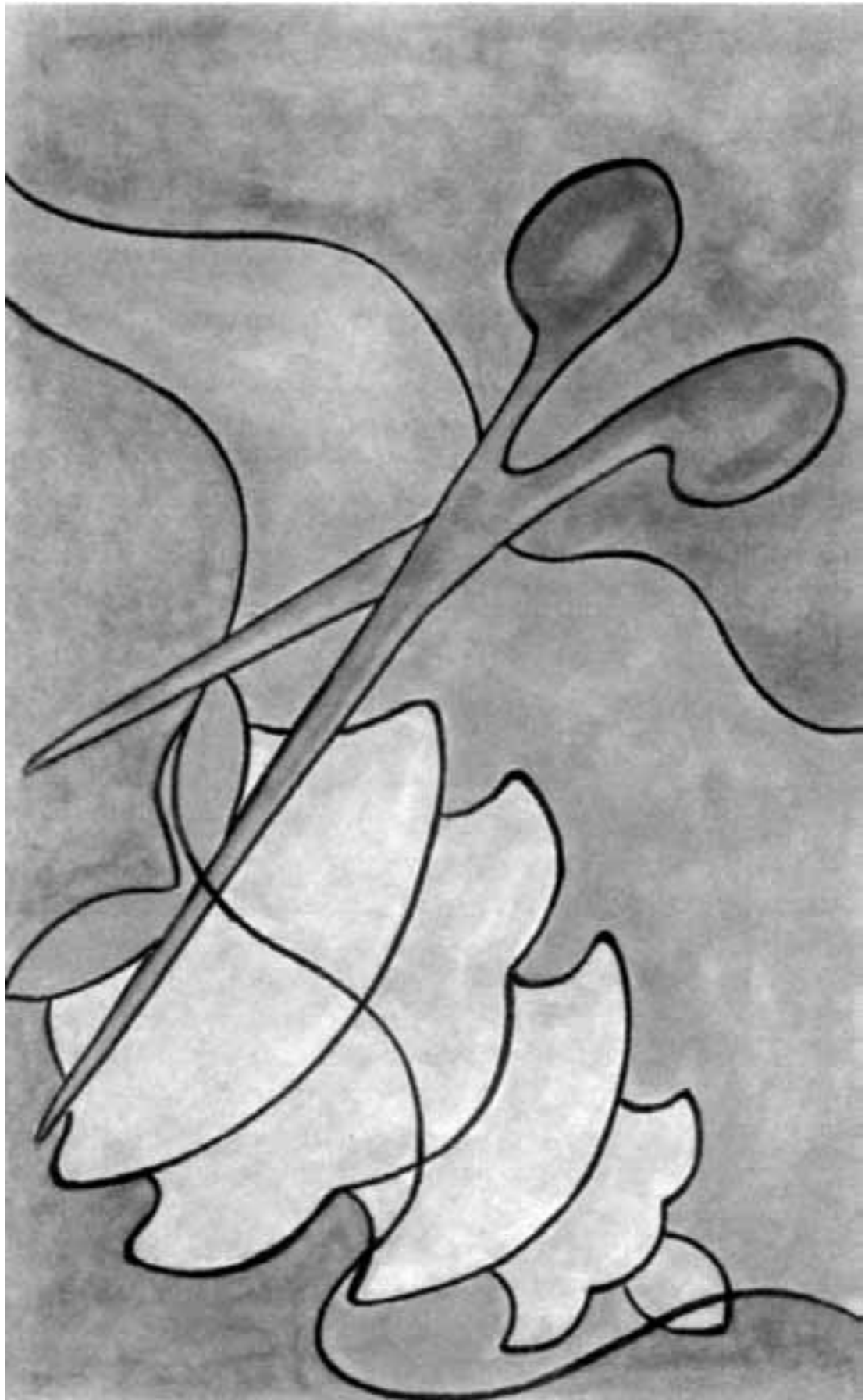
he had adored and upon whom he had relied. The royal subjects, though fond of the young Prince Somadatta, often talked about the popular King who had renounced the world. They decided to try one more time to entice the King to the pleasures of the world. The Prince, Queen Chanda Devi, the ministers, and many subjects visited the forest hermitage where the King lived. Despite His simple clothing, the King looked radiant and peaceful as He sat in meditation amidst the flowering blooms of the hermitage. Bowing before the King, who was now in the garbs of a simple ascetic, they offered Him the kingdom.

The King listened to them patiently, then taught them the virtues of holy life. After listening to Him, the Queen and the subjects decided that they too would give up the pleasures of the world for the development of their spiritual life. On the advice and encouragement of the King, the young prince and his ministers returned to the kingdom to govern the remaining subjects. In perfecting the virtue of renunciation the Bodhisatta exclaimed thus:

*"A kingdom dropped into my hand,
Like spittle vile I let it drop.
Nor for it felt the smallest wish,
And thus renunciation gained."*

4. Wisdom — Sattubhatta Jātaka

Many years ago the Bodhisatta was born as a very wise sage by the name of Pandit Senaka. The king appointed Him a minister and before long He was well known for His wisdom and fairness when dealing with problems and conflicts



among His majesty's subjects. His fame spread across the city so that persons with problems came to Him from all over the country in search of a fair and equitable solution.

In this City there lived an old Brahmin who had a very beautiful young wife. Unknown to the Brahmin she had many lovers and often entertained her men friends in his absence. One day the young woman requested that her husband seek employment so that he could earn some gold to provide them with servants and some savings for their future. Then, packing some delicacies that kept well on a journey, she sent her husband away.

The old Brahmin worked hard and earned sufficient gold to provide them with two servants and savings for their future. Then, remembering the food that his wife had packed, he stopped by the wayside to eat the delicacies she had made. Unknown to him, a poisonous snake crept into the open bag of food, attracted by the sweet smell. The man having eaten his fill, closed the bag and continued on his journey home without realizing that there was a snake in the bag with the leftover food.

A tree Deva, on seeing the danger to the man, made himself visible to the Brahmin and exclaimed, "If you go home your wife will die; if you stop by the wayside again, you will die." The old Brahmin was perplexed and worried. Unable to understand the meaning of the words of the Deva he fretted in anguish. Walking thus he was attracted by a large gathering who had come to visit the Pandit Senaka to ask Him questions. The Brahmin too approached the Pandit, and after telling his story, asked Him to explain the words of the Deva.



After pondering over the words for some time the Pandit Senaka asked the Brahmin to untie carefully the string tied around the bag of food. He told the Brahmin that He suspected there was a poisonous snake in the bag. He then explained the words of the Deva by saying that if the Brahmin had gone home, his wife would have died, as, unaware of the snake, she would have put her hand into the bag to take out the leftover food, and that if he had stopped on the way to rest again, he would have died, as he would have put his hand into the bag to have some food. As instructed, the old man carefully opened the bag. A small but poisonous snake slithered out into the bushes.

The old man was overwhelmed with gratitude for the Pandit who he felt had saved his life. He offered the 700 gold coins that he had earned as a gift to the Pandit. The Pandit Senaka, surprised at seeing so much money on a travel-weary old man, asked him how he happened to have so much money with him and to relay the full story of the past few days.

Feeling compassion for the hard-working old man, the Pandit refused the gift and gave him 300 gold coins so that he would have a thousand gold coins for his and his wife's future. But, suspecting the young woman of treachery, He requested that the Brahmin not inform his wife of his savings.

The old Brahmin, who trusted and loved his wife, did not heed the advice of the Pandit. He provided his wife with the servants she had requested and buried all his treasures in the premises of their garden in her presence.

A few days later, he was horrified to find that all his gold was missing. Distraught, he visited the wise Pandit Senaka in the hope of finding a solution to his problem. The

Bodhisatta listened to the case, and suspecting the young woman of treachery, instructed the old Brahmin to entertain fourteen guests for seven days. Seven of the guests were to be chosen by his wife and seven were to be chosen by himself. Each succeeding day, one of the guests selected by each of them was to be dropped so that on the seventh day there would only be two guests present, one of whom was selected by his wife and the other by himself. He then requested that the Brahmin come back and inform Him of the identity of his wife's last guest.

The Brahmin followed the instructions of the Sage and identified his wife's last guest — the one whom she had chosen to entertain for the full seven days. The Bodhisatta then sent His men to search the house of the wife's last guest and found the gold that had been stolen.

Upon being caught with the gold the man acknowledged the crime and his relationship to the young woman. The Bodhisatta then questioned the Brahmin if he wished to forgive his wife and remain with her. After being informed that he still loved her and wanted to remain with her, the Bodhisatta advised the young woman of the danger and folly of her behaviour and the consequences of sexual misconduct. On hearing the wisdom of the Bodhisatta, the young woman agreed to mend her ways. The Brahmin and his wife went home reconciled.

The Bodhisatta had practised the virtue of wisdom in many, many births. The Ummagga Jātaka illustrates many of the problems that He solved in His quest for wisdom. In solving this problem the Bodhisatta completed the virtue of wisdom. In happiness He exclaimed:

*“With wisdom sifted I the case
And freed the Brahmin from his woes
In wisdom none can equal me
In wisdom I’ve perfection reached.”*

5. Effort (courage) — Greater Janaka Jātaka

Many, many years ago, the Kingdom of Mithilā in the country now known as India, was ruled by a king named Mahā Janaka. He had two sons whom he named Arittha Janaka and Pola Janaka. When the older son, Arittha, came of age, King Mahā Janaka appointed him the new king, and retired. He also appointed his younger son, Pola, chief minister.

Before long the old king passed away. The two brothers ruled the kingdom with friendship and wisdom. A minister, jealous of the friendship and attention that the king paid to the chief minister, planned to destroy Prince Pola. He started to poison King Arittha’s mind with false accusations regarding his brother. The King, who trusted his minister, soon began to think that Prince Pola was plotting to kill him and capture his kingdom. He commanded that his brother be chained and thrown into the palace dungeons.

Prince Pola, who had been a righteous prince, was dismayed. He knew that he had never performed an unwholesome deed by thought, speech or action. Using the power of Truth he aspired thus, “I have never performed an unwholesome deed either by thought, speech, or action. By the power of this Truth may the chains that hold me prisoner be destroyed.” By the power of Truth the bonds were destroyed. The young prince fled to a nearby kingdom and lived incognito among the villagers.

Prince Pola, who had the character and qualities of a leader, won the hearts of the villagers. He sent a message asking his older brother to hand over the kingdom to him for his wrongful action of punishing an innocent man. King Arittha refused. Gathering an army, Prince Pola prepared to attack his brother who had punished him for naught.

King Arittha realized that he could die in battle. Handing over the crown jewels to his queen who was pregnant with their first child, he asked her to flee the kingdom to safety should he die in battle. King Arittha was killed in battle and Prince Pola took over the Kingdom of Mithilā as king.

The queen, with the help of a passing charioteer, travelled to the city of Kala Champa and lived among the destitute, in a home for the homeless. One day a Brahmin, who was with his retinue of students on their way to the nearby lake for a bath, passed the home. Seeing the beautiful queen who was heavy with child, he felt compassion. Taking her home, he asked his wife to tend to her needs as she would a younger sister. Before long the queen gave birth to a baby son who was none other than our Bodhisatta. She named her baby Mahā Janaka after His grandfather.

The baby Prince grew up to be a good student. He was also a strong sportsman. However, He was often teased by his classmates as a fatherless destitute. Determined to find out His origins, the Prince questioned His mother. On hearing that He was the son of a king and that His mother still had with her the crown jewels, He decided to seek His fortune.

The Prince was now sixteen years of age. Taking leave of His mother, Prince Mahā Janaka asked permission to set

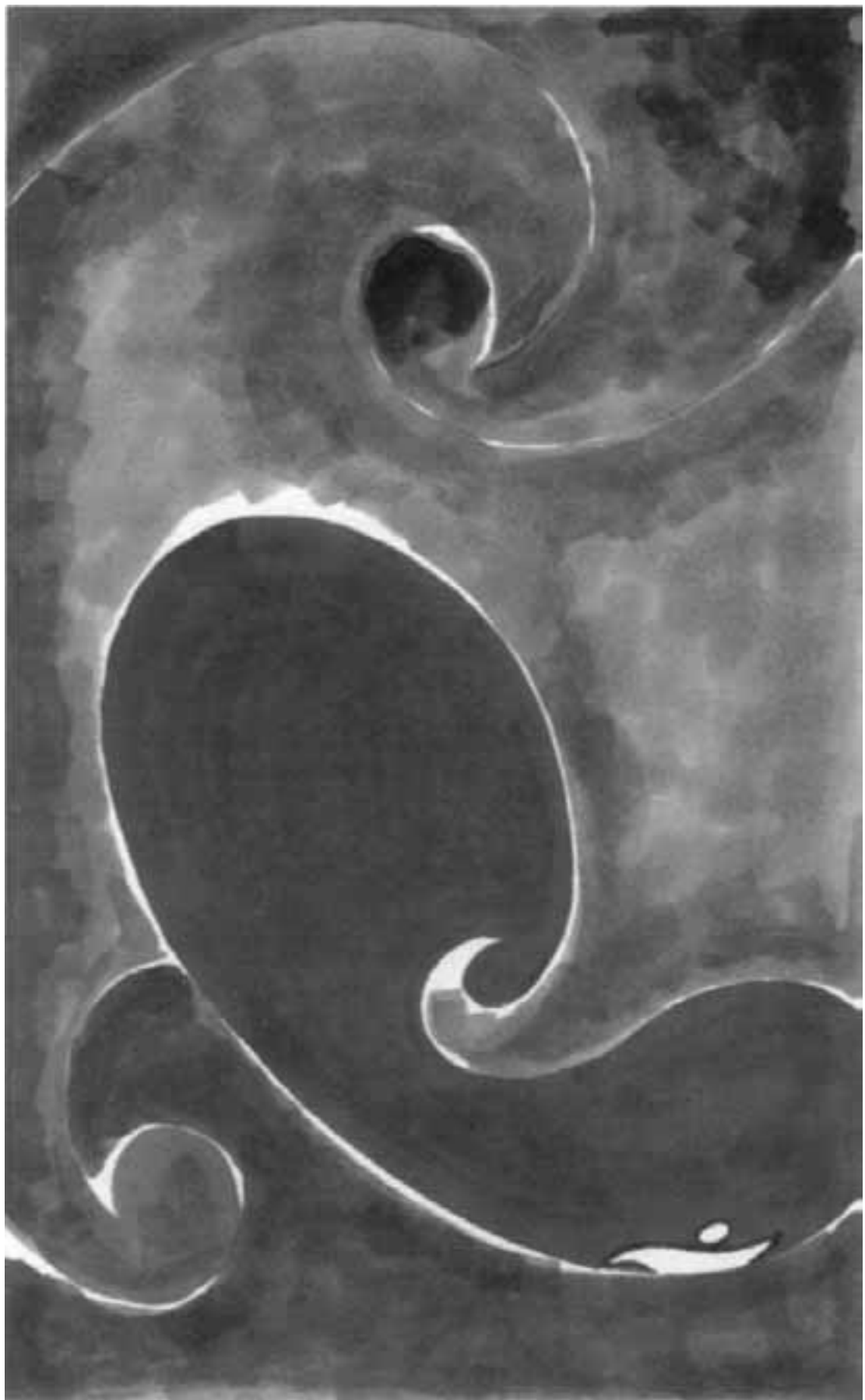
sail as a merchant shipman. His mother gave Him a portion of the crown jewels and bid Him farewell and success. Seven days later the ship encountered difficulties. Rough seas lashed the ship causing it to lurch from side to side. The desperate crew were trying to control the ship when they saw that it was surrounded by giant turtles. The frightened crew were troubled by the unusual sight of such giant creatures. In fear they started praying to the Gods to save them.

The Prince realized that the ship would soon capsize. Urging His crewmates to follow Him, He applied ghee (oil) to His body and ate a meal to sustain Himself. Then, climbing the mast, He dived into the water and swam.

Every muscle in His body ached and His lips were parched. The wind, heat and water had braised His tender skin. The salt water stung while the searing heat of the sun burnt His skin. Seven days had passed — seven days of extreme hardship and effort and He had not yet sighted land. Seeing a distant seagull He made a desperate effort. The last He remembered was dragging His sore body up a sheltered cove.

At about the same time, King Pola of the City of Mithilā was breathing his last. The Old King passed away, after leaving instructions that the next king would be the man that his daughter, Princess Sivali, chose as her husband. Suitor after suitor was brought to the princess, as princes from neighbouring countries came to ask for her hand. But in scorn she refused them all. The desperate ministers started combing the entire country for a suitable match.

Prince Mahā Janaka, who had been nursed by a caring peasant, was resting in a nearby park. Rested and healed, He



was walking slowly among the beautiful blooms when the ministers, attracted by His royal carriage and countenance, approached Him. On learning that He was the son of King Arittha, they dressed Him in royal attire and led Him to the palace. Princess Sivali was transformed at the sight of Prince Mahā Janaka. Running towards Him she held His hand and drew Him into the palace.

In surviving with courage the ordeal of shipwreck for seven days, the Bodhisatta completed the virtue of effort. In completing the virtue of effort, with joy He exclaimed:

*“Far out of sight of land were we
The crew were all but dead of fright
Yet still unruffled was my mind
In courage I’ve perfection reached.”*

6. Patience — Khantivādia Jātaka

Many, many years ago, during the Kāya-panidhāna kāla, our Bodhisatta was born into a priest’s family and, giving up the pleasures of day-to-day life, took to the life of an ascetic. He was well known for His practise of patience, kindness and compassion and also for His skill in teaching others. His real name was soon forgotten and He became known as Khantivādia, the teacher of forbearance. The Bodhisatta lived in a beautiful grotto in a forest, near a clear pond which was fragrant with blue and white lotus flowers.

One hot summer day the king, his wives, and attendants decided to visit the forest in which the Bodhisatta lived. There among the beautiful flowers the king enjoyed the singing, dancing and frolicking of his beautiful wives.



Intoxicated by the beauty of the place and the fragrance of the flowers, the king lay down to relax and enjoy the singing and dancing of his wives. Within a short time he fell asleep, lulled by the soft music and warm sun.

The king's wives, seeing their lord asleep, wandered into the forest in search of fresh merriment. Enchanted by the beauty of the forest, they roamed deeper and deeper in search of exotic flowers. Before long they came to the sweet-scented grotto where the Bodhisatta sat in meditation. On seeing the calm and serene ascetic they sat down around Him and asked Him to share His wisdom with them.

Before long the king awoke to find that his wives and female attendants were missing. Following the trail strewn with flowers and flower petals the princesses had been picking, the king came upon the calm and gentle ascetic surrounded by his wives. He became enraged with jealousy. Unleashing his wrath, he accused the Bodhisatta of misconduct saying, "This man has cast his eyes upon my wives. He only preaches forbearance and compassion. He is a hypocrite." Unsheathing his sword, he advanced to kill the Bodhisatta.

The king's wives then pleaded with him, saying the ascetic had done naught but preach to them the virtues of forbearance and patience. This, however, enraged the king further. Maddened by the thought that his wives were now defending the ascetic, he screamed, "Let us see your practise of forbearance." Swinging his sword, he cut off the outstretched hand of the ascetic. Then, seeing the calm and gentle expression in the eyes of the ascetic, he slashed again and again, cutting off his arms, nose, ears, and feet.

Blood gushed from the Bodhisatta's body and formed a pool around Him. And yet not a word of anger passed His lips. Compassion and pity filled the heart of the Bodhisatta at the folly of the king. Knowing that He was dying, the Bodhisatta forgave the king with calm and patience by saying:

*"Long live the king whose cruel hand,
my body thus has marred.
Pure souls like mine such deeds as these,
with anger ne'er regard."*

The cruel king, however, had to reap the effects of his monstrous deed. A violent earthquake and fearful rumbling thundered through the air as the ground broke open and swallowed him. He died in torment engulfed by the fires of his rage.

Even though the bodily pain under the sword of the cruel king was unbearable, the Bodhisatta retained His calm and patience and felt no anger or malice towards the king. And in so doing, after many, many years of practising patience, He completed the virtue of patience.

