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ESSENTIAL  
THEMES  
OF  
BUDDHIST  
LECTURES

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BY

SAYADAW U THITILA

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# ESSENTIAL THEMES OF BUDDHIST LECTURES

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The contents that follow in this small publication comprise a collection of expanded notes prepared for unconnected individual talks on Buddhism given in the West by the author over the period 1938–1983. They are not, therefore, subject matter necessarily for consecutive reading.

To give the differing teaching material and information surrounding the main themes, repetition of phraseology in respect of the themes themselves is an unavoidable feature; thus each short article is here reproduced as originally conceived and without regard to any repetition.

## Essential Themes of Buddhist Lectures

Sayadaw U Thittila

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# PART ONE

## INTRODUCTORY ARTICLES OR TALKS ON BUDDHISM

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE BUDDHA

Friends,

The subject that I have chosen for this evening is 'The Buddha'.

Who is a Buddha? A Buddha is one who has attained bodhi. By bodhi is meant an ideal state of intellectual and ethical perfection which can be attained by man by purely human means. In order to make clear how the Buddha attained bodhi, let me narrate a brief summary of the Buddha's life.

About 623 years before the Christian era, there was born in Lumbini Park in the neighbourhood of Kapilavatthu, now known as Padaria in the district of modern Nepal, an Indian Sakyan prince, Siddattha Gotama by name. To mark the spot as the birth-place of the greatest teacher of mankind, and as a token of his reverence for him, the Emperor Asoka in 239 B.C. erected a pillar bearing the inscription, 'Here was the Enlightened One born'.

Gotama's father was Suddhodana, king of Kapilavatthu, the chief town of the Sakyan clan; and his mother, who died seven days after his birth, was



Queen Maya who also belonged to the same clan. Under the care of his maternal aunt, Pajapati Gotami, Siddhattha spent his early years in ease, luxury and culture. At the age of sixteen he was married to his cousin, Yasodhara, the daughter of Suppabuddha, the king of Devadaha, and they had a son named Rahula.

For nearly thirteen years Siddhattha led the life of a luxurious Indian prince, seeing only the beautiful and the pleasant. In his twenty-ninth year, however, the truth gradually dawned upon him, and he realized that all without exception were subject to birth, decay and death and that all worldly pleasures were only a prelude to pain. Comprehending thus the universality of sorrow, he had a strong desire to find the origin of it, and a panacea for this universal sickness of humanity. Accordingly he renounced the world and donned the simple garb of an ascetic.

Wandering as a seeker after peace he placed himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned brahman teachers, Alara and Uddaka. The former was head of a large number of followers at Vesali, and was an adherent of Kapila, the reputed founder of the Sassata system of philosophy, who laid great stress on the belief in atma, the ego. He regarded the disbelief in the existence of a soul as not tend-

ing towards religion. Without the belief in an eternal immaterial soul he could not see any way of salvation. Like the wild bird when liberated from its trap, the soul when freed from its material limitations would attain perfect release; when the ego discerned its immaterial nature it would attain true deliverance. This teaching did not satisfy the Bodhisatta, and he quitted Alara and placed himself under the tuition of Uddaka.

The latter also expatiated on the question of 'I', but laid greater stress on the effects of kamma and the transmigration of the soul. The Bodhisatta saw the truth in the doctrine of kamma, but he could not believe in the existence of a soul or its transmigration; he therefore quitted Uddaka also and went to the priests officiating in temples to see if he could learn from them the way of escape from suffering and sorrow. However, the unnecessarily cruel sacrifices performed on the altars of the gods were revolting to his gentle nature, and Gotama preached to the priests the futility of atoning for evil deeds by the destruction of life, and the impossibility of practising religion by the neglect of the moral life.

Wandering from Vesali in search of a better system Siddhattha went to many a distinguished teacher of his day, but nobody was competent to give him what he earnestly sought. All the so-called philoso-

phers were groping in the dark, it was a matter of the blind leading the blind, for they were all enmeshed in ignorance. At last Siddhattha came to a settlement of five pupils of Uddaka, headed by Kondañña, in the jungle of Uruvela near Gaya in Magadha. There he saw these five keeping their senses in check, subduing their passions and practising austere penance. He admired their zeal and earnestness, and to give a trial to the means used by them he applied himself to mortification, for it was the belief in those days that no salvation could be gained unless one led a life of strict asceticism, so he subjected himself to all forms of practicable austerities. Adding vigil to vigil, and penance to penance, he made a super-human effort for six long years until eventually his body became shrunken like a withered branch. His blood dried up, the skin shrivelled and the veins protruded, but the more he tortured his body the farther his goal receded from him. His strenuous and unsuccessful endeavours taught him one important lesson, though, and that was the utter futility of self-mortification.

Having this valuable experience he finally decided to follow an independent course avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, for the former tends to retard one's spiritual progress and the latter to weaken one's intellect. The new path was the Majjhima Patipada, the Mid-

dle Path, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of his teaching.

Early in the morning on the full moon day of Vesakha, as he was seated in deep meditation under the Bodhi Tree, unaided and unguided by any supernatural agency but solely relying on his own efforts, the consciousness of true insight possessed him. He saw the mistaken ways that all the various faiths maintained, he discerned the sources whence earthly suffering came and the way that leads to its annihilation. He saw that the cause of suffering lay in a selfish cleaving to life, and that the way of escape from suffering lay in treading the Eightfold Path. With discernment of these grand truths and their realization in life, the Bodhisatta eradicated all passions and attained enlightenment – he thus became a Buddha.

Having attained Buddhahood, the supreme state of perfection, he devoted the remainder of his precious life to serving humanity, both by example and precept, without any personal motive whatsoever. In order to deliver his first sermon the Buddha started for Benares, which has been famous for centuries as the centre of religious life and thought. On his way he met one of his former acquaintances, Upaka, a Jain monk, who, being struck by his majestic and joyful appearance, asked, ‘Who is the teacher

under whose guidance you have renounced the world?’ The Buddha replied, ‘I have no master, I am the Perfect One, the Buddha. I have attained peace, I have attained Nibbana. To found the Kingdom of Righteousness I am going to Benares; there I shall light the lamp of life for the benefit of those who are enshrouded in the darkness of sin and death.’ Upaka then asked, ‘Do you profess to be the Jina, the conqueror of the world?’ The Buddha replied, “Jinas are those who have conquered self and the passions of self, and those alone are victors who control their passions and abstain from sin. I have conquered self and overcome all sin, therefore I am the Jina.’

At Benares he met Kondañña and his four companions in the Deer Park, now known as Saranath. When these five saw the Buddha coming towards them they addressed him as Gotama, his family name. Then the Buddha said to them, ‘Call me not after my personal name, for it is a rude and careless way of addressing one who has become a Buddha. My mind is undisturbed whether people treat me with respect or disrespect, but it is not courteous for others to call one who looks equally with a kind heart upon all living beings, by his familiar name; Buddhas bring salvation to the world and so they ought to be treated with respect.’ Then he preached them his first great sermon, the

Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, in which he explained the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. They received ordination and formed the first nucleus of the holy brotherhood of disciples known as the Sangha.

During his active life the Buddha made many converts, high and low, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, brahmans and chandalas, ascetics and householders, robbers and cannibals, nobles and peasants, men and women from all classes and conditions became his countless disciples, both ordained and lay. After a supreme ministry of forty-five years the Buddha, in his last preaching tour, came to the town of Kusinara in the eastern part of Nepal, where he passed into Nibbana at the ripe age of eighty. His last words to his disciples were, 'All conditioned things are subject to decay; strive with heedfulness.'

The Buddha was, therefore, a human being. As a man he was born, as a man he lived, and as a man his life came to an end. Though a human being he became an extraordinary man, *acchariya manussa*, as he himself says in the Anguttara Nikaya: he does not claim to be an incarnation of Vishnu, as the Hindus believe, nor does he call himself a saviour who saves others by his personal salvation. The Buddha exhorts his disciples to depend on them-

selves for their salvation, for both purity and defilement depend on oneself. In the Dhammapada he says, 'You yourselves should make the exertion, the Buddhas are only teachers. The thoughtful who enter the Way are freed from the bondage of sin. He who does not rouse himself when it is time to rise, who, though young and strong is full of sloth, whose will and thoughts are weak, that lazy and idle man will never find the way to enlightenment. Strenuousness is the path of immortality, sloth the path of death. Those who are strenuous do not die; those who are slothful are as if dead already.'

Buddhas point out the path, and it is left to us to follow that path to save ourselves. To depend on others for salvation is negative, but to depend on oneself is positive. In exhorting his disciples to be self-dependent the Buddha says in the Parinibbana Sutta, 'Be ye lamps unto yourselves; be ye refuges to yourselves; hold fast to the Dhamma as a lamp; hold fast to the Dhamma as a refuge; seek not for refuge in anyone except yourselves. Whosoever shall be a lamp unto themselves and a refuge unto themselves, it is they among the seekers after bodhi who shall reach the very topmost height.'

Furthermore, the Buddha does not claim the monopoly of Buddhahood which, factually, is not the special prerogative of any specially chosen person.

He reached the highest possible state of perfection to which any person could aspire, and he revealed the only straight path that leads thereto. According to the teachings of the Buddha anybody may aspire to that supreme state of perfection if he makes the necessary exertion; thus, instead of disheartening his followers and reserving that exalted state only for himself, the Buddha gave encouragement and inducement to follow his noble example.

The teaching founded by the Buddha is known in English as Buddhism.



# CHAPTER TWO

## THE BUDDHA AND HIS MESSAGE

The technique of salvation which is characteristic of Buddhism is very different from that of all other religions. They say, 'Turn to God, pray to him, give yourself utterly to him, become one with him.' Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Judaism, base their teachings on the idea of God. These religions say that until a man can believe in God he cannot begin to live a truly righteous or useful life.

We know that thousands in these religions do live lives of charity, purity and holiness, but the strange fact is that lives of charity, purity and holiness are also lived by thousands who follow the Buddha who never asked men to worship any god as the first step towards their salvation. The Buddha taught men to rely upon themselves in order to achieve their own salvation, and not to look to any external saviour. He never put himself forward as a mediator between us and our final salvation, but he could tell us what to do because he had done it himself and so knew the way. However, unless we ourselves act, the Buddha cannot take us to our goal.

Though we may 'take refuge in the Buddha', the Buddhist phrase in the simple ceremony of pledging ourselves to live a righteous life, it is not through any blind faith that he can save us. He can point the way, he can tell us of its difficulties and the beauties which we shall find as we tread the way, but he cannot tread it for us, we must tread the way ourselves.

Yet we are not left alone and unaided in this difficult task, for in order to help us to tread the way to our goal, Nibbana, the Buddha has mapped out the moral life which must be lived. Like an engineer who constructs a pathway up a difficult mountain, so the Buddha has constructed a code of morality. First come the panca sila, the five precepts as they are called, namely: not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to take any intoxicating liquor or drug. These are not the Buddha's commandments, the breaking of which entails sin, but they represent the preliminary ideals of a virtuous life which a man is to accept whole-heartedly if he is to call himself a Buddhist. He does not promise to the Buddha not to break the precepts, he gives the promise to himself, for the phrase is, 'Panatipata, etc.', 'I undertake the precept to refrain from taking life', and so on, in respect of the other precepts. Each man, as he repeats the precepts, puts himself upon his own honour to do his best not to break them.

And if he breaks them? Then the only repentance which is constructive is to make the pledge to himself again, indeed, as many times as are necessary, day after day, month after month, year after year, until he wins the struggle against his lower nature. A man must win the goal of purity and nobility by himself; not the Buddha, nor the angels, nor any god can bring a man to salvation.

So you see, the practice of the moral life is the very core and essence of Buddhism; character is the product of daily, hourly actions, daily acts of kindness, charity and unselfishness. By doing just actions we come to be just, and we judge strength by the power of action. In the same way as a musician is not one who merely loves music, but is one who is able to blend and combine sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear, so also it is the quality of our actions that determines our character.