7. Truth — Greater Sutasoma Jātaka

Many years ago in the country that we now call India, the Bodhisatta was born into the royal family of the Kauravas. Because of His unusually handsome face the prince was named Sutasoma, which meant "as beautiful as the moon-god Soma". Prince Sutasoma was extremely fond of learning and was renowned for His practise of religion. Before long He outshone His father in wisdom and virtue, whereupon

the king transferred half of the kingdom to his son and made Him heir-apparent. The kingdom was well-governed by the father and son and the people lived in happiness and contentment.

It was a beautiful day in the month of May. The flowers were in bloom, adorning the trees in brilliant hues. Their fragrance and the merrymaking of the princesses attracted the Prince who stepped out of the palace into the royal garden. There, resting beneath a shade-giving tree, He enjoyed the tranquillity and serenity of the garden. A Brahmin, having heard of the Prince's love of religious learning, approached Him and asked His permission to recite some stanzas which he felt the Prince would enjoy. With pleasure, the Prince invited the Brahmin to take a seat beside Him.

Before the Brahmin could speak the peace of the afternoon was shattered. Frightened guards rushed in to announce that Kamashapada the man-eater was storming through the city in search of one hundred princes. Kamashapada, who was king of a small kingdom, had once had the misfortune of tasting human flesh. He so enjoyed the taste that he continued to indulge his craving by killing and eating his subjects. The enraged subjects banded together and vowed to destroy the king. The king ran into the forest and asked for the protection of the Rakshas, a man-eating tribe, in exchange for one hundred princes. Kamashapada was now on a rampage, seeking the princes in order to keep his part of the pact.

The Bodhisatta realized that weapons could not subdue a man who had degraded himself so low as to kill his own subjects to satisfy his craving for human flesh. Instead, He

decided to give Himself up and try to subdue Kamashapada through virtue. Prince Sutasoma walked calmly towards the man-eater and said, "Here I am. Take me and leave my poor subjects unharmed." Seeing the Prince unarmed and on His own, Kamashapada grabbed Him, and throwing Him over his shoulder, carried Him away into the forest.

Kamashapada set down the Bodhisatta in his stronghold amidst the carnage of dead bodies and broken skulls. The place reeked of death. Kamashapada sat back wondering at the beauty and gentleness of Prince Sutasoma.

The Prince at this time was reflecting in sorrow at the missed opportunity of learning as the disaster had struck just as the Brahmin was about to share his wisdom with Him. On hearing the Prince sigh, Kamashapada laughed and asked if He was grieving the loss of His kingdom, wealth, or family. The Bodhisatta then informed him that He grieved not for wealth or family but for the lost opportunity of learning. He then asked permission to go back and hear the words of the Brahmin, promising that He would come back unarmed to Kamashapada's stronghold.

Kamashapada laughed and said, "And what motive would you have for coming back? If I release you, I will lose you." The Bodhisatta, however, insisted that He would come back by saying, "The motive is my word, my promise that I hold sacred. I will not break my promise to you." The man-eater's curiosity was now aroused. He had already captured one hundred princes and could keep the pact even if he lost this Prince. He agreed and set the Bodhisatta free.

The people of the kingdom broke into joyous celebration when they saw the Prince walking back safe and unharmed.

He sent for the Brahmin, and after listening to his wisdom prepared to go back to the stronghold of Kamashapada. The king was horrified and refused to let Him leave, but the Prince was adamant. The king then gathered the army and requested that they accompany the Prince into the forest. But the Prince refused the escort, saying, "I gave him my word. I must go alone and unarmed." Amidst the tears and pleading of His family and subjects, the Prince returned to the stronghold of the man-eater.

When Kamashapada saw the Prince walking towards him unarmed and alone he was surprised and amazed. His curiosity aroused, he said, "I am in no rush to kill you. The funeral pyre still burns. Human flesh tastes best when roasted on glowing embers. So tell me, what was it that was so important that you learned from the Brahmin?"

The Prince then asked him what use the wisdom of virtue would be to one who believed only in evil. The enraged man-eater then ridiculed the Prince for His lack of political wisdom in coming back by saying that only a fool would come back after having been given His freedom. The Prince, however, countered his comments by saying that even more important than political wisdom is righteousness. "I gave you my word. It is more important that I keep my word than that I keep my kingdom."

The subdued and humbled Kamashapada then sat down beside the Bodhisatta and begged Him to teach him the wisdom He had gained. The Bodhisatta agreed to teach him, saying, "It was through your release that I had the happiness of hearing this wisdom. Now share in my happiness." He then repeated the words of the Brahmin:

*“Meet but once a virtuous man
it will suffice to form a lasting friendship,
depending not on further meetings.
From the virtuous keep not thyself remote,
but to follow and honour them, thyself devote.
He who approaches them cannot fail to become like them.
Such persons are like flower dust
giving forth unknowingly the sweet perfume of noble words
and deeds.
The ears of kings with jewels and gold
lose with the jewels their beauty, growing old!
So strong a love of virtue pious men possess
that never does it fade but lives on to bless....”*

Upon hearing these words the heart of the man-eater was suffused with happiness and he offered the Prince four boons. The Bodhisatta then asked for the following boons:

Take the vow of truth.
Cease from injuring living beings.
Free all your prisoners.
Never again partake in human flesh.

Whereupon Kamashapada said, “You can have the first three, but the fourth I cannot give. I cannot give up the taste of human flesh. How can I give up the taste for which I gave up my kingdom?” The Bodhisatta then explained that in not keeping the fourth he had not kept the others either. For after promising a boon he now refused to keep his promise, which in itself was not truth.

With the help of the Bodhisatta, Kamashapada became a changed man. He freed the hundred princes and lived

under the good influence of Prince Sutasoma for a while, after which he went back and reigned in his own kingdom. In keeping His promise to come back, the Bodhisatta completed the virtue of Truth. This is what He said with joy, on completing the virtue of Truth:

*“I kept the promise I had made,
and gave my life in sacrifice.
A hundred warriors set I free.
In Truth have I, perfection reached.”*

It must be said that the virtue of Truth is the highest of the ten virtues for it is the one virtue that a Bodhisatta keeps throughout the Kāya-panidhāna kāla. During this period it is possible for a Bodhisatta to err, as He is still a worldling and subject to wrongdoing; He does not, however, break the precept of Truth. The Seeker of Truth, a Buddha Aspirant, keeps the precept of Truth throughout the entire period, making Truth the most important of the ten virtues.

8. Determination — Mughapakkha Jātaka

Many, many years ago, the City of Benares was ruled by a king of the Mughapakkha caste, named Kasi. As was the custom at that time, the King had a Chief Queen and many other consorts in his court. None of his queens, however, had any children. This was a grave concern to the king and the ministers, as there was no one to carry on the royal lineage.

The Chief Queen, Chandra, who was a very virtuous and generous queen, decided that she would perform many meritorious deeds and pray that she would have a son as a

result of her wholesome actions. She started in earnest to perform acts of generosity and compassion to the poor and needy. Then she aspired that she would have a son resulting from the effects of her good actions.

Before long Queen Chandra gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, who was our Bodhisatta. The joyful king named the baby prince Temiya and offered the queen a boon for having given him a son. The overjoyed queen, deciding that in having a son she had everything she needed, asked the king if she could have her boon at a later date.

From a young age it was apparent that this baby was different from others. He seemed to observe and comprehend all that was happening around Him. The proud father took the baby everywhere, and so it happened that the young Prince witnessed the torture and execution of four persons who were accused and convicted of robbery.

Young as He was, Prince Temiya realized that one day, as king, He too would be expected to punish wrongdoers in this manner. A vision of a previous birth, when as king He had been instrumental in torturing wrongdoers and the resulting birth and torment of 80,000 years in an unhappy realm passed through the young Prince's mind. He knew that He did not want to be a king. But being the only heir to the throne there did not seem to be a way out.

Reflecting thus, the Prince decided that He would need to act in such a manner that the throne would not be given to Him. Pretending to be mute, deaf and mentally incompetent the Prince changed His behaviour. The promise of an heir-apparent slowly faded before the eyes of King Kasi. This child was different. But He was not extraordinarily intel-

ligent and wise as the king had thought. He was, in the eyes of the king, a dumb mute.

The queen tenderly cared for her child, lavishing all her love on the little lost boy who could neither speak nor hear. She bathed Him and fed Him, as it was soon apparent that Prince Temiya was totally incapable of taking care of Himself.

The king, however, was ashamed of his son. Of what use was this son who could never be king? Summoning his charioteer, Sunanda, he commanded him to take the Prince, who was now sixteen years of age, to the cemetery. "Kill Him", said the cruel king, "Kill Him and bury His body. Then bring back the royal jewels that He wears."

Queen Chandra was heart-broken at his words. In tears she reminded the king of the boon he had promised her at the birth of their child. "Let Him live," lamented the queen, "I will take care of Him. Please let Him live." Amidst the pleas of the queen, the young Prince was taken to the cemetery to His death.

Stopping the chariot with the Prince at a suitable place, Sunanda started to dig a grave in preparation of Prince Temiya's death. Prince Temiya then arose from His seat and walked calmly towards Sunanda. At the sound of footsteps Sunanda set aside his spade and turned to behold a radiant and glowing Prince. "I am not a deaf mute," said Prince Temiya, "I had to act that way as my father would never have agreed to let me take the holy life. This is the only way that I could avoid my royal heritage. Take these royal treasures back to the king and queen. Let them know that their son has taken the holy life of an ascetic. Then bring them back to the forest glade where I will dwell."

As requested, Sunanda took the jewels back and consoled the grieving queen by telling her the truth. The king and queen visited their young son who had acted with such conviction and determination to avoid the unwholesome deeds He would have had to perform as king. On hearing their son speak of the effects of wrongdoing and the extremes to which He had gone to in order to avoid wrongdoing, the king changed his ways. He decided to rule his kingdom with righteousness and gave permission for the young Prince to remain in the holy life. On completing the virtue of determination the Bodhisatta declared:

*“It is not that I my parents hate
It is not that I glory detest
But since Omniscience I hold dear
Therefore I kept my firm resolve.”*

9. Loving Kindness — Ekarāja Jātaka

Many years ago, in the kingdom of Kosala, there reigned a King by the name of Dabbamalla. In his court was a trusted minister who, due to a past misunderstanding, was extremely jealous of a neighbouring King named Ekaraja. The minister plotted to destroy King Ekaraja through cunning and deceit. He slowly started to poison King Dabbamalla’s mind by spreading false rumours about King Ekaraja. Before long King Dabbamalla was convinced that King Ekaraja was a greedy, ruthless king who planned to take over his kingdom. King Dabbamalla gathered together his army to destroy King Ekaraja and capture His kingdom.



The Bodhisatta, who was born as King Ekaraja, was a gentle and righteous king who ruled with loving kindness, fairness and compassion, often spending His free time in an adjoining forest deep in meditation. As a result, He had reached the higher spiritual levels known as the Jhānas. The people of His kingdom were happy, gentle people, quite unprepared for warfare. It was therefore very easy for King Dabbamalla to overpower the kingdom and capture King Ekaraja.

With anger and hatred in his heart resulting from the false accusations of his minister, King Dabbamalla bound King Ekaraja's feet and hands and hung Him by His feet on a tree, where he left him to suffer a slow and painful death. Next day he went back to see and enjoy the last moments of King Ekaraja's death.

The King expected to find a tortured, subdued King Ekaraja who would be begging for mercy. Instead, he found a calm and peaceful King deep in meditation. King Ekaraja was meditating a few feet above the ground and radiating peace and serenity. The surprised King Dabbamalla then questioned King Ekaraja as to how He had escaped. King Ekaraja then explained to him the virtues of kindness and compassion, and how He often lived in the forest meditating among wild animals who, because of the compassion He radiated, would never harm Him. On hearing the truth, King Dabbamalla gave King Ekaraja back His kingdom and begged His forgiveness. He then punished his minister severely for his treachery.

Practising compassion to all living beings in earnest, King Ekaraja, the Bodhisatta, completed the virtue of com-

passion. On completing this virtue of compassion He joyously proclaimed:

*“No fear has anyone of me
Nor have I fear of anyone
In my goodwill to all, I trust
And love to dwell in lonely woods.”*

10. Equanimity — Lomahamsa Jātaka

During the Kāya-panidhāna kāla the Bodhisatta, who was still a worldling, committed many unwholesome deeds of which twelve were serious enough for the results to be felt even as the Buddha. Four of these pertained to the insulting of a Pacceka Buddha.⁵ The Bodhisatta, who was struggling for perfection and Buddhahood, had talked down to, or insulted, Pacceka Buddhas through jealousy. The text did not specify to which of the four incidents this related. But as a result of one of these unwholesome deeds, our Bodhisatta was born as an ascetic who practised an extreme form of asceticism. The ascetics in this sect slept in cemeteries among the bones and skulls of dead bodies that had been left to rot, and wore hardly any clothing.

The Bodhisatta, who during this period believed in this extreme form of asceticism, practised these beliefs to the fullest so that the followers of this sect praised Him and honoured Him for His perseverance and dedication. Many

5. A Pacceka Buddha or a Silent Buddha realizes the Truth on His own, but unlike a Supreme Buddha, does not have the ability to teach the Dhamma that He realized to others. A Pacceka Buddha completes the virtues up to about 50% of the level required by a Supreme Buddha and only appears in the world at a time when the teachings of a Supreme Buddha are not present.



others, who did not believe in such extreme forms of asceticism, ridiculed Him for His practise of austerity.

Throughout this period, the Bodhisatta, who was trying to perfect the virtue of equanimity, retained a balanced mind by not reacting to either the praise or insults that He received every day. With equanimity He observed the sensations that arose within Him when He was praised, and forestalled the reaction of craving or attachment to the pleasurable sensation by reflecting on impermanence. Similarly, with equanimity, He observed the sensations that arose when He was ridiculed and insulted, and forestalled the aversion or repulsion to the unpleasant sensation by reflecting on impermanence. In so doing the Bodhisatta, who had practised equanimity in many, many former births, achieved perfection in equanimity and stated thus:

*"I laid me down among the dead
A pillow of their bones I made
While from the village all around
Some came to mock, and some to praise."*

Later the Bodhisatta realized that this form of asceticism was not conducive to His quest for enlightenment. He left this sect and took to the asceticism practised by more moderate sects, where meditation and spiritual development were the goal.

The Supreme Buddha Gotama

In completing the virtue of generosity (in the Vessantara Jātaka), the Bodhisatta completed the ten perfections. At death He was reborn in the Tusita Heaven as a Deva by the



name of Setaketu. And there He remained until the opportune time for His last birth as the Buddha Gotama.

The Bodhisatta observed that the five requirements necessary for His final birth — the right time, the right continent, the right area, the right caste and the right mother — had been met. Passing away from His abode in the Heavens, the Bodhisatta was conceived in the womb of Queen Mahāmāya (consort of King Suddhodana) of Kapilavatthu, who gave birth to a beautiful baby boy named Siddhāttha Gotama.

The Prince led a luxurious but sheltered life. The wise men had predicted that this child would be either a Buddha, who would show the path to the destruction of suffering to mankind and the Gods, or a Universal Monarch. King Suddhodana wanted his son to be a Universal Monarch. With this in mind he ensured that the Prince was shielded from all suffering and sorrow. At the age of sixteen Prince Siddhāttha married His cousin, the beautiful Princess Yasodharā, and led a life of comfort and pleasure.

It was after He saw, for the first time, a sick man in great pain, an old man who was so feeble that he could hardly walk, and the funeral procession of a man amidst his weeping relatives, that the Prince realized the sorrows and suffering faced by mankind. It was after He saw a calm and serene ascetic that the Prince reflected on the merits of a holy life. It was on the full-moon day in the month of July, on the very day that His son was born, that the Prince made the greatest sacrifice. He gave up His kingdom, His wealth and His beloved family to seek the Truth for the welfare of mankind and gods. Prince Siddhāttha was twenty-nine years old when He made the Great Renunciation and took

the simple robes of an ascetic in search of the Truth.

Six years passed. During this period the ascetic Gotama studied under the greatest of teachers in search of the Truth. Before long He accomplished all that His teachers knew. And yet He had not found the path to end suffering. He left His teachers and together with His five friends, practised self-mortification to the fullest in search of the Truth. His body was wasted due to lack of food. His golden skin was darkened and withered. The skin clung to His bones as the fat and muscle melted away. And yet He did not find the path to end all suffering.

The ascetic Gotama left His friends and the practise of self-mortification. He decided that He would seek the Truth and the path to liberation on His own. Seated under the shade-giving branches of a great peepal (*Ficus Religiose*) tree in a beautiful glade surrounded by scented blooms and a fast-flowing stream, He meditated on breathing awareness. Before long, His mind was filled with peace. One by one He attained the Jhānas (mental ecstasies). It was a full-moon day in the month of May in the year 588 B.C. The ascetic Gotama was thirty-five years old.

The moon dips behind a cloud to resurface in its full glory. Its silver light falls upon the compassionate face with half-closed eyes, the raven hair drawn back from His broad forehead. The golden robe is dull in comparison to the glow that emanates from His face and body. The red lips are slightly parted as He concentrates on His breathing. The serene but determined mind. What is He feeling? All alone in this great jungle devoid of any sound. For six years the Noble One has struggled, struggled to realize the Truth.

The silence is palpable. His mind so clear, like a polished

mirror. And then the realization. The realization of the Truth. The tremor that passes over the serene face as He sees His previous births. First one, then two, then five, and ten, and fifty. He gazes in wonder as world cycles unfold before His eyes. How infinite was this *samsāra*? Was there no beginning of time? A shadow crosses His face as He views the effects of *kamma*. The noble and the evil-doers each reaping the effects of their actions. How painful and unsatisfactory was this life? Even the noble, born into happy planes of life, suffered, for all component things were impermanent and subject to change. A gentle smile crosses His face. The Buddha realizes that the cause for birth is delusion (Doctrine of Dependent Origination) and He realizes the knowledge for the elimination of delusion. He also realizes how suffering originated. He understands that if there is no craving, then there will be no suffering. He realizes the Four Noble Truths, including the path to deliverance. For some time He rejoices in His new-found happiness. Then His eyelids flutter open, His lips part as He joyously announces to the world:

*“Thro’ many a birth in existence wandered I.
Seeking but not finding, the builder of this house.
Sorrowful is repeated birth.
O house builder thou art seen.
Thou shall build no house again.
All thy rafters are broken.
Thy ridge pole is shattered.
Mind attains the unconditioned.
Achieved is the end of craving.”*

A brilliant radiance illuminated the world and the ten thousand world systems trembled. He had finally reached His goal, His aspiration. He was the Supreme Buddha Gotama.

After tireless determination, effort and exertion for a period of over 300,000 world cycles interspersed with twenty infinite periods, He had finally realized the Truth. The Supreme Buddha Gotama had finally realized The Doctrine of Dependent Origination and The Four Noble Truths, including the path to the total destruction of suffering, for the benefit of mankind and Gods.

**The Doctrine of Dependent Origination
(Paticca Samuppāda) that the Buddha realized is as follows:**

Dependent on delusion arise conditioning activities (sankhāra).

Dependent on conditioning activities arises rebirth consciousness (viññāna).

Dependent on rebirth consciousness arise mind and matter (nāmarupa).

Dependent on mind and matter arise six sense bases (salāyatana).

Dependent on six sense bases arises contact (phassa). Dependent on contact arises feeling (vedanā).

Dependent on feeling arises craving (tanhā).

Dependent on craving arises grasping (upādāna).

Dependent on grasping arises becoming or action (bhavo).

Dependent on becoming or action arises birth (jāti).

Dependent on birth arise decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa, upāyāsa).

Thus arises the whole mass of suffering. He found that all five aggregates were a mass of suffering.

The Four Noble truths are comprised of the following:

- 1) **Dukkha** The existence of suffering
- 2) **Samudaya** The cause of suffering, craving
- 3) **Nirodha** The absence of suffering, Nibbāna
- 4) **Magga** The path leading to the cessation of suffering,
The Noble Eightfold Path⁶

The Noble Eightfold Path is comprised of the following:

Morality	Right Speech Right Action Right livelihood
Mental Discipline	Right Mindfulness Right Effort Right Concentration
Wisdom	Right Understanding Right Thought

Reflect now on the magnitude of effort and the time span required to be a Buddha. Do not ever compare the Buddha with any other being. A Supreme Buddha is incomparable. Also reflect on how fortunate you are to be born at a time when we still have the teachings of a Buddha. For it took our Bodhisatta 300,000 world cycles and 20 incalculable periods to realize the Truth. His teachings, however, will only be with us for 5,000 years. More than 2,500 years of that period have already passed.