According to Buddhism there is a spark of bodhi (wisdom) in the heart of every sentient being, but in ordinary beings it has not been developed into its power by the weakening of selfish desire, anger and ignorance. Each life is a stage in the pilgrimage from small to great, from less to more, and from ignorance to enlightenment. Everyone is the architect of his own fate. We shall reap in the future, in this life or the next, what we are sowing now. As we had

the power in the past to make our present what it is, so we have equal power now to create a happy and useful future. To win the final victory of perfection it is necessary for each one of us to defeat the three great internal enemies, namely, selfish desire, anger and delusion. To defeat these three great enemies it is necessary for each one of us to live a life of charity, to extend his love towards all beings and to develop the spark of wisdom into its fullest power.

It is only when these three great enemies are defeated, and the final victory of salvation is won, that there will be no war, and we shall have real and everlasting peace and happiness.

# CHAPTER THREE

## WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

What is Buddhism? Is it a philosophy or a religion or an ethical system? Strictly speaking it is not a philosophy, for it does not contain an elaborate system of theories and facts exclusively for cogitation, although it must be admitted that the Buddha has anticipated much modern speculation.

What is known as Buddhism consists of three aspects, the doctrinal (*pariyatti*), the practical (*patipatti*) and the realizable (*pativedha*), which are interdependent and interrelated. The doctrine is preserved in the Tipitaka. This Tipitaka, which contains the word of the Buddha, is estimated to be about eleven times the size of the Christian bible. As the word itself implies, it consists of three baskets, namely: The Basket of Discipline (*Vinaya Pitaka*), the Basket of Discourses (*Sutta Pitaka*) and the Basket of Ultimate Things (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*).

The Vinaya Pitaka, which is subdivided into five books, deals with the rules and regulations of the Order of monks and nuns, and gives a detailed account of the life and ministry of the Buddha. The Sutta Pitaka consists of discourses preached by the

Buddha, and also in some instances, by his distinguished disciples such as the Ven. Sariputta, Moggallana, Ananda, etc. Divided into twenty-six books it is rather like a collection of prescriptions, for the sermons were propounded to suit the occasion and the temperament of different individuals. The Abhidhamma Pitaka, however, is the most important and the most interesting because it elaborates the four ultimate things, i.e., consciousness (*citta*), mental properties (mental concomitants, *cetasika*), matter (material qualities, *rupa*) and Nibbana.

Thus we see that Buddhism is concerned with truth and facts, and has nothing to do with theories and philosophies which may be accepted as gospel truth today and may be thrown overboard tomorrow. The Buddha has presented us with no new astounding philosophical theories, nor did he venture to create any new material science, rather he explained to us what is within and without so far as it concerns our emancipation and ultimately he laid out a path of deliverance which is unique.

It should be understood that the Buddha did not preach all that he knew. On one occasion while he was passing through a forest the Buddha took a handful of leaves and said to some bhikkhus, 'O bhikkhus, what I have taught is comparable to the leaves in my hand, and what I have not taught is

comparable to the amount of leaves in the forest', for he taught us only that which is necessary for our emancipation. Incidentally, though, he has made some statements which are accepted as scientific truths today.

Buddhism is not merely to be preserved in books, nor is it a subject to be studied only from an historical or literary point of view; on the contrary, it is to be learned and put into practice in the course of one's daily life, for without actual practice one cannot appreciate truth. Study and practice come first, but above all it is realization, self-realization, which is its ultimate goal. As such Buddhism is comparable to a raft which is meant for the sole purpose of escaping from the ocean of samsara; Buddhism, therefore, cannot strictly be called a philosophy.

Is it then a religion? Neither is it a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not system of faith and worship. Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents; here mere belief is dethroned and replaced by confidence, *saddha*, as it is known in Pali, based on knowledge of truth. The confidence placed by a follower in the Buddha is like that of a sick man towards the physician, or that of a student towards his teacher. A Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha because it is he who discovered the path of deliver-

ance. A sick man should use the remedy which the physician prescribes in order to be cured, and the pupil should study what his teacher says in order to become learned. In just the same way, a Buddhist who possesses *saddha* should follow the Buddha's instructions in order to gain deliverance.

The starting point of Buddhism is reasoning, or understanding, or in other words *sammaditthi*. To seekers after truth the Buddha says, 'Do not believe in anything on mere heresay; do not believe in anything that is traditional just because it is old and handed down through generations, do not believe in rumours or anything because people talk about it; do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee; never believe in anything because the custom of many years leads thee to regard it as true; do not believe in anything on the mere authority of thy teacher or priests. According to thine own experience, and after thorough investigation, whatever agrees with thy reason and is conducive to thine own well-being and to that of all other living beings, accept that as truth and live accordingly.'

Is Buddhism, then, an ethical system? It no doubt contains an excellent code of morals which is adaptable to all climes and ages, but it is much more than ordinary morality. The Singala Sutta (Si-



galovada Sutta), Mangala Sutta, Metta Sutta, Vasala Sutta, Dhammika Sutta, etc., should be read carefully to understand the high standard of morality; but morality, or sila, is only the ABC of Buddhism.

Buddhism, therefore, is neither a philosophy nor a religion, nor an ordinary ethical code, it is the doctrine of actuality, a means of deliverance; or, as it is called in Pali, the Dhamma.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## BUDDHISM

If a man is to build up a successful, healthy and happy life, a life that will stoutly resist the fiercest storms of adversity, it must be based on sound moral principles such as the five precepts laid down by the Buddha.

Our life is what we make it by our own thoughts and deeds, thus it is through his own thoughts that a man rises or falls. To think habitually of a certain virtue is to become that virtue, and to allow the mind to dwell on thoughts of vice for any length of time is to become guilty of that vice.

There is a common delusion that man's failings and lapses in conduct are due to other people about him and not to himself, but this delusion arises from the error of believing that others can be responsible for a man's misdeeds and errors. All a man's weaknesses and sins arise within his own mind and heart, he alone is responsible for them, and those who succumb to being induced, persuaded or excited by tempters, become cooperators in sin and vice. Tempters are quite powerless against those who refuse to respond. Any weakness lies in a man's own mind, and if he has given in to others'

promptings, the real source of his troubles, his failures and miseries, is his own weakness; he is responsible for his every action.

A common excuse for wrong-doing is that right action would lead to failure, loss and unhappiness; thus immature-minded people concern themselves less with the deed than with the consequences of the deed. The longing to obtain pleasant results is the cause of much mental confusion, making man incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, worthy and unworthy, right and wrong. Right action is very simple whereas wrong action is inextricably mixed, one falsehood often requiring the concoction of several others to hide it. Just one act of dishonesty, corruption or fraud needs a dozen other wrongs to fortify it, which means the creation of complications that bring trouble and unhappiness to oneself and to others.

The right-minded man concerns himself with the act, and not with the consequences; he considers not what is pleasant or unpleasant, but what is good and right according to the rules of morality. When he does right, and does not seek any result, he is relieved of all the burdens of doubt, fear and perplexity, he never becomes involved in an inextricable tangle or difficulty. His mind is at peace, his conscience serene; these are the requisites for health, happiness and long life.

## *Likes and Dislikes*

One often hears the expression, 'I do not feel like doing it'. Such a man is in bondage to self when he is under the sway of his feelings, habits and inclinations, he is not free from servility in respect of his feelings. Those who wish for freedom in this way must be guided by reason and willpower, bringing calm, deliberate judgment to bear on all things, being mindful at all times that, 'This is a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, it is needful or needless, my feelings have nothing to do with it. It is not how one feels, but what is the proper thing to do'. If our life and conduct are ordered by our likes and dislikes, we are weaklings, puppets and bond-slaves, apt to be overwhelmed by indolence and incompetence, ill-health and frustration.

There are two kinds of emotions: (1) negative or destructive, and (2) positive or constructive.

Negative emotion such as illwill, jealousy, bitterness, malice, anger, spitefulness, hatred, despair, fear, impatience, worries, anxieties, should be guarded against, for they poison the warm current of life and often cause troubles in the heart, brain and blood vessels. They invariably cause weakness, failure, folly, misery or untimely death.

Positive or constructive emotion such as pity, sympathy for others, appreciation of the good, kind-

ness, goodwill and altruistic motives are to be encouraged and cultivated. They react through the mind on the vital glands of the body to build up robust health, happiness, prosperity and long life.

Right mindfulness, right attention, is the seventh step in the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the overcoming of sorrow and to the attainment of moral purity, and it includes: 1. Concentration on the body, 2. concentration on one's feelings, 3. concentration on one's thoughts, and 4. concentration on mental objects. In the Majjhima Nikaya we read of ten great blessings which are assured to the person who practises them. None who desires good health, happiness and wisdom can dispense with meditation in Buddhism; moral culture through meditation is a fundamental step in deliverance from suffering and unhappiness. By means of meditation one learns to reason through every situation, instead of reacting emotionally according to likes and dislikes, according to prejudice, custom or tradition; one learns to rationalize the experience of life. When this lesson is learnt one becomes supreme over every circumstance, happening or event.

Take as an illustration two persons who meet financial disaster. One reacts emotionally and falls into a stormy sea of bitterness, loses all hope and sinks in health, vigour and resolution, or he kills

himself to end it all. The other man, who has learnt to think over the problems of life, to meditate, to rationalize, applies every available method to overcome the problem and finds a satisfactory solution, for he has exercised his mind just as the athlete exercises his muscles. He is the master, while the other is a slave. Many disappointments and breakdowns would not exist if people were to live according to the Dhamma.

So you see, Buddhism is a philosophy of hope and of certainty of achievement. It is the gospel of attainment, of deliverance from unhappiness and suffering. The Buddha explained that in every mortal, however humble or lowly he may be, there is a grain of worth, a little goodness, a spark of wisdom which he can kindle into a flame, which he can develop by conscious human effort. The Buddha encouraged everyone to strive for spiritual development, declaring that every right effort is sure of a reward here and now, in this life, or in a future one.

The Buddha also proclaimed that every low desire, every longing for ignoble things, every unworthy feeling that we conquer and trample down, and every difficulty we meet heroically and victoriously, with righteousness according to the rules of morality, becomes another rung on the ladder by which we can climb towards a nobler, higher life. This is the law of

progressive development, the Buddhist doctrine of evolution, of attainment, of accomplishment.

The Buddha drew for us the picture of progressive existence, a growth from small to great, from less to more, from ignorance to knowledge, of development depending upon inward strength, diligence and effort put forth from life to life. This is the doctrine of human perfection won through altruism, discipline and wisdom.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THERAVADA BUDDHISM

The name of the founder of what is known in the West as Buddhism, was Gotama, this being the name of the clan or family to which he belonged. The word 'Buddha' means 'awakened', or 'enlightened one', and is not a name but a title of honour bestowed upon the sage Gotama who attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree at Buddhagaya in India.

Gotama was born as the son of an Indian king on the border of modern Nepal six hundred and twenty-three years before Christ, and to mark the spot as the birthplace of the great teacher of mankind, and as a token of reverence for him, the Emperor Asoka in 239 B.C. erected a pillar bearing the inscription, 'Here was the Enlightened One born'. At the time of his birth the wise men of the kingdom said that the signs showed that he would become either a very great ruler or a very great religious teacher. His father, wanting him to be a very great ruler kept his son's mind turned towards worldly things instead of the religious life, and tried to arrange that his son should never see anything of an unpleasant nature that might set him thinking



seriously about the world and life. In his twenty-ninth year, however, while on his way to the royal park, Gotama for the first time saw an old man, a sick man and a dead man, and he learned that all men without exception were subject to birth, old age and death, and that all wordly pleasures were only a prelude to pain. It was when he saw a monk that he realized that in order to learn the way to overcome man's universal sorrow he must give up wordly pleasures and accordingly he renounced his kingdom and became an ascetic.

Gotama wandered about the countryside as a seeker after truth and real peace, approaching many a distinguished teacher of his day, but nobody was competent to give him what he earnestly sought. He strenuously practised all forms of severe austerities, and made a superhuman effort for six long years until eventually his delicate body was reduced to almost a skeleton, but the more he tormented his body, the further away he was from his goal. Finally, having realized the utter futility of self-mortification, he decided to follow a different course, avoiding the two extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence. The new path which he discovered was the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of his teachings. By following this path his wisdom grew to its fullest power, and he discovered the Four

Noble Truths, understood things as they truly are and finally attained full enlightenment.

As a man, Prince Gotama by his own will, effort, wisdom and love, attained Buddhahood, that highest possible state of perfection, and he revealed to mankind the only straight path that leads thereto. A special characteristic of Buddhism is that anybody may aspire even to the state of the Buddha himself if he makes the necessary exertion, it is a sort of evolutionary process and is achieved by one's own effort.

The Buddha laid stress on human dignity, and taught the worth of the human being. A Buddha in the making is a Bodhisatta, and as a Bodhisatta through countless births he suffered all, sacrificed all, and fulfilled every perfection, so that on some distant day he might achieve this unique goal, the goal of winning – not only for himself, but for all beings – deliverance from the heavy burdens of birth, old age, disease and death. The Buddha himself tells us of his origin and how it started with an inflexible, aspiring resolve; he tells us of the gradual perfection of the flux that made that aspiration, and how finally he won full enlightenment. In this way, instead of disheartening his followers and reserving that exalted state only for himself, the Buddha encouraged and induced them to follow his noble example.

The word of the Buddha is called Dhamma, which in the Sanskrit form becomes Dharma. It means truth, that which really is; it also means law, the law which exists in a man's own heart and mind. It is the principle of righteousness, therefore the Buddha appeals to man to be noble, pure and charitable, not in order to please any god, but in order to be true to the highest in himself.

Dhamma, this law of righteousness, exists not only in a man's heart and mind, but it exists in the universe also; all the universe is an embodiment or revelation of Dhamma. The laws of nature which modern science has discovered are revelations of Dhamma; if the moon rises and sets, it is because of Dhamma, for Dhamma is that law within the universe which makes matter act in the ways studied in physics, chemistry, zoology, botany and astronomy; Dhamma exists in the universe just as Dhamma exists in the heart and mind of man. If a man will live by Dhamma he will escape misery and come to Nibbana, the final release from suffering.

Thus Buddhism is not a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, it is not a system of faith or worship. Buddhism begins as a search for truth. It does not begin with unfounded assumptions concerning any god or first cause, and it does not claim to present the whole truth of the

absolute beginning and end of mankind's spiritual pilgrimage in the form of a divine revelation. The Buddha himself searched and discovered with direct insight the nature of the cosmos, the cause of its arising and of its passing away, and the real cause of suffering together with the way in which it could be brought to an end, for the sake of all living beings. Having done thus, he proclaimed the principles on which he had conducted his research so that all who wished to do so could follow his system and know the final truth themselves.

The Buddha taught men to rely upon themselves in order to achieve their own deliverance and not to look to any external saviour. He never puts himself forward as a mediator between us and our final deliverance, but he can tell us what to do because he has done it himself and so knows the way. However, unless we ourselves act, the Buddha cannot take us to our goal. He can point out the way, he can tell us of the difficulties and the beauties which we shall find as we tread the way, but he cannot tread it for us, we must tread the way ourselves.

The life process of the universe is governed by the natural law of cause and effect. The cause becomes the effect and the effect becomes the cause, and so birth is followed by death and death, on the other hand, is followed by birth; birth and death being

two phases of the same life process. In this circle of cause and effect or of birth and death, known in Buddhism as samsara, a first beginning is not discoverable. It is said, 'The origin of phenomena is not discoverable, and the beginning of beings obstructed by ignorance and ensnared by craving is not to be found.' (Samyutta Nikaya II)

According to Buddhism the universe evolved, but it did not evolve out of nothingness. It evolved out of the dispersed matter of a previous universe and when this universe is dissolved, its dispersed matter, or its residual energy which is continuously renewing itself, will in time give rise to another universe in the same way. The process is therefore cyclic and continuous, and the universe itself is composed of millions of world systems such as that which we know as our own solar system, each with its various planes of existence.

What of the soul? That which we call 'man' is composed of mind and matter. According to Buddhism, apart from mind and matter (*nama* and *rupa*) which constitute the so-called man, there is no such thing as an immortal soul – *atta* – which lies behind them. Matter (*rupa*) is the visible form of invisible qualities and forces and there are altogether twenty-eight types of material qualities which constitute the physique body of an animate being. Mind (*nama*)

is the most important part of a being, and consists of the four mental aggregates, namely:

- 1 *Feeling*, of whatever kind (*vedana*)
- 2 *Perception*, of sense objects or reaction to the senses (*sañña*)
- 3 *Mental Properties*, the fifty types of mental formations including good and evil tendencies and faculties (*sankhara*)
- 4 *Consciousness*, which is the fundamental factor of all the other three (*viññana*)

Thus the combination of the five aggregates, or of the material and mental forces, is called a being which may assume as many names at its types, shapes, forms and so on may vary, according to the mode of physical and mental changes. Man is, therefore, a moral being of good and evil tendencies, of qualities and forces, who has unlimited powers physically, mentally and morally. In the heart of every human being there is a spark of wisdom, but in ordinary mortals it is dormant or crippled by its unenlightened intercourse with selfish desire, hatred and ignorance. As a Buddhist the purpose of a man's life should be to grow from small to great, from less to more, from ignorance to enlightenment and from imperfection to perfection. Man is the architect of his own fate, and he will reap what he sows.

Thus, the material and mental forces combine and re-combine with no underlying substance or soul to make them permanent. This process of becoming, the wheel of life, continues indefinitely until its main cause, craving or selfish desire for existence, is totally annihilated. It is this desire which sets the wheel of life in motion and it is manifested in action which is in reality volition or will-power. It is called 'kamma' in Pali, but 'karma' in Sanskrit, and it is this kamma, this volitional action which is responsible for the creation of being.

Kamma means all kinds of intentional actions, whether mental, verbal or physical; that is, all thoughts, words and deeds. Every action produces an effect; it is cause first and effect afterwards. We, therefore, may say that kamma is 'the law of cause and effect', and that man is the master of his own destiny, child of his past and parent of his future. Kamma, however, is not determinism nor is it an excuse for fatalism; the past influences the present but does not dominate it. The past is the background against which life goes on from moment to moment, and the past together with the present influences the future; but one should remember that only the present moment exists, and the responsibility for using the present moment for good or ill lies with each individual. Man has a certain amount of free will and can, therefore, modify his

actions and affect his future. So if a man does a good deed or utters a good word or thinks a good thought, the effect upon him will be to increase the tendencies towards goodness in him. The practice of good kamma, when fully developed, will enable man to overcome evil and thus bring him to his goal, Nibbana.

At the root of man's trouble is his primal state of ignorance, and from ignorance comes desire which sets the kammic force in motion. The Buddhist ascends to Nibbana through the Middle Way, the path of wisdom, morality and mind-control, or meditation; he ascends through the cycle of rebirths, and perfects himself by conquering his cravings through wisdom and love. The attainment of the perfect type involves the utmost development of all the faculties of man by the persistent effort of one's own reasoning, understanding and right living.

Buddhism teaches that with the practice of meditation and mind culture, one can acquire the five supernormal powers, i.e. celestial eye, celestial ear, memory of past births, reading the thoughts of others and various psychic powers. Not only this, but Buddhism also teaches that with the attainment of Nibbana in this life itself, through enlightenment and wisdom, one can reach the end of this chain of rebirths.



Nibbana is not annihilation, neither is it a kind of nothingness, it is the state free from any possibility of the re-arising of conditioned existence, the ultimate peace and happiness. In the Buddhist scriptures it is always described in positive terms such as the highest refuge, safety, emancipation, peace and so on.

Buddhism consists of three aspects: doctrinal, practical and realizable. The doctrinal aspect is preserved in the scriptures called Tipitaka, or Three Baskets, the canon which contains the words of the Buddha, and which has been estimated by English translators to be eleven times the size of the Christian Bible.

All the teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one verse:

*To refrain from all evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind,  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.*

This verse embodies the three stages on the grand highway that leads to enlightenment, the three stages of morality, concentration and wisdom. Morality regulates word and deed, concentration controls the mind, but it is wisdom, the final stage,

that enables the spiritual man to annihilate completely the passions which are ever creating a turmoil within him.

Soon after the attainment of enlightenment the Buddha founded the Order of monks (*Sangha*) containing both the community of those noble disciples who have reached the ariyan noble stages, of which the last is perfect sainthood (*arahat*), and also the community of Buddhist monks who are striving to reach the ariyan noble stages. The Order of monks increased, and within the forty-five years of the Buddha's ministry it had spread throughout India and beyond, and the gospel of liberation became known to all 'whose eyes were but lightly covered with dust.' A similar order was established by the Buddha for nuns, with all the same rules and such additional ones as were required for women. The Buddhist Sangha, which historically is the earliest monastic institution to be governed by perfectly democratic principles, continues to the present day.

On the seventh day after the Buddha had passed away, Maha Kassapa, who was head of the Sangha, decided to hold a convocation to establish the authoritative teachings of the Buddha. They then held a great council at Rajagaha under the patronage of King Ajatasattu, and the Buddhist canon was collected and recited in chants.

During the first century after the demise of the Buddha, there was only one schism among Buddhists, but at the end of the first century during the reign of King Kalasoka, a community of monks attempted to introduce ten new indulgences into the discipline of the Sangha, pronouncing them to be allowable to the Sangha. To suppress this heresy, and for the purpose of securing the permanency of the doctrines of the Buddha, seven hundred leading arahats having Revata for their chief, protected by King Kalasoka, held the second great council at Vesali in precisely the same manner as the previous one.

The third great council was held in the third century after the Buddha, under the patronage of the Emperor Asoka. On the advice of Moggaliputta Tissa, who headed the third great council, Emperor Asoka sent messengers of the Dhamma to the various foreign countries known at that time.

The fourth great council was held in Ceylon early in the sixth century after the Buddha, headed by Maha Agga and supported by King Vattagamini. At that council the Tipitaka, which had been transmitted in Pali by memory from the time of the Buddha, was committed to writing for the first time.

The fifth great council was held in Mandalay, Burma, early in the twenty-fifth century after the

Buddha, headed by Jagara Thera with support of King Mindon. At that time the whole Tipitaka was inscribed on seven hundred and twenty-nine marble slabs placed at the foot of Mandalay Hill.

The sixth great council was held in Rangoon, Burma, commencing at the full moon of May, 2498 years after the demise of the Buddha, and ending on the 2500th anniversary (May 1956). At that council the Tipitaka was recited in Pali, and steps were taken toward translating it into some more modern languages.

In modern times there are mainly two schools of Buddhism, i.e., Theravada, which is practised chiefly in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; and Mahayana, which is practised in China, Tibet and Japan.

Theravada, the Way of the Elders, was the original and only tradition from the earliest times to the time of the second great council when the Mahasanghika school, a precursor of Mahayana, was formed. Sarvastivada then arose as the second major school which differed from Theravada, although in only minor details at first, after which it divided into several sub-sects, many of which eventually developed into Mahayana.

The main differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are the concepts in regard to the Buddha himself, as well as in regard to the Bodhisatta ideal, the canon of scriptures, the development of doctrine, the celibacy of the monks and the form of ceremony.

The similarities between the two school of Buddhism are: the Four Noble Truths, which relate human suffering to the attachment of what is only transient and impermanent; the anatta (non-ego) doctrine and the doctrine of the chain of causation, although variously interpreted; the Noble Eightfold Path, as the way of deliverance which involves a moral discipline as well as the practice of meditation; the virtue of metta, loving-kindness, as being fundamental; the acceptance of the Buddhist Teaching as being universal in its application; and the Middle Way of life to the goal of Nibbana, the highest of all happiness.

# CHAPTER SIX

## THE MEANING OF BUDDHISM

*Extract from talk of above title*

The Buddhist ascends to Nibbana through many stages of the Middle Way, the path of wisdom, morality, and control. There is not enough space here even to mention these phases or the various aspects of the regimen recommended by the Buddha in his vast scriptures; but it may be taken for granted that the life of the conscientious Buddhist is full and rich. Through the cycle of rebirths he ascends, he perfects himself, he conquers his cravings through wisdom and love. Slowly the kammic force ebbs away, the flame dies down.

At the root of man's trouble is his primal state of ignorance. From ignorance comes desire, which sets the kammic force in motion. Hence, the way to Nibbana lies through knowledge, and we come again full circle to Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings. For in Dhamma, as truth, lies release from ignorance and desire and perpetual change, and the Buddha has shown us the way to truth.