6. The order of the Noble Eightfold Path has been changed for ease of understanding.

*“There is one person born into the world,
Who is unique, without par, without counterpart,
Incomparable, unequalled, matchless, unrivaled,
The noblest among bipeds.
Who is that one person?
It is a Tathāgata (Buddha) who is Arahant,
A Fully Enlightened One.”*

Anguttara Nikāya

*“Whatsoever treasure there be
Either here or in the world beyond, or
Whatsoever precious jewels there be
In the heavens or Brahma realms.
There is none comparable with
The Fully Enlightened One.
With confidence I say,
In the Buddha is this precious jewel
By this Truth, may there be happiness to all.”*

Ratana Sutta





Chapter 2

How will the Dispensation of the Gotama Buddha End and that of the Metteyya Buddha Begin?

One day when the Buddha Gotama was residing in the banyan grove in Kapilavatthu, Venerable Sariputta approached Him and asked the Blessed One about the next Buddha. He said:

*“The hero that shall follow you
As Buddha, of what sort is He?
The account in full, I fain would learn
Declare to me, thou Seeing One.”*

The Buddha then declared:

*“...Our cycle is a happy one
Three leaders (Buddhas) have already lived
Kakusandha, Konagamana and the leader Kassapa.
The Buddha now supreme am I
But after me Metteyya comes
hile still this happy cycle lasts...”*

Anāgata-Vamsa

The Buddha then continued, telling Venerable Sariputta how these events would occur. He said, “After my decease first will be the decline and passing away of my teachings. This will happen in five stages as follows:

1. **The disappearance of the attainments**
2. **The disappearance of the method**
3. **The disappearance of the learning**
4. **The disappearance of the symbols**
5. **The disappearance of the relics.”**

The Disappearance of the Attainments

The Buddha said that after His parinibbāna, only for 1,000 years will the monks be able to acquire the analytical knowledge (Patisambhida), or what we know as Arahantship or deep knowledge. Then, as time goes on, they will only be able to attain Anāgami (Never return). And then only Sakadagami (Once return), and finally, only Sotapanna (Stream enterer). With the death of the last disciple who has attained Sotapanna, the attainments will disappear.

The Disappearance of the Method

The Buddha then said that His disciples, unable to realize **the mental absorptions, the insights, the paths and the fruits**, will keep only the four purities of conduct (Catu-pārisuddhi sila).

1. **Restraint with regard to the disciplinary code for monks (pātimokka-samvara-sila)**

2. **Restraint of the senses** (Indriya-samvara-sila)
3. **Purity with regard to one's livelihood** (ājiva-pārisuddhi-sila)
4. **Morality with regard to the four requisites** (Paccaya-sannissita-sila)

Then, as time goes on, they will only keep the discipline of the four deadly sins (pārājika).

1. Refraining from sexual conduct
2. Refraining from taking that which is not given to them
3. Refraining from killing human beings
4. Refraining from claiming to have attained the four spiritual levels

When the last monk has broken the precepts, or dies, the method will have disappeared.

The Disappearance of the Learning

As long as the texts of the tri-pitaka — Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma — which constitute the word of the Buddha are with us, the disappearance of learning will not have occurred. But as time goes on there will be irreligious kings and courtiers of base extraction, and others in positions of authority (in governments) who will be irreligious. Then the country people throughout the kingdom will be irreligious. The country will not prosper, there will be drought and other hardship with famine and scarcity of

food. The devotees will gradually stop providing the four requirements to the monks (Sangha): robes, alms, support for the sick, and dwelling places. The pious, not receiving the requirements, will not enter the order (Sangha), and the learned will not teach their knowledge to the novices. Learning will slowly disappear.

When the learning disappears it will be the great work, the Abhidhamma, which will first disappear, starting with the Patthāna, the Yamaka, the Katha-vatthu, the Puggala-paññatti, the Dhatu-kathā, and so on. When the Abhidhamma Pitaka has disappeared, the Sutta Pitaka will disappear. First the Anguttara Nikāya, then the Samyutta Nikāya, the Majjhima-Nikāya, the Digha Nikāya, and so on. Only the Jātaka stories will be remembered. Then, slowly, the Jātaka stories will disappear, first the Vessantara Jātaka, then the Apannaka Jātaka, and so on until all of the Jātaka are forgotten. Then the people will only remember the Vinaya Pitaka. And then slowly the Vinaya Pitaka will disappear. So long as four lines of the Dhamma remain the learning will be with us. But when the people are unable to recall four lines of a stanza of the Dhamma, then the learning will disappear.

The Disappearance of the Symbols

Without the learning the monks will deteriorate and take on the ways of ascetics. They will discard the robe and have but a yellow strip of cloth which they will wear tied around their neck, their ear, their hair, etc. They will take to a trade and the support of a wife and children. As time goes on they will give up even this symbol of the Sangha, discard

the yellow cloth and take to the killing of birds and animals. When this happens the symbols will have disappeared.

The Disappearance of the Relics

U pon the dispensation of the Buddha being 5,000 years old, the relics of the Buddha will fail to receive due honour and respect. Eventually they will not receive honour and respect in any place. The relics from all over, the world of men, Gods and Brahma, will congregate together under the great Bodhi tree at Buddha Gaya where He attained enlightenment. They will form an effigy of the Buddha and perform a miracle resembling the twin miracle and will teach the doctrine. Not a single human being will be found at that place, but the Gods from ten thousand worlds will come and listen to the doctrine. Many thousands of them will attain the doctrine. And these will cry aloud, "The One possessing the ten forces will pass into Nibbāna." Then they will weep, saying, "From henceforth we shall be in darkness." Then the relics will put forth flames and burn up the effigy with no remains. Thus will be the disappearance of the relics.

In this way, within 5,000 short years, in less than 2,500 more years, the Buddha Sasana of the Gotama Buddha will pass away.

The Advent of the Metteyya Buddha

T here will then come a time when the human life span will be about ten years. Maidens of five years will be of marriageable age. Among such humans the taste of butter, sugar

and salt will disappear. Kudrusa grain will be the highest kind of food. Among such men the ten moral courses of conduct will disappear, and the ten immoral codes of conduct will flourish. Just as today homage is paid to the wise, the pious and the noble, at this time homage will be paid to the ignoble. Among such humans there will be no bar to inter-marriage with mother, with mother's sister, etc. Mankind will fall into promiscuity like goats, sheep, fowl and swine.

Among such humans enmity will be the rule. Passionate thoughts, even of killing a mother, a child, a brother, a sister will occur just as sportsmen today revel in the hunting of animals. Among such humans will arise a sword period of seven days when they will fight and kill each other as wild beasts.

With time the people of this era will slowly realize the folly of their behaviour. They will become good and abstain from slaughter. Over an exceedingly long time their life span will slowly increase so that they who lived for a decade will have descendants who will live for twenty years. As the virtues of the people increase, so will the life span to 80, 160, 320, 640, 2,000, 4,000, 8,000, 20,000 and 40,000 years. And then a time will come when the human life span will be 80,000 years. Maidens will be marriageable at 500 years. There will be only three kinds of disease: desire (Leecha), hunger (Anasana), and decay (Jarā). This 'India' will be mighty and prosperous. The villages, towns and cities will be close to each other. Among such humans, Benares (Vāranāsi of present), will be named Ketumati, a royal city, mighty and prosperous, full of people crowded and well fed. There will be 84,000 towns with Ketumati as the royal city. A righteous

king named Sankha will reign over Ketumati. He will live in supremacy having conquered all by righteousness rather than by the sword.

At that time there will arise in the world an Exalted One by the name of Metteyya, a Fully Awakened One abounding in wisdom and goodness, a teacher of Gods and men. The Truth, beautiful in its origin, beautiful in its progress, beautiful in its consummation, will be proclaimed by Him. The higher life will be made known to the world just as now it has been made known to us by the Buddha Gotama. The Buddha Metteyya will be accompanied by thousands of monks, nuns and disciples.

King Sankha will reconstruct the great fairy palace that King Panada had built (said to be under the Ganges in Payāga). He will dwell there and later give it away to the recluse ascetics and Brahmins. And he himself will give up his wealth and kingdom and wear the yellow robes under the Exalted One, Metteyya.

The era of the Metteyya Buddha is in this same Mahā kappa (world cycle) as ours. The next Buddha, the Buddha Rama, will appear only after 100,000 world cycles, after the passing away of the Buddha Metteyya's dispensation. We live in a very fortunate period known as a Mahā Bhadda Kappa. In this Mahā Bhadda Kappa four Buddhas have already reigned; the dispensation of the Buddha Metteyya is yet to come.

It is opportune at this point to find out who will not see (with certainty) and who will see the Buddha Metteyya. We can then with effort perform good deeds and aspire to see and hear the beautiful teachings of the Buddha Metteyya

and attain Nibbāna during His reign.

According to the Anāgata-Vamasa Desanā, those who have caused disharmony in the Sangha (like Devadatta), as well as others born in Avichi hell as a result of committing the five grave sins will not see the Metteyya Buddha, as they will remain in Avichi hell for the entire Mahā kappa or world cycle (the life span in the Avichi hell is longer than a Mahā kappa). Those who cherish wholly heretical views and those who slander the noble (Ariya) disciples shall not see Him.

All other beings who give gifts (dāna), keep the precepts, keep fast days, fulfill their religious duties, build shrines, and for the good of many build parks, groves, highways and wells, shall see Him. Those who in their longing for a Blessed One shall offer a gift of flowers, a lamp or a single mouthful of food, shall see Him. Those who feel pleasure in meritorious deeds shall see Him. Those who further the religion of the Buddha shall see Him. Those who make offerings to the Sangha shall see Him. Those who wait on their mothers and fathers and perform respectful duties to their elders shall see Him. And those who strive with effort when they have listened to the doctrine of the Blessed One, Metteyya, will attain Arahantship.

Then the Buddha Gotama gave the names of the next ten future Buddhas. He proclaimed:

*“Metteyya excellent, Rama,
Pasenadi Kosala, Abhibhu
Dighasoni and Samkacca,
Subha, and the Brahman Todeyya.
Nalāgiri, Paraleyya.*

*These ten are future Buddhas now
And in due course, in time to come
Wisdom supreme shall they attain."*

These ten Bodhisattas received the definite prophecy from the Buddha Gotama and will in the distant future attain enlightenment with certainty. With the exception of the Metteyya Buddha who has completed the ten perfections and awaits the opportune time in the Tusita heaven, the others are now practising the ten perfections in earnest in preparation for Buddhahood.

(When I sent the draft copy of this book to Sri Lanka for my mother to read, she asked me why I encouraged my students to aspire to reach Nibbāna during the time of the Metteyya Buddha. Why not now? And she is correct.) We strive on and aspire to Nibbāna now, but we do so in a realistic way. In fact, the difference between Buddhism and most other religions is that the Buddhist goal of Nibbāna can be attained in this life, while the goal of heavenly birth (which is the goal of most other religions) can be achieved only at death. Buddhists are at an advantage. One cannot say for sure what happens after death. Does one really go to heaven or hell? One has to rely on the words of others with saddhā (confidence through study and understanding). Nibbāna, however, is achieved prior to death. As such we have the documented teachings of the Buddha and the Arahants who achieved Nibbāna and experienced it before they died. The Buddha said:

*"As long as my disciples lead a pure, religious life,
so long will the world never become empty of Arahants."*

Dhammapada 151

However, the Buddha did not sugarcoat His teachings to make things look easy. He always spoke the Truth and showed us the way things really are. I have sometimes heard ignorant persons joke in a derogatory manner of a religious person saying, “If he continues in this way he will be an Arahant,” or, “Why are you so bent on religious activity? Are you trying to be an Arahant?” It is not easy to be an Arahant. Even the great Arahants take a period of about 100,000 world cycles to reach perfection. There may be among us some who have completed the virtues who will achieve Nibbāna in this life and there may be some who will reach the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. The Buddha predicted that there would be Arahants for only about the first 1,000 years of His dispensation.

It is easiest to achieve enlightenment during and shortly after the time of a Buddha. This is because a Supreme, Fully Enlightened Buddha, having realized the bliss of Nibbāna through His own efforts, can explain the path best. Arahants who achieve the bliss of Nibbāna by following the teachings of a Supreme Buddha, can in turn explain the path, as they have realized the Truth themselves. These enlightened beings are now in a position to explain that which they have experienced. And they have done so during their lifetime through their own effort. It is not like birth in heaven that happens after death and is hearsay. Those who have completed the virtues tend to be born at the time of a Buddha, for they have performed the meritorious deeds required for enlightenment, and with a little instruction from a Buddha or an Arahant and diligent practise, can achieve Nibbāna.

I have often marvelled at those who attained enlightenment after hearing just four lines of the Dhamma. I have read these same lines over and over, analyzed them and tried to practise them to the best of my ability, but I know that I have not as yet developed my mind to the level required for realization. The truth is that for the majority of us, this is the training period. Now is the time to practise the virtues and follow the path diligently. Some of us may attain our goal in this birth. But the rest of us need to strive on with diligence so that we too may be able to achieve Nibbāna at the time of the Buddha Metteyya, with a little instruction and practise.

Some of you may be discouraged when you visualize or understand for the first time the concept of samsāra. You might think, “How long is this samsāra? How difficult is the attainment of Nibbāna? What hope is there? How can I ever reach Nibbāna?” Samsāra, the cycle of birth and death, is infinite. The Buddha, with His infinite vision, could see no beginning. You know now how far back the Buddha traced His life. In fact, He went much further back in search of a beginning, and each time He went back through an infinite period, He saw the flux of life weaving its way throughout the entire period.

He went back another infinite period only to find the flux of life weaving its way during the entire period. The Buddha then said:

*“Inconceivable is the beginning of samsāra.
A first beginning of beings who wander on in samsāra,
Bonded by ignorance and fettered by craving cannot be seen.*

*But despite this fact, there is suffering
(due to the impermanence of phenomena).
Divert your energy instead to the destruction of suffering,
For the destruction of suffering is within your reach."*

Our past in samsāra is infinite. Our future in samsāra too will be infinite if we do not try now. The Buddha was a human being, a remarkable human being, but nevertheless a human being. And He realized the truth by His own effort with no divine intervention, assistance or prayer. He assured us that by following the path He has shown us, we too, like Him, can succeed. The Buddha said:

*"...If you also will strive unceasingly
You too will in time attain the highest goal of bliss."*

Countless people followed His path and attained Arahantship. Look at the alternative. Giving up will not change samsāra. The ostrich hides its head in the sand thinking it will not be seen because it feels it has no alternative. We have an alternative. We live in a very fortunate period. Within this same world cycle in one of the succeeding intra-æon (antokappa), the Buddha Metteyya will reign. All of us have performed the wholesome (good) deeds required to see the Buddha Metteyya. Now let us strive on with diligence so that we too can achieve the bliss of Nibbāna during His dispensation. Let us strive on with diligence, for the era of the future Buddha Rama is more than 100,000 world cycles away.

Summary of the Era

Era	Duration
The era prior to the mano-panidhāna kāla (Mental aspiration)	Unknown
The mano-panidhāna kāla (Era of mental aspiration)	100,000 world cycles interspersed with 7 infinite periods
The vaci-panidhāna kāla (Era of verbal aspiration)	100,000 world cycles interspersed with 9 infinite periods
The kāya-panidhāna kāla (Era of action)	100,000 world cycles interspersed with 4 infinite periods
Total period	Over 300,000 world cycles interspersed with 20 infinite periods
Dispensation of the Buddha Gotama	5,000 years
Advent of the Buddha Metteyya	Succeeding anto-kappa of this world cycle
Advent of the future Buddha Rama	100,000 world cycles after the dispensation of the Metteyya Buddha





Chapter 3

Was the Buddha a Saviour?

*"You yourself should make the effort
The Tathagatas (Buddhas) are only teachers
Those who enter the path and are meditative
Are delivered from the bonds of Māra (death)."*

To answer this question we first need to understand the meaning of the word saviour because our answer would depend on the definition of the word. I looked in Webster's dictionary for the meaning of the word and found that a saviour is one who saves others from danger and destruction, one who brings salvation, and then there was the single word, Jesus.

In the context of religion a saviour is a person who, by his own abilities, saves others from destruction. The dictionary had the word Jesus under saviour because Christians believe that God sent Jesus to earth as a saviour, and that those who believe in His teachings and believe in God will go to heaven after their death. In other words, they will be saved by God in that they will be taken to heaven, where they believe life is eternal, by the grace of God. To be saved one must believe in God. God has the ability to save anyone, provided they believe in Him and have faith in Him.

The Buddha was residing in Savatthi when He helped a youth to understand the reason for the varied levels of spiritual development of the devotees who visited His Dhamma halls daily. Every evening a young man visited the Buddha

and listened to His Dhamma, but never put His teachings into practise. After a few years the young man approached the Buddha and said, “Sir, I have a question that has raised some doubts in my mind.” The Buddha replied, “There should be no doubts regarding the Dhamma. What is your question?”

The young man then said that he had been coming to listen to the Buddha, to His Dhamma hall, for many years. He had observed that some of the devotees, monks, and nuns were obviously liberated. Some others had experienced some change in their lives for they were better than they had been before; and yet there were some others, like himself, who had not changed for the better. He went on to explain that people came to the Buddha because He was fully enlightened, compassionate, and powerful. He then asked, “Why do you not use your power to liberate them all?”

The Buddha then asked the young man from which city he came. The youth replied that he was originally from Rājagaha, but that he had been living in Sāvattthi for many years. The Buddha then questioned him if he still had ties in Rājagaha. The young man said that he did. He said that he had many relatives there, that he still conducted business in Rājagaha, and that he visited the city often. The Buddha then questioned if he was familiar with the road between Sāvattthi and Rājagaha. The youth replied that he knew it so well that he could walk the distance blindfolded. The Buddha then asked if others asked him for directions when they had to visit Rājagaha and if he helped them when they did. The youth answered that many people had questioned him on the directions and that, having nothing to hide, he had given detailed directions to Rājagaha. “These people,”

said the Buddha, “to whom you give detailed instruction, do they all reach Rājagaha?” The man replied that not all of them reached Rājagaha, and that it was only those who traversed the entire path who reached Rājagaha.

The Buddha then gently explained to the youth that there were many who came to Him to learn the path to Nibbāna because He had realized the Truth and found the path to liberation. “And because I have nothing to hide, I explain the path to them in detail. They listen to me carefully, but many do not walk the path to liberation. At most, with love and compassion, I can show you the path to liberation. I cannot carry anyone on my shoulders. Nobody can. Each step you take brings you closer to your destination. But you have to make the effort. You have to take the steps. He who has taken a hundred steps is a hundred steps closer to the goal. He who has taken all the steps has reached the final goal. The compassionate Buddhas show you the path. You have to exert yourself and walk the path.”

*With this beautiful explanation, the Buddha illustrated a fundamental concept of Buddhism. The Buddha was not a saviour. There is no saviour in the Buddha’s teaching. No God, Deva, or Brahma can liberate a person. The Supreme Buddhas are compassionate teachers who have, over countless years, perfected themselves and realized the Truth in order to teach the path to men and Gods. **You are your own saviour.***

The Buddha’s compassion was infinite. We now know the effort and struggle He faced to free mankind from suffering; the struggle for perfection over æons of time; the sacrifice of His liberation for the good of mankind at the time of the Dipankara Buddha. In fact, each morning the Buddha

surveyed the world with compassion, seeking out suffering persons whom He could help. This is how the great poet Rabindranath Tagore describes the Buddha's early morning seeking out of suffering humanity:

*"May my heart lend its ear to every cry of pain,
as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.
Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain,
before I have wiped it off from the sufferer's eye.
But let each burning human tear
drop on my heart and there remain,
nor ever be brushed off until the pain
that caused it is removed."*

And yet the Buddha, who was often referred to as The Compassionate One, said, "I cannot carry anyone on my shoulders. Nobody can." Why could not the Buddha carry anyone on His shoulders?