What, then, is the meaning of Buddhism? Ultimately Buddhism, although not strictly speaking a reli-

gion, is a systematic exercise in spirituality, certainly one of the greatest ever conceived. It offers the individual a means by which he may fulfil himself through understanding, reaching eventually the plane of the supraperson on which both the self and self-knowledge are no longer useful. Meister Eckhart, the Great Christian mystic, said: 'The kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead'. The Buddhist would agree, though he would probably prefer a less grim way of saying it. Nibbana in life, the peace which 'passeth all understanding', is the conquest of life, the discovery of the permanent in its flux of psychophysical accidents and circumstances. The Buddhist believes that through meditation and good hard thought he can follow the Buddha through the successive stages of enlightenment and achieve at last the perfect wisdom which surmounts all needs.

But by no means all Buddhists are monks or adepts. What does Buddhism mean for the ordinary person going about his work in the world? All through the Buddha's teaching, repeated stress is laid on self-reliance and resolution. Buddhism makes man stand on his own feet, it arouses his self-confidence and energy. The Buddha again and again reminded his followers that there is no one, either in heaven or on earth, who can help them or free them from the results of their past evil deeds.

The Buddhist knows that the powers of his own mind and spirit are enough to guide him in the present and shape his future and bring him eventually to the truth. He knows that he possesses a strength which is ultimately unsurpassable.

Moreover, Buddhism points unequivocally to the moral aspect of everyday life. Though Nibbana is amoral, in the sense that final peace transcends the conflict of good and evil, the path to wisdom is definitely a moral path. This follows logically from the doctrine of kamma. Every action must produce an effect, and one's own actions produce an effect in one's own life. Thus, the kammic force which carries us inevitably onward can only be a force for good, that is, for our ultimate wisdom, if each action is a good action.

This doctrine finds its highest expression in metta, the Buddhist goal of universal and all-embracing love. Metta means much more than brotherly feeling or kindheartedness, though these are part of it. It is active benevolence, a love which is expressed and fulfilled in active ministry for the uplifting of fellow beings. Metta goes hand in hand with helpfulness and a willingness to forego self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. It is metta which in Buddhism is the basis for social progress. Metta is, finally, the broadest and conceivably the most intense degree of sympathy,



expressed in throes of suffering and change. The true Buddhist does his best to exercise metta toward every living being and identifies himself with all, making no distinctions whatever with regard to caste, colour, class or sex.

In addition, of course, the teachings of the Buddha are a prime cultural force in Oriental life, just as the Bible is the ultimate source of much Western art and thought. The Buddhist scriptures are larger and more detailed than the Christian Bible, and in translation would fill a dozen volumes. In Pali, the language of the scriptures (the Buddha's teachings) are called Tipitaka, which means 'The Three Baskets'.

Vinaya Pitaka, 'The Basket of Discipline', consists of five books which expound the rules of monastic life. *Sutta Pitaka*, 'The Basket of Discourses', is a collection of discussions, stories, poems, and proverbs, written in simple language, imparting all the precepts of practical Buddhism. The third basket, *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, or 'Basket of Ultimate Things', deals with epistemological, metaphysical and psychological matters and is of interest mainly to trained philosophers.

Thus, the Tipitaka offers cohesive guidance at every level of intellectual, ethical and spiritual activity. The Buddha's word is a light, a lamp for Burma – and for everyone.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## WHAT BUDDHISM MEANS TO A BUDDHIST

*Lecture to the High Court Buddhist Association, Rangoon*

The title of my talk this afternoon is 'What Buddhism means to a Buddhist'. To a Buddhist, Buddhism is not a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood; but to him or to her Buddhism is a practical method of life – to show how to live rightly, thereby, happily and peacefully in spite of the unrest that is prevailing in the world.

Buddhism, we say, is not a religion because it is not a system of faith and worship. The word 'religion' usually means a system of faith and worship but Buddhism is a way of life, and it is also a way of understanding the conditions of life so that a Buddhist may be able to live in harmony with other people and also with the laws of righteousness.

Buddhism is founded on reason. Therefore, it is a scientific explanation of the natural laws of life and not a set of dogmas laid down authoritatively; there are no dogmas in Buddhism. You know what a dogma means (a dogma is a rigid system laid down by authorities as representing the Truth it is, so to

speak, an arrogant declaration of one's own opinion). In Buddhism there are no such dogmas, but there are laid down a set of facts and principles for us to live by – for us to follow.

Buddhism declares the laws of righteousness, the Universal law, the laws of cause and effect (*Dhamma Niyama*) proclaiming that man is the master of his own destiny. He can mould his own life according to his ideas as a Buddhist. Buddhism removes that fear of death which haunts every untrained mind. Buddhism is the right way of life which is neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

Many people in the West think that Buddhism is pessimistic. On the contrary, the Buddhist way of life is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Many people in the world, especially the unthinking, carefree sort would like to have an optimistic view of life. Whenever such a man becomes depressed he is advised to be optimistic, but according to the Buddhist view this is not correct. Optimism, being an over-estimated view of the condition of life, does not take the right view; nor is the pessimist's view, which underestimates the actual condition of life, the right view.

The right view of life is the Middle Way (*Majjhima-patipadd*) between these two extremes. Both these

two extremes are futile for anyone to follow. So to a Buddhist, Buddhism means the right way of life – a method by which a man can live happily, peacefully and with security for the present and security in the hereafter. In Great Britain, people talk of future security but the security they speak of is very temporary. The Buddhist way of security is permanent, eternal and lasting.

The lives of men, and in fact the whole universe of living beings are governed by unchanging, eternal laws, such as the laws of cause and effect, the laws of the mind or the laws of psychology (*Citta-niyama*). So the whole universe is governed by these eternal laws and not by any imaginary God.

For instance, sin, according to Buddhism, is not like the original sin mentioned in Christianity. Sin, Buddhism says, is the direct consequence of man's ignorance of these laws of righteousness, these laws of justice. As you know, sin begets sorrow. These are ancient or eternal laws of life.

To anyone who believes that the world is not governed by the laws of righteousness but by a changing, continually changing, God, it seems one must try to persuade a supreme God to make it better. It means that one does not believe that God's will is always just, for God has wrath which has to be appeased, compassion to be aroused and partiality to

be won. But to the Buddhist the laws of nature, the laws of righteousness which govern the universe, are always the same, the same for one and all. Therefore, a man's duty is not to break these rules of nature – the laws of justice – not to try to change these laws by means of any prayer and by guarding against them but to know, to understand these eternal, unchanging laws and live in harmony with these laws.

Right through the Teachings of the Buddha, stress is laid on such attributes as self-reliance, self-confidence, resolution, energy, work, effort. Buddhism makes a man or woman stand on his or her own feet and be master or mistress of fate. Mindfulness is also emphasized greatly by the Buddha. For instance, in the *Dhammapada*<sup>1</sup> it is said: 'You yourself must make an effort; the Buddhas are only teachers. The thoughtful who enter the Way are freed from the bondage of sin.' Again, in the same book, 'Mindfulness is the path of immortality, sloth the path of death. Those who are strenuous do not die; those who are slothful are as if dead already.'<sup>2</sup>

By deathlessness, the Buddha means *Nibbana*. All other conditions, all other lives are full of death – continual, unending death.

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1. Magga Vagga 276

2. Appamada Vagga 21

Also the Buddha said, it is in many scriptures either directly or indirectly, that it was through his ceaseless efforts and unshaking perseverance that he attained Buddhahood, the highest state of perfection, that is, supreme enlightenment. Yet the Buddha does not take a monopoly of his Buddhahood; instead the Buddha encouraged his followers to be as high as possible in the spiritual field, or if they try hard enough, even as high as himself. That is the chief characteristic of Buddhism. The Buddha is like a good father who looks after his son well and likes him to be his equal or even to be his better, if the son can; that is the beauty of Buddhism. And the Buddha shows the way to attain self-enlightenment. He again and again reminded his followers that they will have to rely on themselves, rely on their own efforts and that there is no one anywhere either in heaven or on earth to help them, to save them from the results of their own misdeeds. You will remember also the saying of the Buddha: 'Evil deeds are done only by yourself, not by your parents, friends, relatives or advisers. So you yourself will have to reap the painful results of these misdeeds.' So we are responsible for our own evil deeds. There is no one to save us from the results of these evil deeds.

Understanding that there is no one, no God, no big ceremony that can save us, that can give us spiritu-

al salvation, the true Buddhist feels compelled to rely on himself and on his own efforts, and, therefore, he has confidence in his power and sense of responsibility. The tendency to rely on any God or any imaginary power outside oneself weakens one's own confidence and affects one's own sense of responsibility. The tendency to trust his own power strengthens his own confidence and sense of responsibility. Moral and mental progress is only possible where there is freedom of thought, without dogmas, without authorities. Where the dogmas come and fetter the mind there can be no spiritual progress; and reliance, trust in any outside authority, leads to spiritual stagnation.

I have lived many years among Christians. Some of my Christian friends, in a joking way perhaps, say their prayers like this: 'O God, if there be a god, save my soul, if I have a soul.'

Now in any faith, freedom of thought is important. In one of the six qualities of the *Buddha Dhamma* these words, as you all know, are mentioned '*Ehi Passiko*' (Come and see for yourself). The Buddha asked us not to believe in a blind way what is said by him. Of all religions Buddhism makes most demands on mental activity – mindfulness, earnestness, strenuousness, etc. When the Buddha gave his famous exhortation to the Kalama Princes in

the *Kalama Sutta* he said: 'Don't accept (views) from hearsay, from what you have been told, because it is mentioned in the scriptures, by reason of logic, in consideration of the reasoning (being plausible), by tolerating the views based on speculation, because of its appearance of possibility and because 'Our monk is venerable'. When you Kalamas realise by yourselves that these qualities are good, faultless, praised by the wise and that they lead to good and happiness when practised and observed, then Kalamas, you should abide in them after acquiring them.'

So the Buddha urged us not to believe what is said merely on authority. Also not to believe in anything because it is the traditional custom but at the same time it is better not to denounce such traditions very easily. You must try to experiment with it, examine it thoroughly and after such examination, if it is reasonable and conducive to your happiness and the happiness and welfare of others, then take it, live up to it. This could be said to be a very grand and one of the bravest and boldest declarations ever made by any religious teacher.

To understand the causes and the conditions of life, one of the doctrines taught by the Buddha is the doctrine of *Kamma*. It is always good to talk a little about the doctrine of *Kamma* because it helps us to



understand Buddhism more and at the same time to understand our daily life better. *Kamma* is a *Pali* word meaning ‘action.’ Literally it means ‘good and bad actions’. It covers all actions, be they mental, verbal or physical; in other words, thought, words and deeds. In its ultimate sense *Kamma* means volition – mental volition. In the *Anguttara Nikaya* mental volition is defined. Having mental volition one acts by the mind, by words and by actions.

The doctrine of *Kamma* is not fatalism nor is it a doctrine of predetermination. *Kamma* is one of the 24 causes mentioned by the Buddha in the *Patthana* which govern the whole universe. *Kamma* is one of the 12 causes which constitute the wheel of life and death taught by the Buddha in the *Vibhanga*. *Kamma* is also one of the four causes mentioned in the *Abhidhamma* and also in the *Suttas*. *Kamma* is not of the past only; the past merely influences the present but does not fully dominate it because *Kamma* is not only the past but also the present. The past forms only a background against which the present life works for the moment. The past combined with the present influences the future which is to come. Only the present moment exists and can be said to be within management, and the responsibility of using this present moment lies with each individual either for good or for evil. Every action produces its effect. It is the action or the

cause that comes first and then the effect. Therefore, we speak of *Kamma* as the Universal Law of Cause and Effect.

Let me give you a very common example which has been given many times. For instance, throwing a stone is action, which is a cause. This stone strikes a glass window and breaks the pane. The throwing of a stone is action, a cause, but the stone strikes the window pane and breaks it; that is the effect. The act of throwing a stone at the window is the cause of the breaking of the window and the broken window is the effect. This effect in its turn becomes a cause for further trouble, or effect; for instance, the wasting of money to replace the broken glass. Because you have to replace the window pane and waste your money, the effect on your mind will be disappointment. Then you become irritable. When you are irritable your anger can easily be aroused. Your anger is the result (or effect) but it also becomes a cause again; because of your anger you may say or do something unpleasant; and this something said or done in an unpleasant manner may hurt something or someone and so on.

In Christian terminology, because you throw a stone and break the window and you have to pay money to buy a new window pane, the whole series of causes and effects leading to the final result is

regarded by them as a punishment of God. In Buddhism there is no room for God who would come and punish you. So, to continue with my example, when you get angry you may say something unpleasant to somebody who may reply by saying something equally unpleasant to you. After that, if you are not careful, this may lead the two of you to a furious quarrel. For two persons this may lead to a fight. Between two nations this sort of thing may lead to a war. All this shows us clearly the existence of the laws of Cause and Effect.

If properly understood, the doctrine of Kamma teaches us to be careful with our thoughts, words and actions in daily life so that as time goes on, it makes us better human beings, willing to perform better and nobler actions towards all and live more harmoniously with our fellow human beings. This is just one example.

There is a common question asked by people in other countries: 'Sometimes we try to do good, thinking the effect will be good, but in some cases the result or the effect turned out to be just the opposite. The effect is bad. In our locality a cunning, grasping man is called a 'shrewd' person; the more shrewd, the more wicked, the more greedy he is, the more is he praised as a successful hero in society. Again among the dogs, the strongest and fierc-

est dog gets the best bone. So where is the working of your laws of Cause and Effect? Where is the justice of this doctrine of *Kamma*?

Well, as for that not only in Australia, for the questioner was an Australian, but in other parts of the world as well, cunning, greedy people are generally praised as if they are the conquering heroes in society. So, you too may ask, 'When shall we get good results for the good that we have done or are trying to do? The good we have done seems to be very slow in bearing fruit'. Then, there was another man who told me that while he was engaged in saying his prayers aloud to God – somebody – his neighbour – came and told him that he was making a lot of noise over it. So he said to me, 'I was trying to perform a good act in good faith but the immediate effect is bad, very bad. So your law of *Kamma* does not work out well for us.'

I said to him: 'Though you may be worshipping God for a good purpose at that moment, in order to know why the man came and insulted you, you will have to think over what you did or said to him either that morning or the day before or some time in the past. Then, you may be able to find some cause why he came to insult you. 'People are apt to forget what they have done to other people, so when the result comes they think it comes suddenly or that

they are taken by surprise. It is not always sudden or that they are caught by surprise. It may be that you do not remember what you have done and the cause may be entirely misunderstood.

Therefore whatever comes to us is always just and must be accepted in the right spirit. If something very unpleasant happens to us we should not be proud of it. It just shows that our good *Kamma* has come back to us bearing good fruit. If anything unpleasant occurs to us we should not be angry, depressed or disappointed but we should keep calm realising that bad *Kamma* has come back to us to remind us of our past mistakes. Whenever something comes to upset us let us try to be good, and let us never be worried, excited or angry. Let us make a firm resolve within ourselves to live rightly by trying to understand the working of these Laws of Cause and Effect – called the Law of *Kamma* in Buddhism.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## BUDDHISM: THE PATH TO WISDOM

*B.B.C. Talk (Reprinted from the Listener, April 15th 1948)*

Buddha is one who has attained bodhi; by bodhi is meant wisdom – an ideal state of intellectual and ethical perfection, which can be attained by man through purely human means. The term ‘Buddha’ literally means ‘enlightened one’ – ‘a knower’ – and it is the name of honour bestowed upon the Indian sage Gotama after obtaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Buddhagaya in India. Gotama was born as the son of an Indian king on the border of Nepal, about 623 years before Christ. To mark the spot as the birthplace of the greatest teacher of mankind and as a token of his reverence for him, the Emperor Asoka erected in 239 B.C. a pillar bearing the inscription, ‘Here was the Enlightened One born.’ Gotama spent his early years in ease, luxury and culture. His father, the King, tried his best not to let him see anything unpleasant and ugly. In his twenty-ninth year, however, when Gotama went to the royal park, he saw on his way an old man, a sick man and a dead man, and he realized that all,

without exception, were subject to birth, old age and death, and that all worldly pleasures were only a prelude to pain. Comprehending thus the universality of sorrow, he had a strong desire to find a remedy for this universal sickness of humanity.

### *Buddha's Search for Peace*

On the night after his return from the park the Prince thought that if remained as a ruler he would have to spend precious time in kingly duties to maintain his royal position, and not in searching for the remedy whereby to attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana – the complete cessation of all sorrow. He accordingly gave up his kingdom and severed all worldly ties. He then lived an ascetic life and wandered as a seeker after release. He approached many a distinguished teacher of his day, but nobody was competent to give him what he earnestly sought. He strenuously practised all forms of severe austerities and made a superhuman effort for six long years. Eventually his delicate body was reduced to almost a skeleton. The more he tormented his body the farther he was away from his goal. Having realized the futility of self-mortification, he finally decided to follow a different course, avoiding the extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence.

The new path which he discovered was the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path, which subsequently be-

came one of the salient characteristics of his teachings. By following this Path his wisdom grew into its fullest power and he discovered the Four Great Truths, understood things as they truly are, and finally attained full enlightenment. As a man Prince Gotama, by his own will, effort, wisdom and love, attained Buddhahood – that highest possible state of perfection – and revealed to mankind the only straight path that leads thereto. A special characteristic of Buddhism is that anybody may aspire even to the state of the Buddha himself if he makes the necessary exertion. It is a sort of evolutionary process and it is achieved by one's own effort.

The Buddha laid stress on human dignity and taught the worth of the human being. He painted for us the perfect picture of a human being striving and struggling from life to life in the quest for moral perfection – Bodhisatta, man as Buddha in the making. As a Bodhisatta, through countless births he suffered all, sacrificed all and fulfilled every perfection, so that on some distant day he might achieve this unique goal, the goal of winning, not only for himself, but for all beings, deliverance from the heavy burdens of birth, old age, disease and death. The Buddha himself tells us of his origin, and how it started with an inflexible aspiring resolve. He tells us of the gradual perfection of the flux that aspiration and how, finally, he won full



enlightenment. Instead of disheartening his followers and reserving that exalted state only to himself, the Buddha encourages and induces them to follow his noble example.

Is Buddhism a religion? It is not a religion in the sense in which the word is commonly understood, for it is not a system of faith and worship. Though we may take 'refuge in the Buddha,' as runs the Buddhist phrase in the simple ceremony of pledging ourselves to live a religious life, it must not be with any blind faith that he can save us. Here mere belief is dethroned and replaced by confidence based on knowledge of the truth. A Buddhist who has confidence in the Buddha follows the Buddha's instructions to gain deliverance. Because we keep a statue of the Buddha to which we pay respect, we are not in any sense idol worshippers. The image is there to remind us of the perfect personality of the Master, who out of compassion for us left behind his teaching for our benefit. We do not seek our salvation from an image of the Buddha. How can a statue save us? 'Work out your salvation yourself; the Buddhas are only teachers,' says the Buddha. Each one is his own refuge and none should expect to be saved by another.

The Buddha can point out the way, and tell us of its difficulties and of the beauties which we shall find as

we tread the way, but he cannot tread it for us. We must tread it ourselves. In order to help us to tread the way to our goal, the Buddha has mapped out a practical method of life which has to be lived. It is only by living in accordance with the principles of the teaching that one can realize the true significance of it. The great ideal is Nibbana, the final release from suffering. This is a state to be attained by following the method of life which leads to self-enlightenment. The Buddha's way of life is the middle way which is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Optimism tends to over-estimate the conditions of a middle way between the pairs of opposites, and the doctrine of the 'Way' may only be grasped by an understanding of the correlation and interdependence of the two. All extremes beget their opposites and both are alike unprofitable. For all people the middle way of a good life lived in the world is best and safest.

Buddhism consists of three aspects; doctrinal, practical and mystical.<sup>1</sup> The doctrinal aspect is preserved in the Scriptures called Three Pitakas or baskets of the Canon which contain the words of the Buddha. It has been estimated by English translators of the Pitakas to be eleven times the size of the Christian Bible.

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All the teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one verse:

*To refrain from evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind,  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.*

This verse embodies the three stages of the Grand Highway that leads to enlightenment: morality, concentration and wisdom. Morality regulates word and deed, concentration and wisdom. Morality regulates word and deed, concentrations controls the mind, but it is wisdom, the final stage, that enables the spiritual man to annihilate completely the passions which are ever creating a turmoil within him.

### *The Power of Wisdom*

Wisdom is the power of seeing what things truly are and how to act rightly when the problems of life come before us. The seeds of wisdom have lain latent in us, and when our hearts are soft and warm with love they grow into their powers. When a man has stilled the raging torrents of greed, anger and delusion he becomes conscientious, full of sympathy, and he is anxious for the welfare of all living beings. He abstains from stealing and is upright and honest in all his dealings. He abstains from sexual misconduct and is pure, chaste. He abstains

from tale-bearing. What he has heard in one place he does not repeat in another so as to cause dissension. He unites those who are divided, and encourages those who are united. He abstains from harsh language. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear and which go to the heart. He abstains from vain talk. He speaks what is useful at the right time according to the facts. It is when his mind is pure and his heart is soft by being equipped with this morality that the divine seed, wisdom, grows. Knowledge of the properties of the magnetic needle enables the mariner to see the right direction in the ocean in the darkest night when there are no stars visible. In the same way wisdom enables a man to see things as they truly are, and perceive the right way to peace. It is this wisdom which enable us to unite with all beings in one immense ocean of tenderness and love.

# CHAPTER NINE

## A SHORT HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

On the spot where the Buddha passed away, innumerable princes, brahmans, traders and suddas, as well as devas, assembled to attend the funeral ceremony. There were also seven hundred thousand monks of whom Maha Kassapa was at that time the chief, and under whose direction the funeral obsequies over the body and sacred relics of the Buddha were performed. Having the foolish remarks of the monk Subhada, who declared that the Buddha's teachings as well as the rules and regulations for the Order of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis were to be observed only in the lifetime of the founder, the head theras had a great desire to perpetuate the doctrines of the supreme teacher. On the seventh day, therefore, after the Buddha had passed away, the head theras for the purpose of holding a convocation on religion arranged to convene five hundred principal theras who had overcome the dominion of the passions, were of great celebrity, perfect in every religious attribute, and who were versed in doctrinal knowledge. They then held a great council at Rajagaha under the patronage of King Ajatasattu, collecting the Buddhist canon and repeating it in chants. This convocation was terminated in seven months.

The Buddhist canon consists of three aspects, the doctrinal (pariyatti), the practical (patipatti), and the realizable (pativedha), all of which are interdependent and interrelated.

The doctrine is preserved in the Tipitaka. This Tipitaka, which contains the word of the Buddha is estimated to be about eleven times the size of the Christian bible. It comprises eighty-four thousand discourses, And Professor Rhys Davids estimated the total number of words of the whole text of Tipitaka to be 1,752,800 As the word itself implies, the Tipitaka consists of three baskets, namely the Basket of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), the Basket of Discourses ( Sutta Pitaka) and the Basket of Ultimate Things (Abhidhamma Pitaka).

The Vinaya Pitaka, which is divided into five books, deals with the rules, and regulations of the Order of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, and gives a detailed account of the life and ministry of the Buddha. The Sutta Pitaka, divided into twenty-six books, consists of discourses preached by the Buddha and in some cases, his chief disciple. It is rather like a book of prescriptions, for the sermons were propounded to suit the occasion and the temperament of individuals. The Abhidhamma Pitaka is the most important and the most interesting, as it elaborates the four ultimate things: consciousness (citta),

mental properties (mental concomitants, cetasika), matter (material qualities, rupa) and Nibbana.

The convocation which was held by the principal theras, having Maha Kassapa for their chief, is called Theriya Sangiti. During the first century after the death of the Buddha, there was only one schism among Buddhists, but at the end of that century during the reign of King Kalasoka a community of monks, resident in the city of Vesali, attempted to introduce ten new indulgences into the discipline of the Buddhist Order, pronouncing them to be allowable to the Order. To suppress this heresy twelve hundred thousand monks, whose leader was Revata, assembled in Vesali. Thereupon their senior, for the purpose of securing the permanency of the doctrines of the supreme teacher, selected seven hundred theras who were gifted with the quality of sanctity and were repositories of the doctrines contained in the three Pitakas. With Revata as their chief, and protected by King Kalasoka, all these theras held the second convocation of religion at Vesali, where the council was conducted in precisely the same manner as the previous one and brought to a close in eight months.