To answer this question we need to examine the Law of Kamma — the law of cause and effect — that the Buddha realized on the day He attained enlightenment. The Buddha said:

*"All living beings have their kamma (intentional actions) as
their own,
their inheritance, their congenital cause,
their kinsmen, their refuge.
It is kamma that differentiates
beings into low and high states."*

Majjhima Nikāya — Chulla Kamma Vibhanga Sutta

He said that the cause of differences between human beings was a result of their kamma. In other words, the ones who

died young and the ones who lived a long life, the sick and the healthy, the plain and the beautiful, the poor and the rich, the low-born and the high-born, the dull and the intelligent, are all reaping the effects of their past unwholesome and wholesome intentional actions. Some of these past actions may have been in the present life but some of them would be in past lives, for kamma takes effect at the opportune moment.

The Buddha said that every effect has a cause. The effect is a short life, the cause is the killing of living beings or shortening of the lives of others. The effect is longevity, the cause is compassion and the abstinence from killing. The effect is poverty, the cause is miserliness. The effect is wealth and prosperity, the cause is generosity. We are unable to see the cause of our effects as we cannot look into our past lives, and as such cannot understand why misfortunes should happen to the innocent. Why would an innocent baby be born deformed? Why did someone who was generous and kind have a horrible, painful death? The Buddha, in the second watch of the night on the day He attained enlightenment, saw with His developed mind the cause of the effects. He saw persons being born in happy and in unhappy planes of life depending on their good and bad intentional actions. He realized and understood the law of kamma or the law of cause and effect.

Isaac Newton, in his third law of physics, states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Over two thousand five hundred years ago the Buddha realized that every moral and immoral intentional action has a reaction. The reaction He called the effect, the intentional action the cause.

Unlike the Arahants who had limited vision into past

lives, the Buddha's vision was infinite. He could see back into an infinite number of years and link the cause to the effect. Thus the Buddha could see that even the extremely long life spans in the heavens came to an end. Similarly, He could see that the life spans in the unhappy worlds, some of which lasted a Mahākappa, also came to an end. He could also see that birth in the heavens or hells was not directed by a divine hand. It was directed by one's own intentional good and bad actions. There was no divine hand that reached out and took a person to heaven or hell. There was no divine hand that could save a person from his own kamma. Where there is an effect there is a cause. And the cause is our very own intentional actions.

The Buddha also saw that kamma is not fatalism or a doctrine of predestination. The past influences the present. The past and present influence the future. We cannot change the past, but we can change the present. And by changing the present, we can change the future. The Buddha saw that it was you, and only you, who could change your kamma. The Buddha said:

*"By oneself is evil done
By oneself is one defiled
By oneself is evil avoided
By oneself is one purified
Purity and impurity depend on oneself
No one can purify another."*

As such, one could always improve one's inheritance.

*"Just as the concentration of salt in a bucket of salty water
can be diluted by adding pure water"*

*So can the evil actions you have performed
be diluted by pure actions."*

The Buddha was also very clear in His opinion of prayers for salvation. When Vasettha questioned Him on praying for salvation, this is what the Buddha said:

"Vasettha, it is just as if this river Aciravati were brimful of water and a man should come along wishing to cross over, to get to the other side, to get across, and standing on this bank, were to call out: "Come here, other bank, come here!" What do you think, Vasettha? Would the other bank of the River Aciravati come over to this side on account of that man's calling, begging, requesting or wheedling?"

"No, Reverend Gotama."

"Similarly, no amount of prayers will free one from samsāra."

The Buddha could see that birth in the heavens and hells was not directed by a divine hand. He could see the law of cause and effect in operation. **Just as birth in the heavens and hells was dependent upon one's good and bad actions, He could see that salvation was possible only through one's own striving.**

If one looks around one can see that the prayers of many a pious person are left unanswered. Is this because of an omnipotent, compassionate God's will or is this because, as the Buddha said, of the futility of prayer when the law of kamma is in effect?

This teaching is also confirmed when one takes examples from incidents from the life of the Buddha. The Buddha could not save the Sakyans from destruction when Prince

Vidudabha decided to invade and destroy the Sakyan race. The Buddha forestalled their destruction twice by meditating calmly at the entrance to the city. However, when He looked into the past lives of the Sakyan royalty He realized that He would not be able to prevent this disaster. In a previous birth the Sakyans had destroyed a village by poisoning a well. The effect had to take place at the opportune time. In the third attempt Vidudabha successfully destroyed the Sakyan clan. He and his men in turn met their death by being swept away by a flood. Similarly, persons such as Santati and Putigatta Tissa, who attained enlightenment after hearing just four lines of the Dhamma, were not saved by the Buddha. When looking into their past lives it is clear that they had laid the foundation for the attainment by striving diligently and performing meritorious acts in previous lives. Every one of them attained Arahantship through his own effort.

The Buddha was very clear about His role. He was a teacher. He never claimed to be a saviour. Neither did He believe in the possibility of salvation by Divine Powers. One cannot achieve Arahantship by believing in the Buddha; one cannot gain liberation or go to a permanent heaven by being inspired by His teachings. It is through your effort that you gain salvation. The Buddhas show you the path to salvation. You then have to follow the path with diligence. He who has taken a hundred steps will be a hundred steps closer to Nibbāna. He who has traversed the entire path will attain Nibbāna.

*“Do not depend on others for your salvation
Develop your self-confidence to gain it.”*

Majjhima Nikāya



Chapter 4

What are the three salient truths that the Buddha realized about the nature of all conditioned phenomena?

“O Monks, whether there is the appearance of Perfected Ones or there is not the appearance of Perfected Ones, there is this established condition of Dhamma, this fixed law of Dhamma.

*All conditioned phenomena are impermanent, sorrowful, and not self
A perfected one who has fully awakened
is one who fully understands.*

*He then declares, expounds, and explains that
all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, sorrowful, and not self.”*

Anguttara Nikāya

All Conditioned Phenomena are Impermanent *(Anicca)⁷*

The Buddha said that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent. When we look around us we can see that death comes to all living things. We can see our friends and relatives die, we can see the death of animals and plants over

7. For ease of understanding, the order of the three, Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta, has been changed to Anicca, Anatta, Dukkha.

time. However, it is not only living things that are impermanent, even inanimate objects have a life span. We can see that over time everything deteriorates and decomposes. In actual fact, at every moment material form changes so that what something was a moment ago is not the same as what it is a moment later. The perception, however, is that the form remains the same. Even objects that seem permanent such as granite rocks are eroded slowly by wind, sand and rain. Our vision is limited to our life span; as such, some things we know are impermanent because during our life span we can see that they change. Some others we know have changed by applying scientific methods. For example, we know that over time the earth has changed, lush forest lands have turned into deserts and ice lands have melted.

Some things, however, may appear permanent because our vision is limited to a period of time. But the Buddha had unlimited vision into the past and future. He could see into countless past births and He realized that everything was impermanent. Everything aged, decayed, and was finally destroyed. World systems evolved and then were destroyed. The extremely long life spans in the heavens which amounted to millions of earth years too came to an end, just as the life span of beings in some of the unhappy planes, which lasted over a Mahā kappa, came to an end. To these beings it seemed as if life was eternal. But this was only because of the limits of their vision. The Buddha, with His developed mind, saw that all conditioned phenomena were impermanent.

One day a young man approached the Buddha and asked Him:

“Pray tell me, Lord, is there any body, feeling, perception, activity, or consciousness that is permanent, stable by nature, lasting, unchanging, like unto the eternal, so that it will stand fast?”

The Buddha then picked up a pinch of dust on the tip of His fingernail and said to the young man:

“Even this much material form, brother, is not permanent, stable, eternal, by nature unchanging, like unto the eternal, so that it will stand fast.”

“If even this much material form, brother, were unchanging, then the living of the holy life for the total destruction of suffering would not be set forth. But inasmuch as even this much material form is not permanent, stable, eternal, by nature unchanging, therefore the living of the holy life for the total destruction of suffering is set forth.”

All Conditioned Phenomena are Not Self

— Devoid Of A Permanent Soul (Anatta)

“Monks, if there is some entity which is permanent, lasting, eternal, not liable to change, that would stand fast like unto the eternal, take hold of it. But monks, do you see such an entity?”

“No, Lord.”

“Good monks, neither do I.”

“Monks, if there is a theory of permanent soul, grasping to which does not bring about grief, suffering, anguish, lamentation and despair, grasp onto it. But monks, do you see such a theory of soul?”

“No, Lord.”

“Good monks, neither do I.”

Majjhima Nikāya

The “Anattalakkana Sutta” (The Sutta on no permanent soul) was the second discourse that the Buddha taught. It was after hearing this sutta that the five monks — Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji — attained Arahanthship. The theory of no permanent soul is difficult to understand. The belief in a self is deep-rooted and difficult to shake. In His teachings the Buddha referred to self as “I”. He did this because one has to use the word “I” or a name or some terms of reference to identify a person. Without it the Buddha would not have been able to explain many of His teachings. However, He did not believe that in reality there was a permanent, unchanging individual called “I” or “self”. He explained this theory in the “Anattalakkana Sutta” so that the spiritually advanced would be able to understand this important concept.

Even after this lesson, the understanding you will have is an intellectual grasping of the subject (anubodha). It is superficial, not a deep understanding. Real understanding is called penetration, or pativedha. This understanding or realization (seeing for yourself) is possible only through insight (Vipassanā) meditation. This penetration of the understanding of not self is included in Right Understanding in the Noble Eightfold Path. Penetration, or complete understanding, will only be reached with the attainment of Sotapanna, the first stage of sainthood. However, friends who have made Vipassanā meditation a part of their daily life over a number of years have assured me that a glimpse of the Truth is realizable for everyone who practises Vipassanā meditation.

This theory, though difficult, is very important because

when one understands that there is no “self”, no “I”, the word “selfishness”, the word “mine”, become meaningless. It is this selfishness, or greed, or craving for oneself that we, as Buddhists, are trying to eradicate. When one truly understands the theory of no self it is much easier to be selfless and compassionate, much easier to eradicate craving (*tanhā*). Understanding this principle will help you to practise better the Noble Eightfold path, which is the path that destroys suffering by eradicating craving, aversion, and delusion.

Let us all go on a mental journey to the fork of the rivers in downtown Winnipeg. We look over the downtown bridge, at the Red River. I point to the river and ask you, “What is that?” You tell me that it is the Red River. We have given the river a name so that we can identify it. Next, we all look at one point in the river, the point that is in line with the boat moored at the bank. I ask you to look at that body of water near the boat and ask you, “What is that body of water?” You tell me that it is the Red River. Five minutes later I point to the same spot and ask you the same question. Again you tell me that it is the Red River.

We will now examine the body of water to which I was referring. The body of water that I pointed out five minutes ago is not the same as the body of water I just pointed out to you. Another body of water has replaced the first because the first body of water flowed down the river. In fact, at every second the body of water is changing. As we speak, the body of water is continuously being replaced with another, and another, body of water. If we took a sample of water from the spot we were looking at and checked it under a microscope we would see that the water has changed. If we compared

two samples we would find that different organisms are living in the second sample that were not there in the first. Yet we still call it by the same name. We still call it the Red River. In truth, however, it is not the same river that it was five minutes ago. It is not even the same river it was five seconds ago. In fact, at every second it changes to a completely different body of water — the same name for an ever-changing body of water.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, this body that we call “I”, or “self”, is also like the ever-changing river. It is an ever-changing body of matter and mind. At every second, that of which we are composed changes. The change, however, is not visible to the eye. We are in an ever-changing process just like the river. The only difference is that the change is not visible to the eye.

The eye can deceive. Sunlight is white to the naked eye. But is it really white? No, it is made up of a rainbow of colours. If I take a torch like the Olympic torch and move it in a circle at great speed, you will see a circle of flame. But is there really a circle of flame? No, there is not. Is it correct then to say that something is stationary or solid because we perceive it in that way? Could it be possible that movement is occurring so fast that it is creating an illusion of a permanent self?

I have in my hand a bowl full of Red River water. I lower the bowl and show it to you and ask you what is in this bowl? You tell me water. I then ask of you children who study science to look into the bowl to look at the composition of the water. I then ask you again what is this water made of? You tell me H₂O. It is the same bowl of water; we just examined

it more closely. First we looked at the bowl superficially and said there was water in it. Next we looked deeper into the make-up of the water and said H_2O because water is made up of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. With the naked eye we cannot see the H_2O , but those who have the proper instruments can see the breakdown of this water.

A few years ago an American by the name of Donald Glaser received the Nobel Prize for Physics because he invented a machine to measure the number of times a sub-atomic particle changed in one second. He called his instrument the bubble chamber and found that in one second a sub-atomic particle arises and vanishes 10^{22} times. It was already known to scientists that these particles which make up **all** substances arise and pass away with great rapidity. The invention of the bubble machine quantified their knowledge.

Over 2,500 years ago the Buddha realized this Truth. He realized that at every moment the matter that comprised what we call “self”, changed. The physical reality changed constantly, at every moment. Through insight meditation and a concentrated mind, He penetrated deeply into His own nature and realized that the entire material structure is made up of sub-atomic particles which are continuously arising and vanishing. “In the blinking of an eye”, He said, “these particles are arising and passing away many trillions of times.” Unbelievable as it seems, this body which appears to be solid and permanent is in actual fact composed of sub-atomic particles that are changing at every second.

We will now study the make-up of this body that we call “self”, just as we did with the water. According to the teachings of the Buddha, the body is comprised of five

components to which He referred as processes, as they are constantly changing. Four of them are mental and one is physical.

Let us begin with matter, which is the physical aspect. Superficially one can control one's body. It moves and acts according to one's wishes. But on another level the internal organs operate without our knowledge. At a subtler level we know nothing about the biochemical reactions occurring within each cell of the body. Ultimately this seemingly solid body is comprised of sub-atomic particles and empty spaces. And even these sub-atomic particles have no solidity because their existence span is less than a trillionth of a second. Particles continuously arise and vanish, passing in and out of existence like a flow of vibrations. This is the ultimate Truth that the Buddha realized over 2,500 years ago. He found that the entire material universe was comprised of sub-atomic particles called Kalapas (in Pāli), or indivisible units. These units exhibit in endless vibration the basic qualities of matter: mass, cohesion, temperature and movement. They combine to form structures that seem to have some permanence, but in fact, these miniscule Kalapas are in a state of continuous arising and passing away, a state of continuous flux. This is the body which we call "myself".

Along with the physical process there is the mental process: the mind. We have even less control over our minds than we have over our body. How difficult it is to control our conscious mind. How often it wanders. The unconscious mind is completely beyond our power of understanding. As He examined the body the Buddha also examined the mind. He realized that it was comprised of four processes:

consciousness (Viññāna), perception (Saññā), sensation (Vedanā), and volitional formations/responses (Sankhāra).

The first process, consciousness, is the receiving part of the mind. It simply registers the occurring of any phenomena. It notes the raw data of experience without assigning labels or making value judgements.

The second mental process, perception, identifies what has been registered. It distinguishes the raw data, evaluates and categorizes them into positive and negative.

Then sensation arises. So long as input is not evaluated, sensation remains neutral. But once the input has been evaluated, the sensation becomes pleasant or unpleasant depending on the evaluation. Because of ignorance and craving if the sensation is pleasant, a wish forms to prolong it. If the sensation is unpleasant, the mind responds by pushing it away, to stop it.

With the pleasant and unpleasant sensations, volitional response occurs — the volitional response of the mind to prolong a pleasant sensation or to stop an unpleasant sensation. Only after a response has been repeated many times does awareness develop in the conscious mind. Some of these volitional responses then lead to kamma (intentional moral and immoral actions).

These four mental functions are even more fleeting than the subatomic particles in matter. Each time the senses come into contact with any object, the mind goes through these processes at a speed surpassing the speed of lightning. So rapidly does this occur that you are unaware of its happening.

These five components are what compose self. The

Buddha did not see a separate, permanent identity apart from these five components, called a soul. Self, or soul as it is sometimes called, was an ever-changing flux of component parts.

It is natural and deep-rooted to believe “I was”, “I am”, “I shall be”. We operate on the unthinking assumption that the person who existed ten years ago is essentially the same person who exists today. The Buddha challenged this deep-rooted belief in the existence of a permanent “I”. He did not put forth an opinion or expound a theory. The Buddha described the Truth that He perceived through insight. He described the Truth that He realized by penetrating into the reality of “self”. Despite appearances, the Buddha perceived that each human being is in fact a series of separate but related events. He saw the reality of matter, consciousness, perception, sensation and volitional response and their arising and passing away. The unbroken progression of closely related events gives the appearance of continuity, of identity, but this is only the apparent reality, not the ultimate Truth.

We talk of the light provided by an electric lamp, never pausing to think that the light is in reality a flow of energy caused by very high frequency oscillations taking place within the filament. The succession of events happens so rapidly that it is difficult to discern. At a particular point in the process one cannot say that what occurs now is the same as what preceded it. Neither can one say that it is not the same. Nevertheless the process occurs.

Samsāra then, is not the popular idea of a permanent soul that maintains a fixed identity through repeated incarnations. This, the Buddha said, is precisely what does not

happen. He insisted that there was no unchanging identity that passes from life to life. It is just as from the cow comes milk; from milk, curds; from curds, butter; from butter, clarified butter. Milk is not considered to be curds, or fresh butter or clarified butter. Similarly, at any time only the present state of existence is considered to be real.

The Buddha realized that a person is not an unchanging entity but a process flowing from moment to moment. There is no real being, merely an ongoing flow, a continuous process of becoming.

Of course, in daily life we must deal with each other as persons and so the terms “I”, “you”, “self”, must be employed. And so we accept external reality. But this is superficial. At a deeper level the reality is that the entire universe, animate and inanimate, is in a constant state of becoming.

Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of a separate, permanent soul. According to the Buddha, the idea of self is a false belief that produces selfish thoughts of “me” and “mine”. The Buddha states that this entity we call “self” is an ever-changing group of attributes that exists in a constant state of flux rather like the flame of a lamp.

If we can realize this Truth with insight we shall find the clue to lead us out of suffering. At this point, as the scientists who have quantified the change per second in a subatomic particle, we have only knowledge — the intellectual grasping of a subject. With insight meditation will come the self-realization — the penetration of the Truth. We too will then be able to see the ultimate reality — the Truth of no permanent soul.

All Conditioned Phenomena are Sorrowful

(Dukkha)

*“Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering,
dissociation from the loved is suffering,
not to get what one wants is suffering;
In short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.”*

*“There is this Noble Truth of Suffering:
Such was the vision, insight, wisdom,
knowing, and light that arose in me
About things not heard before...”*

Samyutta Nikāya

Why did the Buddha say that all conditioned phenomena is dukkha or full of suffering? Life, as we know, begins at birth. We know that birth is traumatic for the baby and possibly painful. We also know that old age, sickness, and death are sorrowful. Under normal circumstances every living being faces these sorrows. In addition, being separated from those we love is suffering, associating with those we do not like is suffering and not getting what we want is suffering. There are also many who face the suffering of poverty, homelessness, torment, and abuse. All this is visible to us, and if we look-around us at our lives or at the lives of our loved ones we will see that each and every one of us has faced suffering at some point in life.

But when we look around us we also see happiness. Not everyone is suffering, and even those who do have

times of intense happiness. The truth is that this happiness is impermanent. This is why the Truth that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent is so important. It is important because by nature we cling to that which makes us happy. We cling to that which produces pleasurable sensations. The only way we could then have lasting, eternal happiness would be if there were any permanent condition. The impermanence of all conditioned phenomena results in sorrow and suffering because the pleasurable sensations we cling to come to an end.

When King Pasenadi Kosala's minister, Santati, came to the Buddha in grief at the death of his favourite dancing girl, the Buddha explained to him that this sorrow was deep-rooted just as this relationship was deep-rooted. He explained how, many times before in *samasāra*, Santati had cried for this same girl by saying, "If you collect all the tears that you have shed on all the occasions when this woman has died and compare them to the waters in the great oceans, you will see that you have shed more tears than the great waters." The Buddha could see into countless past lives. He saw the suffering that each person had undergone over æons of time because of the impermanence of phenomena. The Buddha said that all conditioned phenomena is *dukkha* or full of suffering because He saw that the impermanence of conditioned phenomena resulted in a cessation of happiness, which caused suffering.