Towards the end of the second century after the death of the Buddha, however, the pupils of those sinful monks, who had been degraded by the theras

who held the second convocation, originated the schism called the Mahasangika heresy which was gradually subdivided into various sects. These persons set up a doctrine of their own, although professing it to be the doctrine of the Buddha, and if there was any religious performance they performed it according to their own wishes without reference to the Buddhistic rules. In consequence of numerical preponderance and schisms of these monks, the good bhikkhus were incapable of regulating their conduct according to the rules of the original faith; therefore the bhikkhus in all the Buddhist temples in India were incapable of observing the rites of sanctification (uposatha) for seven years, as none but good bhikkhus could be admitted to these rites.

The Buddha passed away in 543 B.C. 200 years after the Buddha's decease (323 B.C.) Asoka, the emperor of India, became the defender of the Buddhist faith and conferred the royal protection of the Sangha, causing all those heretic monks to be expelled from the Order. The whole of the monks thus degraded numbered sixty thousand, and the Order was then restored to unanimity of communion and upheld the rules of sanctification. For the purpose of holding a further convocation the chief monk at that time, Tissa, selected a thousand monks of sanctified character, perfect in religious knowledge and versed in Tipi-



taka. Under the auspices of the emperor Asoka they held the third council at Patana according to the methods used by Maha Kassapa and Revata, who led the first and second convocations respectively, and that council was brought to a close in nine months.

The Emperor Asoka gave his beloved son, Mahinda, also his daughter, Sanghamitta, to the Order, and sent them to Ceylon to introduce the religion there. His monks taught it throughout the whole of India and carried it to fourteen Indian nations outside its boundaries, also to five Greek kings, his allies, with whom he made treaties to admit his religious preachers. The names of the five kings mentioned in the edicts of the Emperor Asoka, and inscribed by him on stone pillars, are Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. Five of Asoka's monks were sent to the five divisions of China in the third century B.C., from whence Buddhism reached Korea in 372 A.D. and spread to Japan in 552 A.D. In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. it spread to Cochin China, Mongolia and other Asiatic countries, and from Kashmir it spread to Nepal and Tibet, Sona and Uttara, two of Asoka's monks, introduced Buddhism into Burma, and thence gradually it spread to Arakan and Cambodia. In the seventh century, A.D. 638 it spread from Ceylon to Siam where it became the state religion, even as it still is today.

Towards the end of the first century of the Christian era the Buddhists in India were divided into two schools, one of which taught that all the individual had to do was follow out the pure doctrine of the Buddha and seek Nibbana; this was named Hinayana, or the Little Vehicle. Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos are said to belong to this school. The other taught special doctrines about the Buddha and some new metaphysical theories; this was styled the Mahayana, or the Great Vehicle. However, the terms Hinayana and Mahayana are not mentioned in texts, but they have become common among Western writers owing to their usage by Chinese pilgrims. One of the best known philosophers of the Mahayana school was Nagarjuna, who founded and expounded the Madhyamika philosophy. The end and aim of his philosophy was to bring about a compromise, as it were, between the Buddhists and Brahmins and find a mid-point where the adherents of these two could meet and shake hands with one another. Since his time the Brahmins began to regard the Mahayana Buddhists as their brothers in religion, and the Mahayana School had the predominant voice.

In the closing years of the eleventh century, however, India was overrun by the Mohammedans who destroyed the Buddhist monasteries, appropriated the monastic lands for the use of soldiers, massa-

cred monks by the thousand and burned libraries wherever found. Many monks fled across the borders into Tibet and other safe places of refuge, carrying their books with them, and so Hinayana was practically stamped out from India, while Mahayana lingered in nooks and corners for two more centuries before it was lost altogether.

# CHAPTER TEN

## VESĀKHA FESTIVAL

The most important of the Buddhist festivals is Vesakha. What is Vesakha? It is the name of an Indian month, the month of May, and was the month upon the full moon of which the Buddha was born, upon which he attained enlightenment and also upon which he passed away. The Buddhist festival, therefore, is called after the name of the month. In order to explain a little further, let me give you a summary of the Buddha's life.

The Buddha's life is a remarkable story of unselfishness, service and great ideals. Born in India on the full moon of May 623 B.C., his name was Gotama, and his father, Suddhodana, was king of Kapilavatthu: his mother was Queen Maya. The birth of Gotama was accompanied by many omens such as the blind receiving sight, the deaf and dumb bearing and speaking, the crooked becoming straight and the lame walking: so the king invited to the palace a hermit, Asita, who was famous in the kingdom not only for wisdom and scholarship, but also for his skill in interpreting signs. When Asita saw the royal child he laughed heartily, but then wept bitterly, and the king asked the reason for this. Asi-

ta replied that the omens indicated that the royal child would become the Buddha, bringing deliverance to the world, and this holy event overjoyed him. To explain his lamentation, Asita said that he was too old to live to see that happy event, and his end was drawing so near that he could not hold his tears.

The king asked, 'What shall my son see to make him retire from the world?', to which Asita replied, 'the four signs.' The King queried further, 'What are the four signs?'. To which Asita answered, 'An old man, a diseased man, a dead man and mendicant (holy man).' 'From time froth', said the king, 'let no such person be allowed to come near my son, it will never do for my son to become a Buddha; what I would wish to see is my son exercising sovereign rule and authority over the four great continents'. He then placed guards for a distance of about a mile in each of the four directions, in order that none of these four kinds of men might come within sight of his son.

Thus Gotama spent his early years in ease, luxury and culture, seeing only what was beautiful and pleasant. In his twenty-ninth year, however, the truth dawned upon him, and he then decided to devote his life to the answering of three great questions: whence came we, why are we here and whith-

er are we going? This decision came as a result of four remarkable occurrences, the four signs mentioned by Asita, which forced upon his attention the problems of age, sickness and death; 'Why do people grow old?' he asked, but none could answer him. From whence comes sickness which deprives man from even temporary happiness; what is that cold silent form lying upon the couch of death: does the consciousness die there; is death the end of all things, or is it the release, a door opening into a room beyond? Upon these problems the young prince contemplated deeply, but could find no answer until he became a Buddha. Then came the fourth occurrence, or sign: a mendicant, his face peaceful and calm, certain of freedom from old age, sickness and death, became revealed to the young prince. By the example of the holy mendicant the prince was shown that true happiness lay in peace and understanding.

Inspired by the great need of his fellow beings, Prince Gotama crept silently from the palace at the age of twenty-nine, and leaving behind all the attachment of the world, including his wife and child, he wandered penniless and alone among the hills and valleys of India, asking all with whom he came into contact if they could shed light upon the mystery of human life. Always the answer was in the negative, the spiritual teachers and philosophers of

his day, who could argue and philosophize on many things being unable to answer what he earnestly sought. He mortified his body, attaining by his religious austerities great fame as a holy man as he fasted and wandered, gathering around him a number of disciples who worshipped him because of his untiring zeal and remarkable courage. Undermined by exposure, tormented by religious practices and suffering from malnutrition, at last his health broke down. He realized then that all his labours and self-persecution had produced nothing, and that he was no nearer the solution to his questions than when he dwelt in idleness in the palace of his father. Having thus realized the futility of self-mortification he started eating his food in a reasonable way again, but all his disciples immediately deserted him, saying that the great holy man had eaten like sinners did.

Deserted and beset with uncertainties, Gotama wandered on and at last sat down beneath the spreading branches of the Bodhi Tree, where he determined to remain until he had fought out with himself the problems which beset him. Slowly, as the hours passed, through deep meditation his wisdom grew into its full power; his mind no longer beset with worries and problems, he clearly beheld the process of human existence, seeing both the causes of things and their remedies. It was here

that Prince Gotama became the Lord Buddha – on the full moon of Vesakha – at the age of thirty-five.

Perfect in wisdom, and free from the mists of illusion, he rose from his seat under the Bodhi Tree and went forth to preach the gospel of liberation. Passing to the old city of Benares he stopped at the little town of Saranath, where he found five of the disciples who had deserted him. He persuaded them to listen, and the Buddha preached his first sermon, those five disciples becoming the first followers of what later became the world's largest religion.

For a period of forty-five years the Buddha preached the gospel of enlightenment, which he called the doctrine of the Dhamma, the philosophy of the middle path. He abolished extremes, the mortification of the body and self-indulgence, and instructed his disciples in a great moral philosophy, which is as good today as when he first preached it over 2,500 years ago. He passed away at the age of eighty, on the full moon of Vesakha.

In commemoration of these three holy events we celebrate the Vesakha Festival.

### *The Basic Philosophy of Buddhism*

Buddhism is based upon the fact that ignorance is the cause of all worldly misery, and that only self-



realization of the truth can combat this ignorance. The Buddha taught that out of ignorance is born evil and iniquity, and that if the human race could see clearly, everyone would do right. So right view is absolutely necessary for intelligent living and true spirituality.

Men in their blind ignorance produce the evil things (sins) and sorrows of the world, therefore the first of the four Noble Truths is the truth of suffering. We can see around us everyday the result of people wanting things they cannot have, and the result of their trying to avoid the responsibilities which they should assume. We know that in the majority of cases man's wants and appetites are his undoing, and the Buddha taught that man's sense of possession is his greatest enemy, because the desire for accumulation steals from him his reason and his intelligence. We come, therefore, to the second of the four Noble Truths, namely, the cause of suffering. The great cause of misery is the desire to possess and the desire to reserve things possessed.

To be attached to a thing is to be sad at the loss of it To despise or hate a thing is to be unhappy at the approach of it. The Buddha taught that selfish desire for a worldly material object results in sacrificing spiritual treasure in order to secure the desired objects which is probably of little value. Therefore

selfish desire destroys the sense of value, for selfish desire places worldly possessions above wisdom, and personalities above principles.

The third Noble Truth is freedom from suffering, which is attained by the annihilation of all selfish desire. In line with this we see that attachment is the basis of the fear of death and that when an individual is not attached to his possessions, their coming and going will leave him unmoved. While he is attached to them he will weep with their passing, and he if hates them he will weep at their approach. While his eyes are capable of tears he is incapable of wisdom. The middle way, is the way of the Buddha, and in order to tread the middle way we must understand the Eightfold Path, i.e., right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration: the fourth Noble Truth.

There is a magnificent philosophy underlying all these things which is based upon the four ultimate things, namely, consciousness, mental properties, matter and Nibbana. But Buddhism is not a subject to be studied only from an historical and literary point of view; on the contrary, it is to be learned and put into practice in the course of one's daily life, for without actual practice one cannot appreciate the truth. Buddhism should be studied, also

practised, but above all the Buddha's Teaching should be realized. Self-realization is the ultimate goal, and never have we needed the Buddha's Teaching more than now. It is the way which show that happiness come only with wisdom, which alone is the result of right living, and that only.

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# PART TWO

## TALKS INVOLVING SILA IN PARTICULAR

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# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## BUDDHISM IN BURMA

In Buddhist Burma<sup>1</sup> the Burmese, who have inherited such a sublime ethical code of compassion and altruism, used to be remarkable for an acute sense of humanity, and therefore they were well known to Westerners as one of the happiest people in the world.

We often hear, however, the complaint that some of them have changed their attitude towards their religion, Buddhism, which has been a great source of their happiness, peace and culture. In Buddhist Burma there are certain sore spots of which the following appear to be the most significant: (1) Lack of *metta* (loving-kindness), (2) neglect of religious principles and (3) change from the spirit of compassion and tenderness, which the Buddhism teaches, to that of harshness and selfishness.

In the world as a whole there is enough money and material, and no lack of intellect. But what is it that is lacking? The will to do good, *metta*, is not strong enough to prevail against the powers of darkness, the world is disturbed and men distrust each other

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1. Myanmar

What can we do to help? To increase metta in the world is the world's supreme need. The lack of metta is the major cause of war. Apart from military conflicts there are many other conflicts, racial, political, economic and even religious conflicts. The chief cause of nearly all these conflicts is the lack of metta.

Since the end the first Great War there have been many organizations termed international: many authors have written on this subject of internationalism. Idealistic workers who dream and hope for a better future have started many international movements. We had the League of Nations founded in 1920, but they failed to maintain peace. Why? Because most of them have dealt with mere external and material adjustments, too much attention has been paid to the material and too little to the spiritual side of life. Materialism alone cannot give happiness and peace – which we all desire. It is not materialistic ideology but the Buddhist way of life that is suitable for Burma which is still looked up to by the entire Buddhist world as the home of pure Buddhism. What is needed most in Burma is the practice of the noble principles of Buddhism which teaches the upholding of the laws or morality, fair dealing, honour, truth, right and refinement.