Why is the fact that all conditioned phenomena are "not self" so important? Firstly, because it conforms with the Truth that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent. It is also important because with this realization thoughts of

“me”, “mine” and “I” have no meaning. There is no longer a need to grasp or hold onto anything as “mine”. There is no longer a need for greed and craving. With the elimination of the illusion of self, the eternal thirst to satisfy its demands, the grasping after sensual pleasures to please it, the clinging to phenomena that must fade and die, no longer exist.

It is this greed, craving, or strong attachment, together with the impermanence of all conditioned phenomena, that results in suffering (dukkha). Parting from loved ones is suffering. The stronger the attachment, the stronger the grasping, the greater the suffering. Not getting that which you want is suffering. The greater the attachment or grasping, the greater the suffering at not getting it. When there is true understanding that there is no “I”, no permanent self, the grasping, the craving for that which is mine and to keep that which is mine, permanently mine, no longer has any meaning.

This is what the Buddha said to Santati, King Pasenadi Kosala’s minister, to help him realize the Truth:

*“Whatever in the past be produced by excellence
let there be no ownership afterwards,
and if in the present you will not grasp at all,
you will fare on to the Perfect Peace.”*

After hearing these four lines Santati attained Arahantship. The Buddha knew the meritorious deeds that Santati had done in previous states of existence that made it possible for him to realize the Truth on hearing just four lines of the Dhamma. But He wanted to help those with false views and

to encourage those present to do meritorious deeds by showing them the effects of good actions. Therefore, the Buddha addressed Santati and said, "Rehearse to us all the meritorious deeds you have done in the past, the results of which you now reap. But do so not on the ground but in the air by positioning yourself at a height of seven palm trees." Saluting the Buddha, Santati rose to the height of seven palm trees and seated himself crosslegged in the air. He then related the following story.

"Ninety-one world cycles ago, in the time of Buddha Vipassi, I was reborn in a city named Bandhumati. One day I thought to myself, "What labour can I do which will do away with the want and suffering of others?" I then observed those who went about proclaiming the Dhamma and decided that from that time I too would devote myself to the spread of the Dhamma. I performed meritorious deeds and went about encouraging others to do the same and to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. I then went about proclaiming the virtues of the Buddha's Teaching."

"Now the great King Bandhumati, father of the Vipassi Buddha, asked me what I was doing. I said that I was going about proclaiming the wonder of the Buddha's Teaching and encouraging the people to perform acts of merit. He then asked me what vehicle I used in my travels. On hearing that I went on foot he gave me a horse, decked me in a garland of flowers similar to a string of pearls and sent me on my way. Many years later, I was travelling on the horse proclaiming the Dhamma when the king called me again and asked me the same question. On finding that I was still dedicated to the spread of the Dhamma, he gave me a chariot with four

horses for my travels. After many years the king called me again and asked the same question. On finding that I was even more earnest about spreading the Dhamma, he gave me many jewels, wealth, and an elephant.”

“For eighty thousand years (the life span at this time) I went about proclaiming the virtues of the Dhamma. During this time the fragrance of sandalwood emanated from my body and from my mouth came the fragrance of the lotus flower. These were my meritorious deeds in my previous existence.”

Because of the previous merit acquired by Santati at the time of the Buddha Vipassi, where he had proclaimed the Dhamma with fervour and devotion and practised the Dhamma of the Vipassi Buddha for a period of 80,000 years, he attained enlightenment upon hearing these four lines.

The first Noble Truth the Buddha realized was that all conditioned phenomena is suffering or dukkha. Suffering exists in the world. Why is there suffering? There is suffering because of the impermanent nature of all conditioned phenomena. Because we cannot control the impermanent nature of all phenomena, suffering exists in the world.

What is the cause of suffering? The cause is craving. The intense craving to cling to and hold tight to pleasurable sensations and the intense craving to reject and avert unpleasant sensations that the Buddha called *tanhā*. Usually when we suffer we tend to blame someone else for our suffering. I am suffering because of my mother, my father, my spouse, my children, my friend, my teacher, etc. Are these people the true cause of our suffering or is it we ourselves who bring about our own suffering? Is it the event that causes

the suffering or is it our volitional response to the event that causes suffering?

A class of twenty children just found out from their teacher that they were going to have a surprise test. It was a beautiful day and the class had just asked their teacher if they could play outside and have a longer recess. Many of the children were upset. Not only was the teacher not letting them go out, she was giving them a test! Some of the students ignored the teacher and walked out of the class. They were sent to the principal's office. Some of the students protested, were rude and disruptive. They were given detention. Some were angry but controlled their anger, deciding to complain about it among themselves at recess later. The rest accepted the fact that, nice day or not, this was school time. They worked on their test. Twenty different students reacted in twenty different ways and as a result suffered in different ways. Most of the students if questioned would have said, "I am miserable and it is all my teacher's fault." Suffering exists. But is the cause the teacher? If it were, then would not each and every one of the children have suffered to the same degree?

Let us examine the feelings of these children. Due to past conditioning, they knew that recess outside on a beautiful, sunny day was a pleasant sensation. Some of the children then built craving or a desire to experience this happy sensation again. Due to past conditioning they knew that tests were not fun. Some of the children then built a craving not to write the test or to set aside this unpleasant occurrence. This strong craving led some of the children to experience ill-will and possibly hatred towards the teacher,

who in their mind was thwarting their happiness. Some of them then acted on this ill-will and created kamma. The stronger the craving the greater was their suffering.

And yet there were some children who, with a balanced mind and equanimity, accepted the inevitable. They did not allow their former conditioning to build to craving. As a result they did not suffer.

Thus emerges a totally new concept. The Buddha said, “Such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light that arose in me, about things not heard before...” Suffering exists. Not getting what you want is suffering, separation from loved ones is suffering, associating with the unloved is suffering, but the pain one feels, the suffering itself that one feels, is caused by one’s volitional response, that leads to craving, not by the event itself.

The second Noble Truth that the Buddha realized was that it was not the event, but one’s response to the event, that caused suffering. It was the volitional response, that led to craving to hold onto a pleasant sensation, or craving to avert an unpleasant sensation that occurred, that caused suffering. The cause of suffering was craving (tanhā).

Why then do we develop such a strong craving? We form such strong attachments due to delusion and ignorance of the true nature of phenomena. Whether there is the appearance of a Buddha or not, there is this fixed law of Dhamma — all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, sorrowful and not self. However, it takes a Buddha to realize and then proclaim the Truth to the world for the benefit of men and Gods.

The sole purpose of the Buddha's teaching is the cessation of suffering. All of His teachings were directed towards the cessation of suffering. His teachings revolved around dukkha, its cause, the cessation of dukkha and the path to its cessation. Understanding the true nature of phenomena, one understands that suffering exists. Knowing that it is only a Supreme Buddha who can show us the path to the cessation of suffering, one can now appreciate the importance of this opportunity — we have to be born at a time when the Dhamma is still present in the world.

At this point I will conclude the chapters on “WHY” one should practise the Buddha's teachings with the following summary. Birth as a human being is extremely difficult and rare. Because of the impermanent nature of phenomena, suffering (dukkha), exists. It is only a Supreme Buddha who can show us the path to end suffering. However, the appearance of a Buddha is extremely rare. The hearing of the sublime Truth, His teachings, is even more rare and difficult because even at a time when the Dhamma is with us, only a few will have the opportunity to hear the Dhamma, and only a few of those who have the opportunity to hear will have the ability to understand the Dhamma. We now have this rare opportunity, for the teachings of the Buddha Gotama are with us. The era of the Metteyya Buddha is in this same Mahā Bhadda Kappa. By striving on with diligence to practise the teachings of the Gotama Buddha now, we can, at the time of the Buddha Metteyya, have the developed mind required to understand the Dhamma and attain enlightenment. The next opportunity, if we miss the era of the Buddha Metteyya, is during the reign of the

future Buddha Rama. The era of the future Buddha Rama, however, is a long, long time away. It is one hundred thousand world cycles after the end of the dispensation of the Buddha Metteyya.

*“Rare is the birth of an Enlightened Being,
Through effort is birth as a human obtained
With these two conditions is liberation from samsāra achieved
Why, good people, do you not strive on then?”*

*Loveda Sangarava
Vidāgama Mahā Thera*



Part II

How should I Practise the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna?



Chapter 5

What is Nibbāna?

*“The destruction of greed and lust (lobha),
the destruction of ill-will and hatred (dosa),
the destruction of delusion and ignorance (moha),
that friend, is called Nibbāna.”*

Samyutta Nikāya

When the Buddha was questioned as to the nature of Nibbāna by those who had not attained enlightenment, He was perplexed. How does one explain the colour green and the beautiful shades of green found in the forest to a man who cannot see? How does one explain the exquisite beauty of classical music to a person who cannot hear? Nibbāna is the total eradication of suffering and as such exquisite happiness of mind, but how was He to explain the exquisite happiness of mind experienced through Nibbāna to one who did not have the faculty of a developed mind? How could He explain the supra-mundane to the mundane?

The Buddha explained Nibbāna in terms a non-Arahanth would understand by using the experiences and terms of a non-Arahanth. The Buddha said that Nibbāna is the destruction of greed, hate and delusion. What the Buddha meant by destruction in this context is not the process of destruction. It is the total destruction, the extinction or absence of greed, hate and delusion. It is important then that we have a good understanding of what greed, hate and delusion are, and why

they should be destroyed to attain Nibbāna.

The Buddha said that craving (*tanhā*), caused suffering. The reason we crave to hold onto pleasurable sensations and crave to avoid unpleasant sensations is because of delusion or ignorance — we have not observed or realized the true nature of phenomena. Not understanding the true nature of phenomena, in delusion we continue to crave pleasant sensations, which leads to greed and lust, and crave to avert unpleasant sensations, which develops into ill-will and hatred for that which we do not like.

The Buddha set in motion the wheel of Dhamma for one purpose. All of His teachings centered around this one purpose: the destruction of suffering. Since greed, hate and delusion lead to suffering, we need to destroy greed, hate, and delusion to destroy suffering. Nibbāna — the absence of suffering — then, as the Buddha said, is the absence of greed, hate and delusion.

Craving that Leads to Greed, Lust & Attachment (Lobha)

*“From greed arises grief,
from greed arises fear.
For him who is free of greed,
there is no grief, much less fear.”*

Dhammapada 215

The pāli term *lobha* has been translated as greed, desire, lust and attachment. It is in truth all of the above, as one English word alone does not convey its full meaning. It is the

strong bond that forms from holding onto pleasurable sensations with a view to making them permanent, for self. **It is not the compassionate love and kindness that the Buddha encouraged us to practise towards all living beings. It is a selfish attachment to hold onto that which is “mine”.**

There are many kinds of attachment. First there is the attachment to sensual gratification. An addict takes a drug because he wishes to experience the pleasures that the drug produces, even though he knows that by taking the drug he reinforces his addiction. In the same way, we are addicted to craving for pleasant sensations. As soon as one desire is satisfied, we generate another. Just as the addict increases his dosage due to tolerance to the drug, unchecked craving steadily becomes stronger. The more we get, the more we want. The stronger the craving, the greater the attachment, and because all phenomena are impermanent, the greater the grief at separation. Uncontrolled craving leads to enormous suffering (dukkha).

The next form of attachment is the deep-rooted attachment to “I”, the ego. We extend this attachment to that which is mine. The greater the clinging to that which is mine, the greater the grief at parting, and the greater the fear of loss. But due to the impermanence of all phenomena this parting will occur. Attachment to “I” is also the prime cause of selfishness, for the person then puts himself and his wants above all others.

Attachment also extends to our views and beliefs. No matter what the actual content may be, no matter whether we are right or wrong, if we are attached to our views then they will surely cause us grief (dukkha). We are each con-

vinced that our own views and traditions are the best. We do not like it if anyone criticizes them. We also do not like it if others do not agree with our views after we have explained them. We fail to recognize that each person is an individual with a different background and upbringing. Surely it is only normal that we should have different beliefs. **It is futile to argue about which belief is correct, more beneficial to set aside all preconceived notions and try to listen, question, and examine to find reality.** Our attachment to our own views and non-acceptance of different beliefs again cause grief. How difficult it is to admit one is wrong in an argument! How often have you argued when you knew that you were really in the wrong? In the Majjhima Nikāya the Buddha said:

*“O Bhikkhus, even this view (Dhamma)
Which is so pure and so clear,
If you cling to it, if you fondle it, if you are attached to it,
Then you do not understand,
That the teaching is similar to a raft,
Which is for crossing over and
Not for getting hold of.”*

Majjhima Nikāya

With this beautiful explanation, the Buddha, who was the embodiment of egolessness, clarified that we should not be attached to His teaching and cling to it because we are devoted to Him and to His teachings, the Dhamma. We should instead practise the Dhamma to attain Nibbāna without clinging to it or fighting over it, just as a raft is used for crossing over but not for clinging on to.

From this teaching leads an important concept of Buddhist missionary work. The Buddha instructed His first sixty disciples thus:

“Freed am I, O Bhikkhus, from all bonds, whether divine or human. You too, O Bhikkhus, are freed from all bonds, whether divine or human.

Go Forth, O Bhikkhus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of Gods and men. Let not two go by one way: Preach, O Bhikkhus, The Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure.”

The acceptance of His teachings, however, was solely up to the receiver. The Buddha said:

*“The doors to the deathless are opened!
Let those who will hear leave wrong beliefs,
Now shall I turn the wheel of the great Law (Dhamma),
For this I go to the Kāśian City
There shall I beat the drum of deathlessness,
In this world where people are groping in the dark (of ignorance).”*

Majjhima Nikāya

There is no coercion or enforcement used in the spreading of the Dhamma. In the Kalāma Sutta the Buddha was very specific that His teaching should be examined and accepted only after one felt that it was moral and conducive to the well-being and happiness of mankind. Only then do you live and act according to His teachings. He was very specific that His teachings should not be accepted on mere hearsay,

on account of tradition, rumours, or because it accords with your scriptures, or even because the ascetic (Buddha) who teaches it is respected by all.

Practising in accordance with His teachings the Buddha's followers have not shed a single drop of blood in the spread or propagation of the Dhamma. His followers have respected the beliefs and faiths of others as the compassionate Buddha proclaimed, "If you find Truth in any religion, accept that Truth."

Leading from these strong views we have attachment to religious forms and ceremonies. We tend to emphasize the external forms of religion more than the underlying message. At times we might even feel that a person who does not perform these ceremonies is not a truly religious person. We forget that without its essence, the external manifestations of religion are only an empty shell. Reciting prayers or performing ceremonies is valueless if the mind remains filled with anger and ill-will.

Finally, we have the strongest attachment. The attachment to life and being in a realm of form or a formless realm (becoming — *bava tanhā*). No one likes to die. At death, during the Javana thought-moment, we cling to life and being. We do not want this life to end, and this deep attachment to life results in continuation of the life flux resulting in rebirth. Recently, with sadness, I watched a true-life television program, where people were paying \$120,000 U.S. to have their body preserved in dry ice (liquid nitrogen) with the hope that in the future science will arrive at a solution whereby death could be reversed. The Buddha, who saw this strong attachment of living beings to life, proclaimed with compassion:

*“In the world I see this generation racked by craving for being,
Wretched men quivering in the face of Death,
Still craving, hoping, for some kind of being,
See how they tremble over what they claim as ‘mine’,
Like fish in the puddles of a failing stream.”*

Sutta-nipāta

What causes attachment? How does it arise? To find the answer, the Buddha, with insight, penetrated this body that we call ‘I’ and observed that it is made up of five component parts — four of which are mental and one which is physical. The Buddha referred to these component parts as processes, as they are constantly changing. As discussed in [chapter four, page 124](#), the mental processes are: consciousness (Viññāna), perception (Saññā), sensation (Vedanā) and volitional formations / responses (Sankhāra).

The first process, consciousness, is the receiving part of the mind. It simply registers the occurring of any phenomena. It notes the raw data of experience without assigning labels or making value judgements.

The second mental process, perception, identifies what has been registered.

It distinguishes the raw data, evaluates and categorizes them into positive and negative.

Then sensation arises. So long as input is not evaluated, sensation remains neutral. But once it has been evaluated, the sensation becomes pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the evaluation.

If the sensation is pleasant, a wish forms to prolong it. If the sensation is unpleasant, the mind responds to push

it away, to stop it. With the pleasant and unpleasant sensations, volitional response occurs — the response to prolong a pleasant sensation or to stop an unpleasant sensation. When repeated, this response intensifies into craving — craving to hold onto a pleasant sensation and craving to avert an unpleasant sensation. Craving then leads to attachment (greed) and ill-will (hatred).

When examining the four mental processes it is clear that attachment occurs when volitional mental responses are repeated and gain intensity. The brief, unconscious or dimly conscious (Sankhāra) volitional responses of the mind are repeated and intensified at every moment, then they grow into a powerful attraction or repulsion. It is only after a volitional response has been repeated many times that awareness develops in the conscious mind. Then, as a result of this attachment or repulsion, intentional actions (kamma) are performed.

Craving that Leads to Anger, Ill-Will & Hatred

(Dosa)

Just as **we want to** (crave) cling to sensations that are pleasant, and form strong attachments that cause grief and suffering, **we want to** (crave) avert unpleasant sensations and form strong aversions that ultimately lead to suffering. Aversion unchecked leads to anger, ill-will and hatred. And anger, ill-will and hatred all lead to suffering. As with craving that leads to greed, it is clear that craving that leads to aversion occurs because of the mental process of volitional

responses. The brief volitional responses of the mind are repeated and intensified at every moment, then they grow into a repulsion of the unpleasant sensation. If the unpleasant sensation continues, it causes anger, ill-will and hatred, all of which cause suffering. The Buddha said:

*“Whatever suffering arises
has a volitional formation/response as its cause
If all volitional formations/responses cease to be
then there is no more suffering.”*

It is now clear that we need to concentrate on the mental process of volitional responses (sankhāra). It is the repeated mental process of volitional responses that causes craving. The brief, dimly conscious volitional responses are repeated to form strong craving (tanhā) to cling to or avert sensations. The stronger the craving, the deeper its influence on our thoughts, speech, and action. At this point kamma is created, because resulting from craving, intentional thoughts, speech, and action occur.

If the volitional response leads to craving, which in turn results in clinging or aversion, it causes suffering. However, all volitional responses do not build up to strong emotions of clinging or aversion. Some volitional responses, the Buddha said, are like lines drawn on the surface of a pool of water; as soon as they are drawn they are erased. Others are like those traced on a sandy beach; if drawn in the morning they are gone in the night, wiped away by the tide and the wind. Others are like lines cut into rock with a chisel and hammer. They too will be obliterated as the rock erodes, but it will take ages and ages for them to erode.

Throughout each day of our lives the mind keeps generating volitional responses, but if at the end of the day we try to remember these responses we shall be able to recall only one or two that made a deep impression. At the end of a month we have generated many volitional responses, but if we try to recall them we shall be able to recall only one or two which made the deepest impression that month. Similarly, at the end of a year, we shall be able to recall one or two of the responses from the many, many volitional responses that occurred in our mind that year. Such deep volitional responses as these the Buddha said, are very dangerous and lead to immense suffering.

The first step to destroy such suffering is to accept the reality of it, not as blind faith but as a fact of existence that one realizes through careful examination and investigation. As dimly conscious volitional responses that lead to strong craving lead to suffering, we must ensure that the unconscious or dimly conscious volitional responses do not lead to craving that results in greed or hatred. With this understanding we can learn to act instead of reacting so that our action will be controlled (disciplined) as opposed to an uncontrolled reaction.

Delusion & Ignorance **(Moha)**

*“Those who have destroyed delusion
and broken through the dense darkness
will wander no more (in saṃsāra).”*

Sutta Nipata

The Buddha, observing at the deepest level of reality through insight meditation, realized that volitional response occurs because of delusion and ignorance. We are unaware of the fact that we respond and unaware of the real nature of that to which we respond. We are ignorant of the impermanent nature of all component phenomena and ignorant of the fact that volitional response builds to deep craving to hold onto or avert sensations, which results in suffering. Not understanding our real nature, we respond blindly. Not knowing that we have responded, we persist in our blind responses and allow them to intensify. Thus we become imprisoned in the habit of volitional response because of ignorance.

The Buddha penetrated deep into His mind and body and realized the cause for rebirth which He called the Doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppāda). This is also known as the theory of cause and effect.

If ignorance (cause) arises, conditioning activities (**sankhāra**) (effect) occur;

If conditioning activities (cause) arise, rebirth consciousness (effect) occurs;

If rebirth consciousness (cause) arise, mind and matter (effect) occur;

If mind and matter (cause) arise, the six senses (effect) occur;

If the six senses arise (cause), contact (effect) occurs;

If contact (cause) arises, sensation or feeling (effect) occurs;

If sensation or feeling (cause) arises, craving (effect) occurs;

If craving (cause) arises, attachment or grasping (effect) occurs;

If attachment or grasping (to existence) (cause) arises, the process of becoming (effect) occurs;

If the process of becoming (cause) arises, birth (effect) occurs,

If birth (cause) arises, decay and death (effect) occur, together with sorrow, lamentation and physical and mental suffering.

Thus arises this entire mass of suffering. By this chain of cause and effect we have been brought into our present state of existence and face suffering. It is this chain of cause and effect that results in rebirth.

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination is deep and difficult to understand. As with the doctrine on not self (anatta), penetration or true understanding will occur through realization, not through study. The Doctrine on Anatta analyzes the splitting of existence into its constituent parts. The doctrine of Dependent Origination synthesizes these components and shows that they are conditionally related. The entire Abhidhamma Pitaka, The Higher Teachings, addresses these two important doctrines. I have made an attempt to explain this very important doctrine which teaches the cause of rebirth and suffering.

The term sankhāra has many meanings depending on the context in which it is used and is difficult to translate into English with just one word. Sankhāra has been translated as conditioning activities, volitional formations, volitional activities, and volitional responses of the mind. I have used

volitional responses in most instances to try to convey the meaning. The more traditional translation of conditioning activities, volitional formations, or even sankhāra could be substituted if this gives the reader a better understanding. Sankhāra occur with speed that surpasses lightning and it is only after many repetitions that true awareness develops. Sankhāra lead to craving to hold onto pleasant sensations and craving to avert unpleasant sensations, which in turn leads to kamma. As explained in the preceding section, one of the types of attachment to which craving leads is the strong attachment to being (bava tanhā).

The term sankhāra, as used in the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, refers to the volitional formations that lead to rebirth consciousness. At the time of death, during the Javana thought process, the mind goes through five thought moments with speed that surpasses lightning. The sankhāra that occur at this moment lead to craving for being, which leads to rebirth consciousness. It is the sankhāra that occur at this moment, as opposed to the sankhāra that occur constantly in your mind throughout existence, that are referred to in the second step of the Doctrine of Dependent Origination.

It is clear at this point that the doctrine spans more than one existence. With ignorance as the cause sankhāra are formed (during the Javana thought process) that lead to rebirth consciousness. The doctrine then moves to the next birth of existence where, with rebirth consciousness as the cause, we have mind and matter. The doctrine then links mind and matter, the six senses, contact, and sensation (feeling). We are now in the present birth. The mind with lightning speed constantly forms sankhāra. (The reader

could at this point if he so wishes go back to the four mental processes that the Buddha with insight penetrated in the doctrine on Anatta in [chapter four, page 124](#)). Repeated sankhāra lead to craving which in turn leads to kamma or intentional moral and immoral actions. The Doctrine of Dependent Origination then links sensation to craving. Even though sankhāra lead to both craving that leads to clinging and craving that leads to aversion, the doctrine concentrates only on craving which leads to attachment or clinging. This is because the Doctrine on Dependent Origination concentrates on the cause for rebirth and the suffering caused by rebirth. At this point the doctrine links the conditions that cause rebirth. Attachment or clinging then leads to becoming, or to the strong attachment to life (bava). With the process of becoming as the cause, birth arises. (The reader could if he so wishes insert at this point ignorance, conditioning activities and rebirth consciousness as per the beginning of the doctrine — [see page 148](#).)

The doctrine has now spanned three states of existence or three separate births. The doctrine then links birth to decay and death together with sorrow, lamentation and physical and mental suffering. It is at this point that the suffering caused by sankhāra that leads to craving for pleasant sensations and craving for the aversion of unpleasant sensations (as opposed to the craving that leads to being) is addressed. Because at this point the Buddha addresses sorrow, lamentation and physical and mental suffering, which is caused by both craving that leads to clinging and greed and craving that leads to aversion and hatred.

The subtle difference in the meaning of the term

sankhāra may now be more apparent. Destruction of the ignorance that causes sankhāra that lead to craving for being, which in turn leads to rebirth consciousness, and sankhāra that lead to clinging and aversion, which in turn leads to kamma, are both addressed. To stop the process of rebirth one has to destroy sankhāra that lead to rebirth consciousness. When ignorance has been completely eradicated there will be a complete cessation or absence of suffering.

For us, in our daily life, each time we try to discipline our minds to reduce craving that leads to clinging and aversion we reduce suffering. At this point we are trying to discipline sankhāra that cause craving that leads to moral and immoral intentional actions, as opposed to the sankhāra that cause craving for being. The state of Nibbāna, however, eradicates all sankhāra.

The Buddha had finally penetrated the Truth of suffering. Suffering begins with ignorance of the reality of the true nature of the phenomenon we call 'I'. Blinded by ignorance, we generate volitional responses that lead to craving which develops into attachment that leads to rebirth, unhappiness, and suffering. The volitional responses arise only because of our ignorance of our true nature. The three roots from which all suffering arises are greed, hatred (caused by craving) and delusion. Nibbāna, the destruction of suffering, is then the eradication or the total destruction (and the resulting absence) of greed, hatred and delusion.

A purely intellectual comprehension of Nibbāna is not possible, because it is not a subject to be understood by logical reasoning. The ultimate goal of Buddhists, Nibbāna is beyond the scope of logic. However, the conclusion emerges

that if there is a conditioned phenomenon that is impermanent and sorrowful, then there must be a non-conditioned phenomenon that is permanent and sorrowless. At the time of the Dipankara Buddha, the Bodhisatta Sumedha (Gotama) reflected thus:

*“Even as, although there misery is,
Yet happiness is also found;
So, though indeed existence is,
A non-existence should be sought.*

*Even as, although there may be heat,
Yet grateful cold is also found;
So, though the threefold fire exists,
Likewise Nibbāna should be sought.*

*Even as, although there evil is,
That which is good is also found;
So, though tis true that birth exists,
That which is not birth should be sought.”*

In the Udāna and litivuttaka the Buddha referred to Nibbāna as follows:

“There is, O Bhikkhus, an unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and non-conditioned state. If, O Bhikkhus there were not this unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and non-conditioned state, an escape for the born, originated, made and conditioned, would not be possible. As there is an unborn, unoriginated, unmade and non-conditioned state, an escape for the born, originated, made and conditioned is possible.”

People have often asked me about Nibbāna, “Is it a

place like heaven?" To which I, with my limited understanding, have replied, "No, it is not a place, it is a state of extreme happiness." Then they ask, "What does Nibbāna feel like?" The Buddha and His disciples who have experienced the exquisite happiness of Nibbāna have expressed their happiness as follows:

"Nibbāna is the highest bliss."

"It is bliss supreme because it is not a kind of happiness experienced by the senses."

"It is a blissful state of positive relief from mundane experiences."

*"In cleansing the mind
and attaining wisdom,
One experiences joy, bliss, tranquillity,
awareness, full understanding — real happiness."*

*"Whenever one experiences
the arising and passing away of
the mental and physical processes,
He enjoys bliss and delight.
He attains the deathless
as attained by the wise."*

*"The sorrowless,
the stainless path that ends the things of woe,
the peace from worries: bliss."*

*"Infinite, non-conditioned, incomparable,
Supreme, highest, beyond,
highest refuge, safety, security,*

*happiness, unique, abodeless,
supramundane, immortal, emancipation, peace."*

*"As the lotus is unstained by water,
so is Nibbāna unstained by all the defilements.
As cool water allays feverish heat,
so also Nibbāna is cool and allays the fever of all passions.
As water quenches the thirst of men and beasts who are
exhausted, parched and overcome by heat,
so also Nibbāna quenches the craving for
sensuous enjoyments, further being, and cessation of being.
As medicine protects from the torments of poison,
so Nibbāna from the torments of poisonous passions.
As medicine puts an end to sickness, and nourishes like nectar
Nibbāna ends all suffering and nourishes by giving peace...."*

Ven Nāgasena Milinda-panhā

None of us have attained Nibbāna or even the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. Usually it is only when one has attained the first stage of Sotāpanna that we can say that we have glimpsed the happiness of Nibbāna. The closest we have experienced to Nibbāna is the happiness we derive from performing a wholesome deed. This, however, cannot be compared to the ecstasy of Nibbāna. Nibbāna is not a state of nothingness. What it is not one can definitely say. What it is precisely one cannot express in conventional terms. Nibbāna is unique, without comparison. Nibbāna is for self-realization. **And so we have the Third Noble Truth that the Buddha realized — the Truth of the cessation of suffering — Nibbāna.**

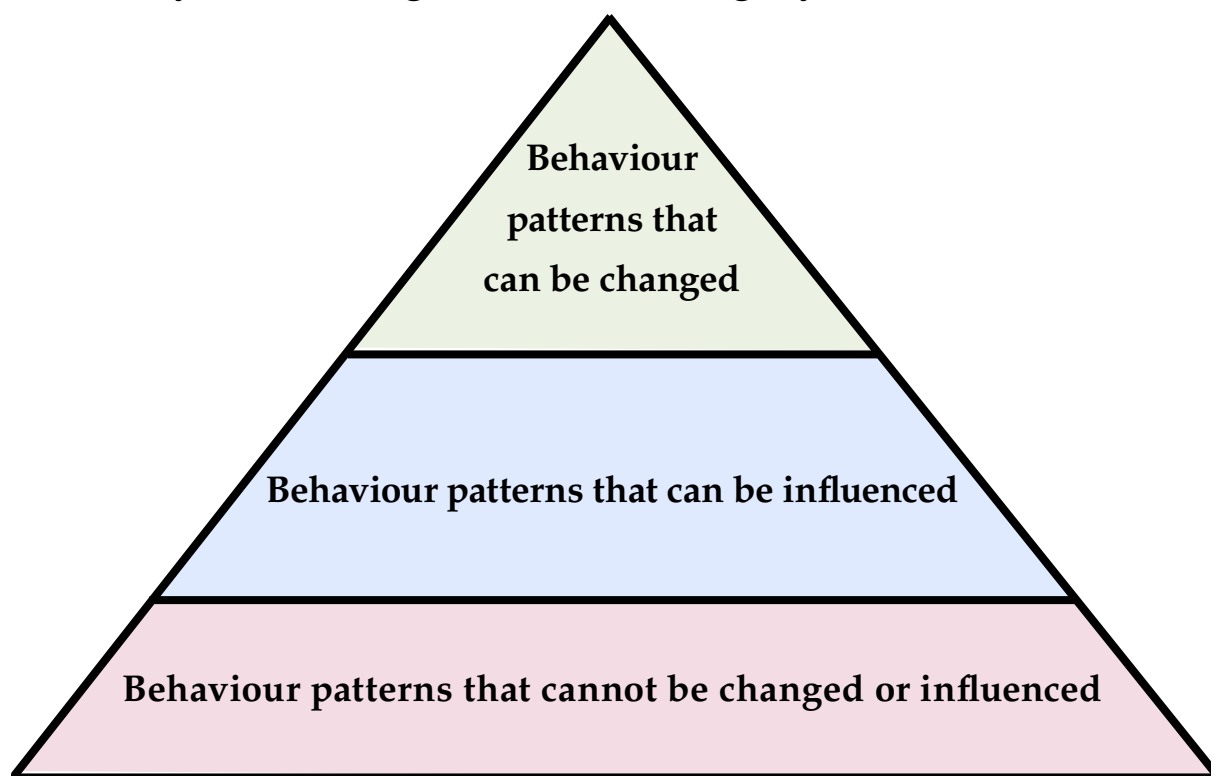


Chapter 6

How should I Practise the Dhamma with a View to Nibbāna?

Changing One's Behaviour

To attain Nibbāna we must destroy greed, hatred, and delusion. All of this requires a change in one's behaviour patterns. I drew this triangular diagram to explain behaviour patterns which can be changed, behaviour patterns which can be influenced, and behaviour patterns which cannot be changed or influenced (over which one has no control), and asked my students to give examples of people who they felt belonged in each category.



My students said that one can change one's own behaviour patterns, those of one's friends and close family; that one can also influence the behaviour patterns of one's friends and close family, and that generally one has little control over the behaviour patterns of politicians and acquaintances. I then said to them that I felt that the only behaviour patterns one could change are our own. I did not agree that one can change the behaviour patterns of one's friends and family, though I agreed with them that one can influence the behaviour patterns of one's friends and close family and that, in general, one has no control over the behaviour patterns of politicians and acquaintances. I asked, "If we could change the behaviour patterns of friends, would not then all our family and friends be non-smokers?" We looked among our family and friends to see how many of us had close family and friends who smoked despite the proven health hazards. After some discussion my students agreed that one can only change one's own behaviour patterns.

I then asked my students how much time they spent trying to change the behaviour patterns of people in each of these categories. We found that the least amount of time was spent in trying to change oneself even though that was the only category one could change. A lot of time was spent criticizing others but, since this was often done in their absence, it was of no value and fell into the uncontrolled category. We realized that in many instances we were wasting our valuable time and effort on the impossible. In fact, even when we had the power to influence, often we were not doing it in the appropriate manner. As a result, even those behaviour patterns that we could influence were going unheeded and

fell into the uncontrolled category because of our approach. Sadly, it seemed as if the vast majority of our time was spent in trying to change the unchangeable.

I usually do not include in my books items that do not directly result from the Buddha's teachings. This poem, however, is so clearly in accord with the Buddha's teachings that even though it was not written in the context of His teachings, I chose to include it in my book. Read this poem and see if the approach you have been taking with the loved ones you try to influence has been appropriate. Did you in fact help them or hinder them? Did your words and actions result in the influencing section of the triangle and the results you wanted, or did the approach you took result in moving them to the base of the triangle into the uncontrolled section?

*If a child lives with tolerance
he learns to be patient;
If a child lives with encouragement
he learns confidence;
If a child lives with praise
he learns to appreciate;
If a child lives with fairness
he learns justice;
If a child lives with security
he learns to have faith;
If a child lives with approval
he learns to like himself;
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
he learns to find love in this world.*

I do not know who wrote this poem. I feel, however, that

it applies to all living beings. The best way to influence a person is through loving kindness, compassion and understanding.

Knowing that the only person one can change is oneself, should we not then be spending more time where we can have some effect? We know now where we must concentrate. We must eradicate greed, hate and delusion. Part of this we must do by changing our conscious minds. But part of it can only be achieved by changing our unconscious mind. The Buddha realized that to destroy suffering, one has to destroy the cause of suffering.

If ignorance is eradicated and completely ceases, conditioning activities (**sankhāra**) ceases;

If conditioning activities cease, rebirth consciousness ceases;

If rebirth consciousness ceases, mind and matter cease;

If mind and matter cease, the six senses cease;

If the six senses cease, contact ceases;

If contact ceases, sensation ceases;

If sensation ceases, craving ceases;

If craving ceases, attachment ceases;

If attachment (to existence) ceases, the process of becoming ceases;

If the process of becoming ceases, birth ceases,

If birth ceases, decay and death, together with sorrow, lamentation and physical and mental suffering, cease.

If we end ignorance we can end conditioning activities or volitional responses. If we end volitional responses, we end birth, decay, death, together with sorrow, lamentation, and physical and mental suffering. This is what the Buddha Gotama realized when He attained enlightenment. If we remove ignorance and stop responding blindly, we can then end rebirth and suffering.

Generosity (Dāna) for the Destruction of Greed & Attachment

*“Monks, in giving alms,
a giver gives five things to the receiver.
What five?
He gives longevity, beauty, comfort, strength
and the power of understanding.”*

Anguttara Nikāya

When I open my discussion on the path to Nibbāna with generosity, I am sometimes questioned as to why generosity is not then included in the Noble Eightfold Path. Maybe it is because The Noble Eightfold Path was first addressed to the five monks who had renounced all worldly pleasures. They had already practised generosity to the optimum by renouncing all their wealth and possessions. The method of teaching the Buddha used is called Ānupubbi Kathā. He first used this method when teaching Tapassu and Bhalluka, two lay persons, in the seventh week after enlightenment, prior to His discourse to the five monks. Ānupubbi Kathā started

with generosity. As this book is directed to lay persons, I feel that it is more appropriate to start with generosity.

Often when generosity is discussed we concentrate on the results of generosity and on how to benefit most by generosity (dānanusasana). Even though the results of generosity are important and it is imperative that one know this aspect, I will not be addressing the effects of generosity. This book focuses on generosity in the context of reducing greed and attachment.

Firstly, a person should give with the destruction of craving as the goal, rather than the benefits or merit acquired as the motivation. When one gives with a pure heart and the aspiration of acquiring merit, one reaps the rewards of the gift through wealth, comforts and heavenly birth. When one gives with a pure heart and a view to purify oneself of the defilements of craving and attachments, one obtains greater benefits of wealth and comforts and higher birth. The Buddha said:

*“He who gives a gift thinking that
giving beautifies the mind (by eliminating craving),
giving strengthens the mind,
will be reborn among the Brahma Devas
(in the Suddhāvāsā Brahma realm).
He will become a non-returner to this world.”*

Anguttara Nikāya

It is clear then that this is the highest manner of giving.

The giver should also give only through compassion and loving kindness, with no coercion or expectation of return. But how does a person give correctly with a view to

destroying attachment?

- He gives that which is earned lawfully and righteously
- He gives clean things
- He gives what is choice
- He gives at the proper time
- He gives what is suitable
- He gives with care
- He gives frequently
- He calms his mind by giving
- After giving he becomes happy

One can now see that to give correctly one has to plan wilfully and give with care. Generosity to reduce craving is not then just the giving away of that which you cannot use or need. This form of giving too reduces craving, but not as much, as one was not attached to the object to begin with.

To reduce craving one must give away that to which one is attached. The object must be clean and choice. That means it must be of good quality and of value. It must also be given at the appropriate time when it is most needed by the receiver. You can see that whatever you give must be chosen with careful planning and it must produce an intrinsic happiness in the giver. This, then, excludes gifts given for public honour and fame, for in these instances the giver has an ulterior motive, which in itself is an attachment to public recognition and fame for self.

Similarly, a gift should be given without expectation of something in return. If one is giving something expecting something back in return, one is not giving to reduce attachment. This kind of 'generosity' leads to attachment and

suffering — attachment to that which you expect in return, which in turn causes suffering, and additional suffering if you do not receive the expected return gift.

As a result, Buddhist missionaries provide food, shelter, clothing, medicines, comfort and care to the poor and needy out of compassion and loving kindness. Buddhist missionaries proclaim the path to the cessation of suffering with compassion and loving kindness towards suffering humanity. Buddhist missionaries do not provide conditional care to the poor and needy where conversion to Buddhism is a pre-requisite to obtaining services. Such an act would be totally against the teachings of the compassionate Buddha, who made clear His views about non-attachment, even to the Dhamma.

A gift given to destroy craving and greed should also have the following effect on the giver:

- Before the gift he is glad of heart
- In giving the heart is satisfied
- The heart is uplifted when he has given

If one gives with true compassion and loving kindness for the welfare of another living being, one will feel this happiness. If the above feelings of happiness are felt and observed by the giver we know that in this instance, craving and attachment to the gift for self was destroyed. If one regrets after giving or is unhappy at parting with the gift, one is still attached to the gift. This then would not be a gift given to destroy attachment.

One should also choose the recipient with care. The Buddha, when asked by King Pasenadi Kosala to whom

“gifts” should be given, said, “Gifts should be given to a person to whom when the gift is given, one feels fulfilled and glad of heart.” Over time one will find that all gifts given with the goal of purifying the mind will have this effect.

Since the purpose of this chapter is to reduce attachment, emphasis has not been placed on the qualities of the receiver and the merit acquired which is dependent on the purity of the receiver. However, since we all know that the gifts given to a Supreme Buddha bear the highest fruit, and as the Buddha is no longer with us, some of you may feel that this opportunity is no longer present. I have included the following words of the Buddha to show you that this is not the case.

*“Whether the Buddha lives or
has attained Nibbāna,
The fruit is the same if
the mind of the giver is the same.
For having delight in the Buddha
Beings go to heavenly birth.”*

Expositor

The mind of the giver then is the most important aspect when one is giving.