Neglect of religious principles is one of the fundamental causes of war. One of the most important

ethical teachings of the Buddha is 'non-killing' or 'non-violence'.

Aggressiveness, urge to destroy or kill is a natural instinct common to both animal and man, but there is a great difference in the way in which instincts function in men and animals. In the case of animals and primitive men the impulse of violence is no doubt a protective and preservative device both for the individual and for the species. Animal needs are only those which are essential for self-preservation, they are not to blame for their acts, for they are regulated by nature. But in the case of man it is quite different, he has a larger number of instinctive urges than animals have. Man by virtue of his possessing higher capacities of memory, imagination, thought, reasoning, self-respect, moral conscience and religious faith, should think of the consequences, immediate as well as remote, of his actions before he performs them, that he may know beforehand how far they are conducive to his personal, social and spiritual security and welfare. His higher and more lasting interest should not be sacrificed on the altar of the momentary gratification of selfish desires.

Man, and not animal, has often to choose between cruelty and sympathy, which cannot be both exercised at the same time with regard to the same ob-

ject. Which one shall he choose? It is not difficult to decide that even from the point of view of one's own personal health and happiness, one should follow the path of love and sympathy rather than that of cruelty and violence. For he is more of a human being while walking along the former path than while going along the latter. Moreover, no man, party, community or race can be sure of being equally strong and powerful at all times to live successfully by violence. In order, therefore, to be on the safe side and to safeguard against becoming a future object of wrath of a forthcoming stronger man, party, community or race, he or it should keep his or its violent tendency under control, and set a right and desirable example for the future behaviour of mankind.

It is a truism that he who lives by the sword perishes by the sword. A cruel man, party, community or race is bound to be treated cruelly when he or it becomes weak in course of time and others come into power. It is also true that cruel persons live a miserable life and die a miserable death. A tyrant lives a life in perpetual danger. Aggressive individuals and communities live in perpetual fear of other individuals and communities. The gains and victories of violence, although quickly achieved, are short-lived and are maintained at a heavy cost; therefore, even from a purely selfish point of view, the path of violence is not secure and desirable.



Human society flourishes better when it is based on love, sympathy and cooperation than when based on acts of violence which the Buddha asked us to avoid. Acts of violence are diseases of humanity. Cruel and selfish individuals or communities who trample over and crush the natural rights of others, are like poisonous germs or diseases in the body. A healthy and happy social life demands that all its members should live with others amicably and should help and protect each other.

In the ideal society, the keynote of the stronger members is loving care and renunciation for the weaker ones, and that of the weaker ones is love and cooperation. In this age, when scientific discoveries and inventions have greatly increased the powers of man to do both good and evil, there is a great need for organizing education that is based on rational, just and moral principles for developing a keen social and humanitarian consciousness in every child so that the inhuman, barbarous and violent activities of men threatening the very destruction of humanity itself may not recur. Nobody likes to be harmed, injured or killed by another. If somebody does so, he violates the basic social principle. He is antisocial, and therefore a criminal.

Social solidarity and material gains are not the only objects of human life, the material and spiritu-

al sides of life are interdependent and interrelated, so the importance of both must be realized. Material life is lived not only by human beings but also by animals. Men by virtue of possessing higher capacities should live a higher and noble life in which peace and goodwill rather than struggle and destruction prevail. As a moral being guided by moral conscience, a man should rise much above an animal. He should become a being of a higher world in which higher values are preferred to mere material life and material gain, in which every human being is regarded as an equal and never as inferior to another, and in which truth, justice, honesty, fellowship and freedom are the intuitively accepted principles of action.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## ECUMENICAL DEVELOPMENTS: DIALOGUE

*B.B.C. European Service General News Talk*

The word 'dialogue' used in connection with the ecumenical movement, means conversation or discussion between separated Christian churches in order to pave the way for greater harmony between them. According to his first great letter or encyclical, however, addressed to the bishops, clergy, people of the Catholic Church and 'to all men of goodwill', the present Pope has considered it on a wider scale than the ecumenical dialogue between Christians. I therefore would like to take the opportunity to contribute to a series of talks on the general theme of the ecumenical movement from a Buddhist point of view.

The teaching founded by the Buddha is known as Buddhism. All the teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one verse:

*To refrain from evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind,  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.*

The evil thoughts are to be eliminated and virtuous thoughts to be increased. Mere ceasing from evil is not enough, a noble effort is needed to replace evil by good. All this constitutes self-culture, and in the course of this culture the individual, through his kind thoughts, words and deeds, helps all his neighbours and makes them happy.

Thus Buddhism is not individualistic, it is not a negative treatment, it is indeed a positive philosophy in which an ethical and moral code is enunciated to a great degree. In fact Buddhism is largely devoted to ethico-moral discipline, and through that discipline one can attain deliverance. As such it can be supplementary to any religion, and in fact it did act as a supplement to other religions. In China and Japan, for example, Buddhism supplemented the local religions; it did not expel local faiths, it merely stimulated people to moral awakening, ethical excellence and philosophical understanding. In this way Buddhism may be said to be a moralizing agent and a civilizing force.

Buddhism being an ethico-moral discipline should have no quarrel with any other religion, no religion worth the name should oppose ethico-moral discipline which is a synonym of Buddhism. It is on this basis that Buddhists will be willing to enter into genuine dialogue with the members of all other reli-

gions, in fact the Buddhists of Thailand have already taken the first step towards it.

An inter-religious conference was held in Bangkok under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Thailand on the 26th October 1964. The conference was officially opened by the Prime Minister of Thailand, who said that the circumstances of the world at present were such that no religion could isolate itself from another. It is therefore of great importance that all religious people, no matter to what faith they belong, should come and work together for the security and development of both their religions and their countries. He was convinced of the fact that there is nothing to fear from sincere people of any faith, who are no threat to anybody or anything. What is to be feared, he said, is the kind of people who have intrinsically no religious principle in mind. The Prime Minister requested the cooperation of all religious people, asking them to safeguard their religious members and the people against dangerous political ideologies that seek to destroy all religions.

The religions whose ministers were present at the conference were Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Brahmanism. The Director of Religious Affairs there, said that the purpose of the conference was to promote cooperation among the various religions, to promote unity among all people

with faith in religion, to build moral strength and to exchange views and opinions on religious matters. The theme of the conference was 'Religion in the Light of Life,' in which the representatives of all the religions took part and freely expressed their and opinions. The conference was such a great success that the Director-General hoped to be able to arrange a second of its kind on a greater scale, if possible international, sometime in 1965.

To have proper moral discipline, to promote cooperation and unity among men, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of metta, universal and all-embracing love. Metta means much more than brotherly feeling or kind-heartedness, though these are part of it; it is active benevolence, a love which is expressed and fulfilled in active ministry for the uplifting of fellow beings. The Buddha said, 'As a mother even at the risk of her own life loves and protects her child, her only child, so let man cultivate all-embracing love without measure towards all beings.' This is the model of what man should be to man.

Metta goes hand in hand with helpfulness and willingness to forego self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. It is metta which in Buddhism is the basis for social progress. It is this metta that attempts to break all barriers which separate one from another. There is no reason

to keep aloof from others merely because they belong to another religion; any religion worth the name is not confined to any one country or any particular nation, it is universal. Religion is an education of the heart, with a view to refining our nature and elevating us in the scale of human beings. Religion is not merely theory, but practice, and the heart, like the body, becomes healthy and strong by practical exercise. No doctrine merely held in the mind as an intellectual belief has any driving force, no doctrine is of any value unless and until it is applied.

The Buddha said, 'A beautiful thought or word which is not followed by a corresponding action is like a bright flower that has no scent, that will bear no fruit.' Practice of the moral life is the very core and essence of religion. It is action and not speculation, it is practice and not theory that counts in life. The will to do, followed by the doing, is the actual virtue; the will does not count much unless it is fulfilled. To put one's high ideas and concepts into practice is religion in the best sense.

The world has found itself as one body; yet the fact of physical unity and economic interdependence, though of very great value is not by itself sufficient to create a united family, for this we require a human consciousness of community, a sense of personal interrelationship among men. Science proves that the fundamental structure of the human mind

is uniform in all races; what differences there are, due to historical circumstances and stages of development. Without recognition of the oneness of the world today and all its aspects, spiritually as well as social, there will never be harmony among religions.

In order to pave the way for harmony among religions, we must realize the oneness of the world and understand that we are one family. Life is a mighty wheel of perpetual motion. This great wheel contains within it numberless small wheels, corresponding to the lives of individual men, each of which has a pattern of its own. The great wheel and the smaller wheels, the whole world and individual men, are intimately and indissolubly linked; the whole human family is so closely knit together that every unit is dependent upon all others for its growth and development.

To bring out the goodness in us, each one of us has to try to reproduce in his own wheel of life that pattern which is in harmony with the pattern of the great universal wheel. For all the wheels to revolve in harmony the highest good in each must be developed; this is possible by the performance of daily duties with kindness, of mutual service and practical brotherhood. In all our thoughts, our emotions, our words and our deeds, we act and react upon one another; in a very real sense each one of us is



responsible for the whole community. Men, being in need of each other, should learn to love one another, bearing on another's burdens; mutual service is a perpetual call upon humanity, for we are bound alike by the bonds of humanity.

Wherever there is a good man, a truly upright and noble man, pure in his motives and compassionate in his heart, whatever his faith may be, that man is one whom the Buddhist will revere. At the time of death, whatever may have been his creed, the Buddhist knows that he will receive the just result of his actions in the new birth; not according to his faith or any religious ceremonies he may have performed, but on the merits of the thought, word and deed, the good he did to those around him, the integrity with which he acted and reacted. He may have been a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, theist or atheist, it makes no difference.

In the universal Law of Cause and Effect, that man's actions will produce good in the world to himself as well as to others and in time he also will attain the goal of deliverance – may in fact be nearer to it than many who are mere professed Buddhists. It is on this basis also that the Teaching of the Buddha embraces the members of all other faiths, and the followers of the Buddha are able to extend the hand of brotherhood to all humanity.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## A BUDDHIST VIEW OF WORLD PEACE

In the world as a whole there is enough money and material and there is no lack of intellect, yet something is missing. What is it? The answer is the spirit of fellowship, and it is this lack of active fellowship which is the major cause of war. Apart from military conflicts, there are of course many other kinds of conflict such as racial, political, economic, even religious conflicts and the cause of nearly all of them is the lack of the spirit of fellowship.

In a conflict each side has its own conceit, but to hide it both parties have their own nicely written labels such as 'New World Order', 'Civilizing the Backward Peoples,' 'Co-prosperity in East Asia', etc., and in almost every conflict each side blames the other, both parties claiming that they are right. They even use the name of religion to justify their actions, and will try to persuade God to take their side, although without seeming to make any attempt to be on God's side. They claim that there is only one God, apparently forgetting that if there is only God, there must only one family of men, and they treat one another not just as strangers but as enemies.

Since the end of the first world there have been many organizations called 'international'. Many authors have written on the subject of internationalism, and idealistic workers hoping for a better future have started many international movements, but all without exception have failed to maintain peace. Why? In the first place they have not, for one reason or another, been able to carry out their plans; secondly, they received insufficient support from the public, and thirdly, most of them have dealt only with the purely external, material adjustments, paying too much attention to the material side of life and too little to the spiritual side. The two sides are interdependent and interrelated, and the importance of both should be recognized.

Then came the second world war, unparalleled in history for destruction. The world is still in a state of chaos, devoid of peace and real happiness, and once again idealistic workers, lecturers and writers are producing books and introducing new international organizations. Will they be successful in maintaining peace? It is possible to predict whether they will be successful or not; they will be successful if the leaders or workers can carry through their plans in a spirit of world fellowship, otherwise they will never be successful, there will be further wars, even more dreadful than the last.

The peace which we all desire, peace in our hearts and in our minds, peace between neighbours and among nations, is not a miracle which it is God's task to preform, it can only come about as a result of a reconstruction of thought, feeling and action by means of the spirit of fellowship, and such is the duty of all mankind.