Up to this point we have concentrated on reducing or destroying craving that has led to greed in the conscious mind. However, at times our conscious mind is weak. We want to be generous and we want to give in the right way but our minds hold tight with craving and attachment and refuse to be generous. As such we must strengthen, develop and discipline the mind, so that our mind will perform as we

feel is right and in our best interest. Just as proper exercise is necessary to strengthen our muscles and keep our body healthy, meditation is required to strengthen, develop and discipline the mind. The meditation the Buddha advocated for this is known as Samatha meditation.

In addition, one still has to reduce craving by controlling and disciplining the volitional responses (Sankhāra) that occur in the mind. This can be done only through Vipassanā meditation. In Vipassanā meditation one learns how to observe oneself with insight so that with time one is in tune with every sensation — in tune with every subconscious response. One then observes, reflects, and then with a balanced mind, acts with wisdom without reacting in ignorance. As Samatha and Vipassanā meditation are discussed in the following lessons I will conclude this lesson by saying that to destroy attachment one must, in addition to practising generosity correctly, discipline the mind through Samatha and Vipassanā meditation.

Morality (Sila) for the Destruction of Ill-Will & Hatred

*“Abandon wrong. It can be done.
If it were impossible to do
I would not urge you to do so.
But since it can be done
I say to you abandon wrong....”*

Anguttara Nikāya

Just as craving (I want this) pleasant sensations leads to greed and attachment, craving (I want to stop this) to avert unpleasant sensations leads to ill-will and hatred. In addition, if you thwart that for which you crave, it could lead to ill-will and hatred. The Buddha advocated morality (infinite compassion towards all living beings) to destroy the craving that led to aversion, ill-will and hatred. The Buddha said, "Easy to do are things which are bad and not beneficial to self. But very hard to do indeed is that which is beneficial and good." And yet the Buddha assured us that it can be done. He himself had done it on His own, without Divine help, and many by following His teaching had accomplished the same through their own effort. The Buddha knew that this was something that each of us could do.

The Buddha laid out modes of discipline (sikkhapada) for His devotees to follow to accomplish this goal. He wanted us to study, examine intelligently and then practise if we felt that these modes of discipline were for the moral benefit of ourselves and others. Often I am questioned as to how one knows if something is for the moral benefit of self or others. How does one know when what one person defines as moral (wholesome) may be defined by another as immoral (unwholesome)?

The Buddha offered a universal definition of moral and immoral. He said that any action that harms another living being, that disturbs their peace and harmony, is an unwholesome action. Any action that helps another, that contributes to another's peace and harmony, is a wholesome action.

Any person who wants to destroy aversion must begin by practising sila. We must begin by abstaining from all actions, words and thoughts that harm living beings. We

abstain from such actions not only because they harm others, but also because they harm us by causing aversion, ill-will and hatred that lead to suffering.

The Buddha laid out a comprehensive code of moral conduct for His followers. In this book I have included the precepts as interpreted by Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in his book, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. I have used his interpretation with some additions, as in my opinion it embodies the true practise of sila as laid out by the Buddha in His teachings. These precepts, as I have emphasized before, are modes of conduct that one should undertake after careful examination. They are not commandments and as such they are not forced upon you. They should as such not be undertaken lightly. If one chooses to follow the Buddha's practise of morality, then one should with effort keep the precepts, as undertaking them is a vow made freely without coercion or compulsion.

Development of Morality through Compassion

*Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life,
I vow to cultivate compassion and
learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals
(environment).*

*I am determined not to kill,
and not to condone any act of killing in the world,
in my thinking and in my way of life.*

Development of Morality through Loving Kindness

*Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice,
stealing and oppression,*

*I vow to cultivate loving kindness and
learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants and
minerals (environment).*

*I vow to practise generosity by sharing my time,
energy and material resources with those who are in real need.*

*I am determined not to steal and
not to possess anything that should belong to others,
and I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering
or the suffering of other species on Earth.*

Development of Morality through Responsible Conduct

*Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct,
I vow to cultivate responsibility and
learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of
individuals, couples, families and society.*

*I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a
long-term commitment.*

*To preserve the happiness of myself and others,
I am determined to respect my commitments and the
commitments of others.*

*I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and
to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.*

Development of Morality through Mindful Speech

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and
the inability to listen to others,*

*I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening
in order to bring joy and happiness to others and
relieve others from their suffering.*

*Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering
I vow to learn to speak truthfully,
with words that inspire self-confidence, joy and hope.
I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and
not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure.
I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord,
or that can cause the family or the community to break.
I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.⁸*

Development of Morality through Mindful Consumption

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption,
I vow to cultivate good health, both physical and mental,
for myself, my family, my society
by practising mindful eating, drinking and consumption.
I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace,
well-being and joy in my body, in my consciousness and
in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society.
I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant
or to ingest food or other items that contain toxins,
such as certain T. V. programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations.
I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons
is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations.
I will work to transform violence, fear, anger and confusion in myself and
in society by practising a proper diet (mindful consumption)
for myself and for society.
I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and the
transformation of society.*

8. Four of the precepts, the telling of untruths, backbiting and slander, harsh, rude or abusive language and idle gossip have been amalgamated into one.

Development of Morality through Mindful Livelihood

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful livelihood,

I vow to cultivate fairness and respect

to those who depend on me at work.

Aware that it is through deed and not by birth that one is noble,

I vow to treat all people of all nationalities,

religions and groups with respect and fairness

and encourage others to do the same.

I am determined not to exploit others for my gain or social standing.

Understanding that it is with trust that I have been given employment

I will work diligently with integrity to the best of my ability.

I am determined that I will not pursue my livelihood,

through the exploitation of others,

the killing or breeding of animals for killing,

the manufacture or sale of poisons, harmful chemicals,

lethal weapons, or other harmful substances (drugs or intoxicants)

that bring destruction and suffering to living beings.

If we decide to accept the Buddha's code of moral discipline then we must work diligently at incorporating it into our daily life. Often the observance of the precepts is in Pāli. Even though we know the meaning, after a while reciting the precepts becomes a habit. We go to the temple or shrine room and repeat the precepts mechanically, then promptly forget about incorporating them into our daily life. On our next visit to the temple we renew our vows by reciting the precepts again. If you see yourself in this description you are not alone. This is exactly what I did until recently.

From now on, recite the precepts in Pāli when repeating them after a monk, and in English, as laid out in this

book, when reciting them on your own. But do so mindfully. Savour each word and understand and absorb what you are saying. Then try to keep the precepts just for one day. And then for just one more day. And then for just one more day. If you break one of the precepts do not be disheartened. Be happy that you kept the precepts even for a short period. Reflect on your omission. Reflect on why it happened and how you can prevent it from happening again. Try to be mindful of your observance of the precepts. Then start again by renewing the precepts. In this way, little by little, you will be keeping the precepts just a little while longer, just a little while longer than the time before.

The Buddha laid down a discipline that, if practised mindfully, would result in infinite compassion and loving kindness towards all living beings. In following the Buddha's precepts with compassion we destroy aversion, ill-will and hatred in the conscious mind. **We practise morality as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna.** We must still destroy craving that leads to aversion that results from our volitional responses. This can be done only through meditation. For practise of morality I encourage my students to start with meditation on loving kindness. The effects of this meditation when practised mindfully are enormous. We then move on to Samatha and Vipassanā meditation.

The following true-life story was related to me by a visiting monk. Many years ago there was in Sri Lanka a period of ethnic unrest between the Muslims and the Sinhalese. A person who had committed a political crime in relation to the unrest was wanted by the government and police. He absconded to India and started a new life to avoid the authorities.

Many years later his whereabouts were ascertained by the Government of Sri Lanka. The Chief of Police of the city in which he lived was contacted and orders were given to arrest the man for his political crimes. The information that he was about to be arrested reached the man one day before his scheduled arrest. Having lived many years in Sri Lanka among Buddhists, this man had had the good fortune to learn and practise meditation on loving kindness. Believing in the results of meditation, he placed before him a picture of the Chief of Police and, concentrating on the Chief, practised meditation on loving kindness towards the Chief in preparation for the next day.

Tired but composed, the man greeted the Chief of Police the next morning. Upon seeing him the Chief felt an overwhelming sense of compassion and an unexplainable feeling of closeness and warmth towards him. After talking to him the Chief said, "Arresting you would be like arresting a much-loved relative. Guarantee that you will not abscond and run away again; I will then take the responsibility of not arresting you." Many years later the grateful man related his story to the monk.

This story illustrates a fundamental concept of meditation. Meditation helps all beings and flows over the imaginary ethnic and religious boundaries that men have created. Meditation on loving kindness helps the meditator and the recipient of his meditation. Meditation helps a Muslim to be a better Muslim, a Christian to be a better Christian, a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Jew to be a better Jew, and a Buddhist to be a better Buddhist. One does not have to be a Buddhist to acquire the benefits of meditation, just as one

does not have to be a Buddhist to acquire the benefits of generosity and morality. All one needs to do is to meditate with truth and mindfulness in one's heart.

In fact, the term 'Buddhist' and 'Buddhism' are in themselves misnomers. At the time of the Buddha there were no Buddhists and there was no Buddhism. There was the Dhamma (His teachings), there were the people who practised the Dhamma, and there were those who did not practise the Dhamma.

In the Maha Pari Nibbāna Sutta, the Buddha praised a monk named Dhammarama, who practised His teachings diligently with the hope of attaining Nibbāna before the Buddha's death instead of coming to pay his last respects to the Buddha. The Buddha approached Him and said, **"Excellent! Excellent! He who loves me should act as this monk. He honours me best who practises my teachings best."**

Perhaps the concept that the Buddha's "Path to Nibbāna" benefits people of all faiths is best expressed by Goldie Hawn who meditates regularly amidst crystal prayer beads and Buddha statues in her shrine which she calls 'a sanctuary to house my spirit'. She says, "I was raised in a Jewish, although not in a strict religious, atmosphere. If I were to call myself anything it would be a Buddhist... I don't look at Buddhism as a religion. **I look at it as a path to life.**"

One begins the practise of loving kindness by starting with oneself. This is because the meditator is then suffused with thoughts of peace and happiness. He then, for that moment, becomes the embodiment of loving kindness. Shrouded by loving kindness and compassion, he injects happiness and compassion into others. It is important then

that one begin with oneself and attain this state of calmness and compassion, **because what one does not possess one cannot give to others.**

What traits should one then cultivate so that one can benefit most by the practise of loving kindness? One develops:

- Mettā** Goodwill and loving kindness towards every living being without discrimination.
- Karunā** Compassion and kindness radiated with sympathy to relieve others' sorrows and grievances.
- Mudita** Sympathetic joy, by sharing the happiness and progress of others without jealousy.
- Upekkhā** Equanimity, impartiality, maintenance of harmony, without showing discrimination.

Mettā is loving kindness directed to all living beings, while Karunā is compassion towards the suffering. Mudita is directed to the prosperous and happy, while Uppekkhā embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

A tree makes no distinction in the shade it gives. Even so, the serious meditator must make no distinction between any beings. He must develop loving kindness towards his enemies just as he develops it towards himself, thinking, "How may these beings be without enmity and harm? How may these beings be at peace, secure, and happy? How may they look after themselves?" **In practising morality to the fullest one completes morality as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna.**

The following is the practise of loving kindness as laid out by the Buddha in the Karaniya Metta Sutta (the sutta on loving kindness).

*This is what should be done
By one who is skilled in goodness,
And who knows the path to peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward and gentle in speech,
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied.
Unburdened with duties, and frugal in their ways.
Peaceful and calm, wise and skillful,
Not proud and demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
That the wise would later reprove.*

*Aspiring thus: In gladness and in safety,
may all beings be at ease.
Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to be born
May all beings be at ease!*

*Let none deceive another,
Or despise a being in any state,
Let none through anger or ill-will
Wish harm upon another,*

*Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating loving kindness over the world:
Spreading upwards to the skies
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.*

*This is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.*

Meditation (Bhavana) in Mental Discipline & Wisdom, for the Destruction of Delusion & Ignorance

“What thinks you Rahula? What is a mirror for?”

“To reflect, Sir.”

“In just the same way you must reflect again and again before doing every act, in speaking every word and in thinking every thought....”

Majjhima Nikāya

If we remove ignorance and cease to respond blindly, we shall experience the resulting peace of Nibbāna. Suffer-

ing begins because of the ignorance of one's own reality. In the darkness of this ignorance, the mind responds to every sensation with liking and disliking, and craving that leads to clinging and aversion. How does one break this chain of events that leads to suffering? The Buddha realized that by the practise of Vipassanā (insight) we develop awareness of our true nature. And we develop equanimity. We examine every sensation with a balanced mind and understanding through realization of the impermanence of all phenomena. Knowing that this too will change, we observe sensations without clinging or aversion. We do not react. Now, instead of giving rise to blind volitional responses, every sensation gives rise to wisdom and insight.

Before one starts Vipassanā Meditation one needs to strengthen, develop and discipline the mind through Samatha Meditation. This is because, in general, our mind tends to run from one thing to another, out of control and contrary to our wishes. It is important then to begin by disciplining the mind so that it remains still without wandering. There are forty types (objects) of Samatha Meditation which can be used for the development of the mind.

The Buddha categorized human beings into six basic types or a combination of these six types — those with lustful temperament, those with hateful temperament, those with ignorant temperament, those with devout temperament, those with intellectual temperament, and those with discursive temperament. The appropriate Samatha Meditation was then selected to ensure optimum results by matching the type of meditation to the temperament of the meditator.

When meditating we must be aware that disciplining

the mind which has run free for many years is difficult. We must begin with the awareness that this is not something that we will achieve in a day, a week, or a month. We must not, however, be discouraged or agitated by the wandering mind. Instead, we should be aware and constantly observe so that when the mind has wandered we will with equanimity bring it back to the topic of meditation. If we keep things in perspective and reflect on how vast samsāra is, how many countless years we have wandered in suffering from birth to birth, we will put things in context. We will cultivate the patience required and begin meditation with determination and effort, one day at a time.

The Samatha Meditation that I have chosen is the awareness of breathing meditation or Ānāpāna Sati Meditation, which is what the Buddha Himself used to attain enlightenment. We begin by sitting upright with our back straight and head held high. One can sit in the lotus position as the Buddha sat, or cross-legged with the feet placed over each other. If this position is difficult for the meditator a low chair with the feet placed firmly on the floor is acceptable. The right hand is placed over the left on the lap and the eyes are half-shut and directed to a point a few feet in front of the meditator when angled from the tip of the nose. The meditator could also keep the eyes closed; however, one must then be mindful to avoid drowsiness. A quiet room with no distractions is used to help the meditator to discipline the mind.

Turning from the outer world to the world within, the meditator then turns his attention to the breath entering and leaving his nostrils. At times meditators prefer to start

by relaxing their bodies and then gradually moving to the awareness of breath. This works very well. One can begin with the bottom of the toes and slowly move up the legs, up the torso, the neck and the head, relaxing each muscle and observing the sensation until one reaches the nostrils. Then one focuses on the breath entering and leaving the nostrils. Remember that this is not a breathing exercise. It is an exercise in awareness — awareness of the breath entering and leaving the body through the nostrils. Concentration is focused only on the nostrils and on the observation of the feelings or sensations that one experiences when breathing occurs.

When one starts one will often control the breathing. Maybe you will take a deeper breath or a longer breath. Then gradually you will relax and let the breathing occur naturally. Many times you will find that your mind will wander. Maybe the sound of a telephone or a siren distracts you. Maybe pain in the legs or the seat, or numbness in the toes distracts you. Do not be perturbed, observe the sound, the pressure on your legs or seat, then slowly bring your mind back to the point of focus — the nostrils and the sensations or awareness that you feel as the breath moves in through the nostrils and again moves out through the nostrils. Remember that the exercise is not to control the breathing, but to be aware of it. To begin with, if necessary, move your legs and seat when you are very uncomfortable. But with time you will not find it as uncomfortable. You will also learn to observe the pain and pressure objectively with a balanced mind. After many days of meditation the sensation the meditator feels may be finer than what he felt when he started. Maybe you will feel

that the air that goes in through your nostrils is cooler and that the air that passes out through your nostrils is warmer. Maybe you will be able to isolate the sensation to just one nostril. Maybe it will take longer for you to feel any sensation at all.

Understand that it takes time to break the habits of a lifetime. We will fail again and again as our mind wanders from one topic to another, from the past to the future, flitting like a butterfly from flower to flower. Calmly, without anger or tension, bring the mind back to the point of focus — your nostrils and the awareness of the sensations of breath against your nostrils.

To benefit from this technique you must meditate regularly, preferably at a fixed time every day. Over time you will find that the mind does not wander as often as it did when you started. The position of sitting cross-legged is no longer as uncomfortable as it was before. In fact, after a period of meditation you are more relaxed and energized. It is said that half an hour of meditation is more restful than many hours of sound sleep.

You will also find that you are so in tune with the sensation of your respiration that you will immediately recognize a change in the breathing pattern. When you are agitated or angry, the breath comes faster. Blood rushes to the face. With time you will be aware of these changes before they result in action. You will know when the mind is agitated as the subtle changes to the breathing will be recognized. Then with a balanced mind you can reflect before you act so that you do not say or do something that you will later regret.

Often during meditation you might be tempted to give

up. Doubts will begin to creep in. The pressures of daily life will take over and it will be more and more difficult to find the time to meditate. You may even feel that after so long no visible progress has been achieved. These doubts are normal. However, they need to be discussed with the teacher (and fellow meditators). In fact from time to time you might be faced with any of the five hindrances to progress — sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and sceptical doubt. The best way to start meditation is by attending a two-week Vipassanā retreat. This should be followed with weekly meditation performed in groups under the direction of an experienced teacher, and daily meditation on your own. The group will then be self-supporting. Helping each other and understanding each other's doubts and weaknesses will strengthen your resolve. You will be motivated to meditate daily on your own if you can have group meditation at least once a week.

On your own it will take firm resolve, and maybe in some instances, a little longer to get on track. In-truth, the unavailability of a temple or meditation centre close by makes it much harder for those of us living in non-Buddhist countries. But there are some among us who have succeeded, so it can be done. Reflect when in doubt of the benefits of meditation. Notice the small changes — the balanced mind, the reflection before response. Then you will slowly begin to see that changes, however subtle they may seem, have taken place.

With the ongoing practise of Samatha Meditation one will find that it is easier and easier to keep the mind on awareness of breathing. No longer does the mind wander at

will. The meditator can now concentrate for longer periods of time and keep his mind focused throughout the entire period. One is also more aware of sensations. One will find that one is now aware of thoughts before they have been turned into speech or action. **One can now concentrate with Right Effort as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna, as one now has better control or discipline of one's mind. One can now:**

Prevent evil or unwholesome thoughts from arising

Abandon evil or unwholesome thoughts if they should arise

Generate wholesome and good thoughts that have not arisen

Develop and bring to fruition good and wholesome thoughts that have arisen

Meditation is now moving from the 'classroom' to daily life.⁹ One begins to be mindful in every thought, action and speech. Whether one eats, or reads, or drives, or studies, one does it mindfully. One is fully aware of what one is doing. This in itself will be a big change for us living in North America. We seem to cram our days with so many activities that we are often doing two, sometimes three things at one time. It seems to be the only way to get all our daily chores done. Eating while watching television; studying while

9. This does not mean that you should restrict mindfulness only to the time during which you meditate. You should perform all your daily activities mindfully. You will then find that a balance is reached. Meditation helps your daily life and mindfulness in your daily life helps meditation.

listening to music; driving while talking on the cellular telephone. When one engages in more than one activity at a time, it is difficult to be mindful of either one of the activities. But with meditation this slowly changes. **One is now aware and mindful and practising Right Mindfulness as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna. One is mindful of:**

Activities of the body

Sensations or feelings

Activities of the mind

Ideas and thoughts

By maintaining this awareness for as long as possible one develops Right Concentration. Over time one finds that one's mind is now more relaxed, breathing is slower and calmer, the metabolism slows down. At this stage one who practises awareness of breathing may experience unusual phenomena, seeing lights or visions while having the eyes closed, hearing sounds not heard before. All these so-called extraordinary experiences are indications of the heightened level of awareness and concentration of the mind. One should, however, continue to focus on breathing awareness. These extrasensory experiences are but milestones on the path that one may or may not experience. They should, however, not distract you. Some, intent on awareness, may not even notice such sensations. Others may cling to these thinking they have achieved some form of spiritual development.

Meditators develop concentration not in order to experience unusual phenomena or bliss and ecstasy. The purpose is to examine one's own reality, to remove the conditioning that causes suffering. **This is Right Concentration as laid**

out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna. The meditator is now ready for Vipassanā Meditation.¹⁰

Vipassanā, or insight, is defined in the dictionary as follows: the ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of things. Just as in the dictionary definition, the Buddha used Vipassanā for the purpose of seeing into the true nature of self. Since the prime purpose is to be aware of the true nature of self, to be aware of every sensation and every feeling, one now begins in earnest to observe the sensations that one feels in every part of the body and mind.

The Buddha said, "Everywhere within the body one experiences sensation. Wherever there is life there is sensation. If you allow the attention to move at random from one part of the body to another, from one sensation to another, naturally it will always be attracted to the areas where there is strong sensation. You will neglect certain parts of the body and you will not learn how to observe subtler sensations. Your observations will remain partial, incomplete, superficial. Therefore it is essential always to move the attention in order."

And so one begins the practise of Vipassanā by isolating the tips of the toes and the sensation that is felt in the toes. To begin with one may feel nothing. In fact, one's attention may be diverted to the calf muscle which is aching due to the pressure of the other leg, or to the back that is now starting to stoop. But one must concentrate only on the toes

10. Meditation on Breathing Awareness and meditation on Insight are often performed simultaneously, with greater weight being given to breathing awareness at inception, and to insight later on when higher levels of concentration have been reached.

and examine and observe the sensation or the feeling. Little by little, very slowly, one moves up the foot to the ankle, the calf, the thigh. The idea is to observe the sensation in each part of the body slowly, one at a time, in order, starting at the tip of the toes and ending with the top of the head. Over and over again. If one's mind is wandering, one must move back to awareness of breathing and regain one-pointedness of mind. Then one starts once again to observe, observing deeply each and every sensation.

Remember that our goal is to be aware of every sensation and to develop equanimity. We examine every sensation with a balanced mind, without liking or disliking. The entire effort is in learning not to react. A sensation appears and liking or disliking begins. If we are unaware, the response to the sensation is repeated and intensified to craving that leads to clinging and aversion. It grows stronger and stronger until it overpowers the conscious mind. We become caught up in our emotions and all our better judgements are swept aside. The result is that we find ourselves engaged in unwholesome thoughts, speech or actions that harm ourselves and others. We create misery, suffering now and in the future as the result of one moment of blind volitional response (*sankhāra*). Keeping this in mind, we observe. We observe every sensation, however subtle, in order, methodically, so that none will be omitted. We do it over and over again until the meditation moves from the "classroom" to our daily life. We now instinctively observe our sensations with equanimity. Whether a pleasant experience has arisen in the meditator, or an unpleasant or a neutral one, it ceases, but equanimity remains.

With the heightened awareness of every sensation you start to observe the true nature of self. No longer are you merely observing the sensations of the external body. Your awareness is so great, your mind so developed that you are now aware of the sensations in internal organs and internal body parts. You see through realization that the body we called 'self' is made up of ever-changing component parts. You see that there is no separate self, only an ever-changing flux or process. **You achieve Right Understanding as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna.**

We are now in perfect harmony with our sensations. Awareness happens so quickly that it becomes almost second nature. We know when sensation occurs. We are aware of the point at which the process of response begins. We develop both awareness and equanimity at the deepest level. We are now conscious of every sensation and understand that it too will change. We do not respond blindly. We observe with a balanced mind and act instead of reacting. We act calmly, without letting our responses intensify to craving that leads to clinging and aversion. We catch them at the point of inception and act with equanimity. This is true wisdom. Instead of giving rise to blind volitional responses, every sensation now gives rise to wisdom (pañña). One completes Right Thought as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbāna.

When the meditator has reached this stage of awareness and has learned to act with wisdom and a balanced mind he will attain the supreme bliss of Nibbāna.

In order to teach the practise of the Path with a view to Nibbāna, I have had to segregate each step of the Path, change the order for ease of understanding, and address

it one step at a time. The Buddha, however, wanted us to practise all the steps in conjunction with one another. One would be practising generosity, morality, mindfulness and wisdom (meditation) daily at all times. The Noble Eightfold Path is not a linear state. It is more of a “working together”. On realizing the Fourth Noble Truth, the Path to Nibbāna, the Buddha said:

*“This is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering:
Such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light
that arose in me, about things not heard before...
This Noble Truth must be penetrated
by cultivating the Path...”*

Samyutta Nikāya

If I were to summarize the importance of Vipassanā meditation in the Buddha’s Path to Nibbāna, I would say as follows:

It is only through Vipassanā that we can destroy delusion and see things as they really are. At present we may have doubts for we have not seen for ourselves. We may have doubts as to whether all phenomena are impermanent, and doubts as to the Truth of no permanent soul. With Vipassanā you will see and realize for yourself. There will be no more doubts, as you will now have experiential wisdom. You will also understand the truth on suffering through observation of reality.

When one feels a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensation, one can now observe it knowing that this too will change. For this sensation also is impermanent. One can observe the sensation with equanimity so that it does not lead to craving to hold onto or avert, because one knows

through experience that this sensation too is impermanent. One also knows that attachment to this sensation and repulsion of this sensation lead to suffering. Understanding that this sensation is impermanent, one observes and acts. One acts with wisdom instead of reacting, which leads to craving, clinging and aversion.

When one has stopped sankhāra — one will stop suffering. For even though suffering exists, the cause of the pain and suffering one feels is the clinging and aversion that result from repeated sankhāra. In learning not to respond in ignorance, one slowly learns to reduce one's pain and suffering.

One also learns to view with compassion the frailties of mankind. One knows now that ignorance and delusion are the reasons behind one's responses. When someone is angry, thoughtless, or cruel one can now observe and understand with compassion that the person is behaving in this way and causing suffering and misery for himself because of ignorance. With loving kindness and compassion one can now help that person without responding to their anger. One can truly practise generosity and morality to its fullest.

All of us have suffered at some point in our lives. Maybe it was the pain of a grave illness or maybe it was grief at the death of a loved one. Five to ten years later, look back on your grief and see if you can recreate the intensity of the pain. You will find that over time, the unbearable grief and pain also have changed. The sorrow remains but the intense pain is gone, and it cannot be recreated.

Look back and observe an incident that resulted in intense anger and hatred. Five years later, even this hatred and anger have changed. See if you can recreate the intense

hatred and anger you felt. Now think back on the thoughts, words and deeds that resulted from this hatred. Five years later, feeling what you feel now about this incident, would you have acted in the same way?

Vipassanā lets you experience this change or impermanence. Experiencing this impermanence, one acts with calm and equanimity just as one would act five years later. One acts with wisdom because one knows that this sensation too is impermanent. It will pass and change. Instead of volitional responses, which lead to clinging and aversion, one acts. One enjoys the pleasant sensations with equanimity, with no craving to cling, knowing that these too will end. And one observes the unpleasant sensations with equanimity, with no craving to avert, knowing that these too will end. And one observes the neutral sensations with wisdom and equanimity, knowing that these too will end.

It is extremely important that you understand this section well. If we remain satisfied simply to accept and receive wisdom without questioning, it becomes a form of bondage. In the same way if we remain content merely to contemplate the Truth, to investigate and understand it intellectually, but make no effort to experience it directly, then all our intellectual understanding becomes a bondage instead of an aid to liberation.

The unique contribution of the Buddha to the world was a way to realize Truth personally, and thus to develop experiential wisdom (*bhāvana-maya pañña*). This method of achieving direct realization of the truth is Vipassanā. And this Truth can be realized during one's life-time, unlike heavenly birth which is attained after death. To ensure that the reader

has the full benefit of the teachings of the Buddha in this very difficult area, I have included the following quotations which are a direct translation of the words of the Buddha.

*“There has arisen in me this pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral experience.
It is composed of a gross nature, dependent on conditions.
But what really exists, what is most excellent is equanimity.”*

*Indriya Bhavana Sutta
Majjhima Nikāya*

*“There are three types of sensations. Pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.
All these are impermanent, composed, dependent on conditions,
Subject to decay, to decline, to fading away, to ceasing.
Seeing this reality, the well instructed follower of the Noble Path,
Becomes equanimous towards pleasant, unpleasant,
and neutral sensations.
By developing equanimity he becomes detached,
By developing detachment, he becomes liberated.”*

*Dighanakha Sutta
Majjhima Nikāya*

*“If a meditator abides,
observing the impermanence of pleasant sensations within the body
its decline fading away and ceasing
and also observing his own relinquishing of attachment to such sensations
Then his underlying conditioning
of craving for pleasant sensations within the body is eliminated.
If he abides,
observing the impermanence of unpleasant sensations within the body,*

*its decline fading away and ceasing
and also observing his own relinquishing of aversion to such sensations
then his underlying conditioning
of aversion towards unpleasant sensations within the body is eliminated.
If he abides,
observing the impermanence of neutral sensations within the body,
then his underlying conditioning
of ignorance towards neutral sensations within the body is eliminated."*

*Pathama Gelañña Sutta
Samyutta Nikāya*

*"When his underlying conditioning for
craving for pleasant sensations,
aversion towards unpleasant sensations,
and ignorance towards neutral sensations
are eradicated,
the meditator is called one who is totally free of
underlying conditioning, who has seen the truth,
who has cut off all craving and aversion,
who has broken bondages,
who has fully realized the illusory nature of the ego,
who has made an end of suffering."*

*Pahāna Sutta
Samyutta Nikāya*

*"The view of reality as it is becomes right view.
Thoughts of reality as it is become right thought.
Effort towards reality as it is becomes right effort.
Awareness of reality as it is becomes right awareness.
Concentration on reality as it is becomes right concentration.*

*His actions of body, speech and thought
and his livelihood become truly purified.
Thus the Noble Eightfold Path advances him
towards development and fulfilment."*

*Mahā-salāyatanika Sutta
Majjhima Nikāya*

This is what the Venerable Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha, said on realizing the Truth:

*"The faithful follower of the Noble Path makes effort, and
by practising with effort becomes mindful, and
by remaining mindful becomes concentrated, and
by maintaining concentration develops right understanding, and
by understanding rightly develops real faith, being confident in knowing.
Those truths of which before I had only heard,
now I dwell having experienced them directly within the body
and I observe them with penetrating insight."*

*Āpana Sutta
Samyutta Nikāya*

One day the Buddha was seeking his mid-day meal with bowl in hand when a recluse stopped Him, bowed down, and held His feet. He said, "Sir, I am told that you are fully liberated and teach a path to achieve liberation. Please teach this technique to me." The Buddha replied, "Yes, I teach such a technique, and I can teach you. But this (in the middle of the road) is not the proper time or place to teach. Go and wait in my meditation centre. I will return soon and teach you the technique." The man replied "Oh no, Sir, I cannot wait. Not

even for half an hour. Who knows? In half an hour I may die. In half an hour all the confidence I have may die. Now, Sir, is the time. Please teach me."

The Buddha looked at him with His compassionate eye and saw that the man had little time to live. But how was He to teach the Dhamma in just a few minutes while standing in the middle of the street? The Compassionate One spoke only a few words but His words contained the crux of His teachings. He said, "In your seeing there should be only seeing; in your hearing nothing but hearing; in your smelling, tasting, touching, nothing but smelling, tasting, touching; in your cognising, nothing but cognising (whatever you do, do it mindfully). When contact occurs through any of the six bases of sensory experience, there should be no valuation, no conditioned perception. Once perception starts evaluating any experience as good or bad, one sees the world in a distorted way because of one's blind responses. In order to free the mind from all conditioning, one must learn to stop evaluating on the basis of past volitional responses and to be aware, without evaluating and without responding."

The recluse, who had a spiritually pure and developed mind, sat down by the side of the road and in the few minutes left to him fixed his attention on the reality within. No valuation, no volitional responses, he simply observed the process of change within him. And in the few minutes left to him he achieved the supreme bliss of Nibbāna.

I included this story to encourage meditators. We know that enlightenment will not be reached so quickly by us, at least not in this birth, because we are not yet as spiritually advanced as the recluse was. We know that it is only by

working patiently, persistently, and continuously that the meditator can advance towards his goal. Yet it is encouraging to know that those who have strived in the past can and have reached liberation with just a few words of teaching, within a short period of trying.

Many years ago one of my students asked me if I was a better person than he was because I taught the Dhamma. I replied that it was not the knowledge of the Dhamma that made a person good, but that it was the practise of the Dhamma that made a person good.

I then explained to him that during the forty-five years the Buddha was of service to mankind and Gods He dispensed 82,000 Suttas. To that if we add the two thousand Suttas dispensed by His disciples, we have 84,000 documented Suttas of the Buddha's teachings. I then asked him, "Keeping in mind that the teachings of the Buddha are in Pāli, how many of these suttas do you think an average Buddhist would know and understand?" He replied, "About one tenth. I think an average Buddhist must know and understand about one tenth of the Buddha's teaching."

Assuming that this is correct, an average Buddhist would have read or heard and understood eight thousand four hundred of the suttas. That seems like a lot, does it not? But put in another way, the average Buddhist can then only practise the Dhamma contained in these eight thousand four hundred suttas, because that is all that he knows. Maybe the essence of the Buddha's teaching is included in this one tenth, maybe it is not. The fact is that only one tenth of the Buddha's teaching can then be practised by the average Buddhist. This is why it is so important

that you should first of all know the Dhamma. Because if one does not know the Dhamma, one cannot practise the Dhamma.

I then added that because I was learning the Dhamma to teach, I often read many books on a given topic before I prepared my teaching notes. I had to make sure that I understood perfectly in order to teach and answer questions, and that this often required the reading of many books. However, everything that I have read, everything that I know, I have taught to you, my students, through my lessons and my books. If you listen to me carefully, and if you read my books with concentration, you too can have the same knowledge that I have of the Dhamma. You and I then could be equal in our knowledge of the Dhamma. In fact, if you continue to question, study, and read books on the Dhamma, your knowledge of the Dhamma will be greater than mine.”

I then encouraged my student to practise the knowledge he had of the Dhamma. I also encouraged him to measure his progress, not against others, but against himself. And to you, my readers, I say the same. Practise the Dhamma to the fullest and measure your progress only against yourself. Then reflect in happiness, knowing that you are, to the best of your ability, under the present circumstances, practising the Dhamma with a view to Nibbāna.

*“The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts
The flavour of Dhamma excels all flavours
The pleasure in Dhamma excels all pleasures
He who has destroyed craving (tanhā) overcomes all sorrow.”*

Dhammapada 354

Glossary

Abhidhamma Pitaka	The books that contain higher teachings of the Buddha that require penetration or realization for full understanding
Anatta	The doctrine of no soul
Ānāpānasati meditation	Meditation on breathing awareness
Anicca	The doctrine of impermanence
Arahanth	One who has realized the Truth using the teachings of a Buddha
Asankkeyya	Infinite period
Bhavana	Meditation
Buddha	One With Wisdom, The Enlightened One
Bodhisatta	One on His way to perfection (name given to a Buddha Aspirant)
Dhamma	Truth or the Law
Dāna	Generosity
Dosa	Hatred
Dukkha	Suffering
Jātaka Stories	Birth stories of the Bodhisatta
Kalapas	Indivisible units
Kamma	Intentional moral and immoral actions (also known as the cause)

Karunā	Compassion and kindness to relieve others' sorrows
Kāya-panidhana Kāla	Era of action, (after the definite proclamation)
Lobha	Greed
Mahā Kappa	World cycle
Mano-panidhāna Kāla	Era of mental aspiration
Mettā	Goodwill and loving kindness
Moha	Delusion
Mudita	Sympathetic joy in the progress of others
Nibbāna	The Buddhist goal; the total destruction (or absence) of suffering
Pacceka Buddha	One who realizes the Truth but cannot teach it to others
Pāli	Language spoken by the Buddha
Paññā	Wisdom
Puthujjana	Worldling; one who has not attained even the first stage of sainthood
Saddhā	Confidence through study and understanding
Samatha meditation	Meditation on mindfulness
Samsāra	The cycle of birth and death
Sangha	Order of the monks and nuns
Sankhāra	Volitional formations or responses

Sasana	Dispensation of the Buddha
Sikkhāpada	Modes of discipline or precepts that the Buddha laid out for His followers
Sila	Morality
Sinhala	The race and language of the majority of the people of Sri Lanka
Sotapanna	First stage of spiritual development (One who has entered the stream of Nibbāna)
Supreme Buddha	A Fully Enlightened One who realizes the Truth and then teaches it for the benefit of men and Gods
Sutta Pitaka	The books that contain the majority of the teachings of the Buddha
Suttas	Discourses of the Buddha
Tanhā	Craving to cling to pleasant sensations and avert unpleasant sensations. Tanhā is the strong feeling that leads to “I want” for my happiness.
Upekkhā	Equanimity
Vaci-panidhāna kāla	Era of verbal aspiration
Vinaya Pitaka	Books that contain the code of ethics and discipline for the Sangha
Vipaka	The result of intentional actions (also known as the effect)
Vipassanā meditation	Meditation on insight

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About the Author

Radhika Abeysekera began teaching and writing books on the Dhamma to help re-introduce Buddhism to immigrants in non-Buddhist countries. The books are designed in such a manner that a parent or educator can use them to teach Buddhism to a child. Mrs. Abeysekera feels strongly that parents should first study and practise the Dhamma to the best of their ability to obtain maximum benefits, because what you do not possess you cannot give to your child. The books were also designed to foster understanding of the Dhamma among non-Buddhists, so that there can be peace and harmony through understanding and respect for the philosophies and faiths of others. She is currently working on "The Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha", which is the second book in this series.

"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God, avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual and a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."

Albert Einstein

Other Books by the same Author

The Life Of The Buddha

A work-book to introduce the life story of the Buddha to young children and new students of Buddhism. This book is written using plain language that young children can understand and includes illustrations and spaces where they can draw their own pictures. The purpose of this book is to introduce children to the Buddha.

Questions And Answers In Buddhism (Volume 1)

This book includes questions asked by students of the Dhamma and covers such topics as: Why should I believe in rebirth? What is the Buddhist viewpoint on capital punishment? and Why are there inequalities among mankind? The purpose of this book is to introduce the child or beginner to some important concepts of the Dhamma in an interesting manner while encouraging them to question and understand the teachings before accepting them.

In The Footsteps Of The Buddha

This book takes you in the footsteps of the Buddha from Lumbini where He was born to Kusinara where He passed away. It includes beautiful colour illustrations of the significant sacred places in the life of the Buddha and helps the reader to visualize the spirituality and exquisite beauty of these places. This book is addressed to all persons interested in the Buddha and the Dhamma and to persons who have an interest in history and ancient ruins.

With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of
Limitless Light!

~ The Vows of Samantabhadra ~

I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.

~ The Vows of Samantabhadra ~

Avatamsaka Sutra

Dedication of Merit

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

Namo Amitabha

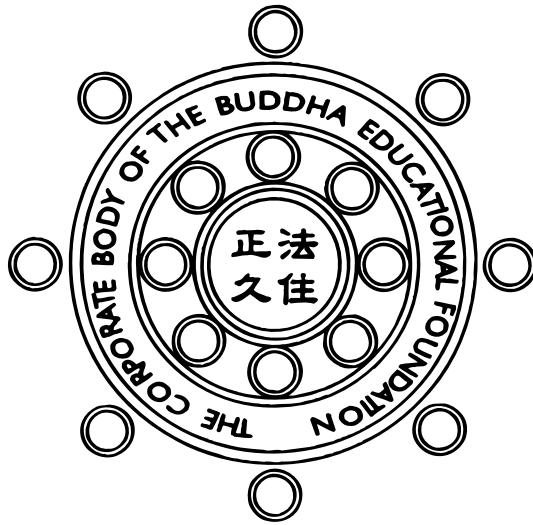
南無阿彌陀佛

As this is a Dhamma text,
we request that it be treated with respect.

If you are finished with it,
please pass it on to others or
offer it to a monastery, school or public library.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Namo Amitabha!



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