Taking all nations as one whole there is in the world sufficient wealth and ability to abolish poverty, unemployment, hardship and cruelty of any kind from all countries. It is possible for all men to be able to do what work is necessary, if only they would learn to understand each other better by drawing closer. The discovery of power and energy could be of great service to humanity, and men could be inspired to noble conduct if only all the scientists, poets and artists of all countries would come together. A powerful spiritual influence, helping all men to make the world a happier place, could be given by every religion if all of them were to act together as members of one family.

Buddhism teaches that misery and sufferings are not the results of the wrath of a god, or gods, but are the direct consequences of man's ignorance of his own nature and of his surroundings. In attempting to discover a way of appeal on which to base morality, Buddhism teaches that there is no

such appeal to any external authority in the form of a deity, but only to the natural desire of the human heart. Therefore, knowing that certain actions such as selfishness, violence and laziness tend to disorganize society, and to cause unhappiness to its members, a man will try to avoid injuring others if he sees clearly that his interests are bound up with those of others.

The real spirit of fellowship which is lacking in the world today can be promoted only through religion. Religion is an education of the heart with a view to refining our nature and elevating us in the scale of human beings: it is not merely theory but practice, and the heart, like the body, becomes healthy and strong by practical exercise. No doctrine merely held in the mind as an intellectual belief has any driving force: no doctrine is of any value unless and until it is applied. The Buddha said. 'A beautiful thought or word which is not followed by a corresponding action, is like a bright flower that has no scent.' Such will bear no fruit.

Practice of the moral life is the very core and essence of religion, for it is action and not speculation, practice and not theory that counts in life. The will to do, followed by the doing, is the actual virtue; the will of itself does not count much unless it is fulfilled. Thus to put one's high ideas and con-

cepts into practice is religion in the best sense. Religion is obviously not confined to any one country or to any particular nation or race, it is universal; and it is certainly not nationalism which, in other words, is merely another form of caste system but founded on a wider basis.

The world has found itself as one body, yet the fact of physical unity and economic interdependence, though of very great value, is not by itself sufficient to create a united family; for this we require a human consciousness of community, a sense of personal interrelationship among men, the spirit of fellowship. To have this spirit of fellowship we must realize the oneness of life, and understand that we are one family.

According to Buddhism life is a mighty wheel of perpetual motion, and this wheel contains within it numberless smaller wheels corresponding to the lives of individual men, each of which has a pattern of its own. The great wheel and the smaller wheels, the whole world and individual men, are intimately and indissolubly linked, the whole human family is so closely knit together that every unit is dependent on the others for its growth and development. In all our thoughts, words and deeds we act and react upon each other, so in a very real sense each one of us is responsible for the whole community. Men, be-

ing in need of each other, should learn to love each other and bear one another's burdens. This mutual dependence is a perpetual call on humanity, for we are bound alike by the bonds of humanity.

Science proves that the fundamental structure of the human mind is uniform in all races; what differences there are, are due to historical circumstances and stages of development. Without recognition of the oneness of the world in all aspects, spiritual as well as social, economic as well as political, there will never be peace. A genuine spirit of world fellowship is the only logical basis of all true and high civilization, and of whole peace.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## WORLD FELLOWSHIP THROUGH BUDDHISM

We are living today in a world torn between despair and hope. Our despair is due to many causes, the most serious of which is the constant fear of war; for although humanity wills peace, and the desire for peace exists everywhere throughout the world, instead of trying to give effect to that almost universal desire for peace each country has been arming to the limits of its capacity. Already more than half the national incomes of the world are being used for the preparation of war, and the maximum of our energy, ingenuity, finance and organization is being turned in the direction of discovering how we can kill our fellow beings more ruthlessly. To strengthen our military power is not to guard the blessings of peace, but to run in the armaments race which must inevitably end in war. Many of us still remember the first great European war, and only recently country after country has been the victim of cruel, barbarous and unjustifiable tyranny. What will be the future of humanity if the present tendency of each country is continued?

Nevertheless we are not without hope, for there are at the same time idealistic writers, lecturers and



those who work for the general good of mankind who dream and hope for a better future, and many present day publications bear the term 'international.' The World Congress of Faiths I regard as an important movement, because it deals not just with mere external adjustments in material needs, but with the fundamental spiritual realities of life. It is the aim of this congress to promote world fellowship through religion, and it is now my present task so show how Buddhism can help in achieving this aim.


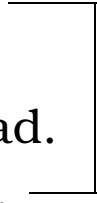

*Sabbapapassa akaranam,  
Kusalassa upasampada,  
Sacittapariyodapanam,  
Etam buddhana sasanam.*

To refrain from all evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind,  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

Verse No. 183 in *Dhammapada*

In order to understand the above verse we should first understand what is meant by evil, and evil, bad roots; also what is meant by good and good roots.

What, now, is that which is bad?

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Destruction of any living creatures is bad.</li> <li>2 Stealing is bad.</li> <li>3 Sexual misconduct is bad.</li> </ul>      |  | Bodily action<br>( <i>kaya kamma</i> ) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Lying is bad.</li> <li>5 Tale bearing is bad.</li> <li>6 Harsh language is bad.</li> <li>7 Frivolous talk is bad.</li> </ul> |   | Verbal action<br>( <i>vaci kamma</i> ) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Covetousness is bad.</li> <li>9 Illwill is bad.</li> <li>10 False views are bad</li> </ul>                                   |   | Mental action<br>( <i>mano kamma</i> ) |

What are bad roots?

Greed (*lobha*) is a bad root; hatred (*dosa*) is a bad root; ignorance (*moha*) is a bad root; therefore the above ten kinds of bad actions are due to greed, hatred or ignorance. These three roots are like three great currents of force, for they are sweeping each one of us down along the road to misery, just as the swift current of a river will carry with it all the logs which have fallen into it.

### *Greed*

The first mentioned root, that of greed, is desire: desire for sensual pleasures, wealth, rank, etc. This greed is in all of us like a raging thirst. The greedy

man always says, 'I want', 'I must have', 'I cannot do without'. He may well heard to say that if he were as rich as some neighbour whom he envies, he would be perfectly satisfied; but give him the particular amount of wealth he has set him mind upon, and he will find some still richer man to envy, and be as discontented as ever. A certain Persian poet has written, 'A small coin of silver makes a beggar contended; Faridun, with his kingdom of Persia, is only half satisfied'.

Our tendency to remain discontented in spite of success and prosperity is due to the insatiable nature of our desires; and we are depressed by the fear of losing our possessions, at the same time being dissatisfied so long as there is someone in the world richer than ourselves. What is beyond our reach seems valuable until we obtain it, but when possessed it loses its value. This, unfortunately, is the character of most men, greed making us selfish so that we think only of our need for gratification. The selfish man aims at obtaining a much happiness as he can for himself, and does not care whether other people are happy or miserable.

In order to acquire his object he tries to appropriate as large a share as possible of the good things of the world, and whenever he has an opportunity of doing so he enjoys himself, even when his enjoy-

ment is obtained at the expense of his fellow men. All over the world we find the selfish taking an unfair share of everything, and trying their best to use others as a means of obtaining their pleasure.

Greed is like a thick fog such as there is in London sometimes, when we cannot see our way clearly before us: or sometimes at sea on a foggy day when people cannot see what lies ahead and two ships collide, perhaps both sinking. Men, when blinded by desire, are carried away by a powerful current, not realizing whither they are going, and where there are many who are blinded by desire for the same things, there is jealousy and rivalry. As they act to satisfy their desires, so they hurt and harm one another with resultant suffering.

### *Hatred*

The second current which equally leads us to misery is hatred., illwill or anger. It is that tendency within us which resents an action of another which challenges our right to what we desire. Our general tendency is to try and dominate others and we want others to obey our will while suppressing their own: so when someone opposes his will against our's our action is like that of a dog with a bone when another dog approaches. We are irritated in many ways, and although our irritation may at first be slight, if it is allowed to go on day by day it grows into a deep

hatred. When a man is angry he is 'beside himself', as the saying goes, being swept along by a torrent of hatred, and it is due to this anger that disputes arise between one individual and another, between one nation and another. Such people as are blinded by anger cannot see that 'hatred ceaseth not by hatred, but by love': they regard war as the only ultimate way of settling national disputes, and the armies of great nations are larger than they were ever before in the history of the world, yet there seems little prospect of the establishment of the reign of universal peace. Although the principle that 'might is right' no longer prevails in the relations between individuals, it is still considered natural to appeal to it when one nation quarrels with another: and although war remains as the greatest relic of barbarism in the midst of modern civilization, the 'progress' of science is every year leading to the discovery of more and more powerful instruments for the destruction of human life and property.

In many countries of the present conscription prevail, and the younger members of every family are compelled by law to serve a term in the army. Under such circumstances war spreads far wider desolation than when it is waged between a limited number of men who have voluntarily adopted the profession of army life, as a consequence of which countless number of families in every war are re-

duced to destitution by the destruction of their property, by the loss of those on whom they depended for their support. All this is the result of hatred.

### *Ignorance*

The third current which carries us to misery is ignorance, delusion. The state of greed as well as that of hatred is always accompanied by ignorance, because ignorance is the primary root of all evil. It is far more subtle than greed and hatred, and when a man is hypnotized by it he cannot distinguish between right and wrong, he can see no good in any noble action; nothing is safe from his scoffing and sneers, neither a sense of duty, nor filial love, nor sacrifice in any form can win a word of praise from his lips. On the contrary, he wants to be praised, and he is hurt if he is not properly appreciated, for he thinks much of himself and continually plans to feed his ambitions for personal happiness. The spirit of loving-kindness and charity is absent from him, he is deaf to all prayers and appeals for mercy, he has no sense of duty towards his fellow men. If he helps others he does so in order that he may get them into his power and there by increase his gains, for under the influence of delusion he is determined to have what he wants, no matter who suffers, and he dislikes all those who hinder him or get ahead of him. He may occasionally gain advantages from those who cannot avoid coming into

contact with him and who fear to provoke his resentment, but such advantages are conferred without goodwill, and those who can do will be inclined to avoid society. When perhaps the majority of men turn against him, and the world does not want him any longer, he then blames them, saying, 'What I have done is perfectly right, but people are too ignorant to realize it or too wicked to agree to it', he does not know that it is the poison himself which has upset the world.

An old story may serve as an illustration in connection with ignorance which arouses hatred. Once a big bear with her three little cubs was looking for something to eat in the jungle when they saw a beehive in a trough under a tree, from one branch of which a big log was hanging just over the trough. The bears wanted to get at the honey, but as the log was in the way the mother bear pushed it away so that they could all get at it, and they began to eat. Suddenly the log swung out and came back, hitting the mother bear on the head. Growing very angry she knocked it away violently so that it went out much further than before, and causing it to come back with such force that it struck one of the little cubs killing it. The mother, now furious, struck at the log with all her might, and swinging out it came back with a great rush striking her again on her head and killing her.

Who killed the bear? Strictly speaking it was her ignorance, her delusion which make her think that the log was her enemy. Through ignorance hatred arose to make her fight against the log which had hit her, although the log could not hurt unless she set it in motion, but the poor bear did not know that. When a man is carried away by the current of ignorance he becomes brutal and barbarous, any sense of a common humanity fades from his mind.

It is due to these raging torrents of greed, hatred and ignorance that nations fight with nations, kings fight with kings, priests with priests; the mother quarrels with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, friend with friends. We talk about peace, yet we create confusion; we long for happiness, yet we obtain unhappiness, why? Because we are like logs carried helplessly along by the currents of greed, hatred and ignorance. If we are to revive the sense of a common humanity and find happiness, we must step outside those torrents. How may this be achieved? The Buddhist technique is to still the raging torrents of greed, hatred and ignorance by a careful self-culture; 'Save thyself by thyself' are the words of the Buddha, and he laid down a specific course of practice in mental and physical actions for the successful outcome of this self-culture.



To plan our good actions we should first understand what is meant by good and good roots.

What, now, is that which is good?

- |    |   |   |  |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1  | To abstain from killing is good.              | } | Bodily action<br>( <i>kaya kamma</i> ) |
| 2  | To abstain from stealing is good.             |   |  |
| 3  | To abstain from sexual misconduct<br>is good. |   |  |
| 4  | To abstain from lying is good.                | } | Verbal action<br>( <i>vaci kamma</i> ) |
| 5  | To abstain from tale-bearing is good.         |   |  |
| 6  | To abstain from harsh language is good.       |   |  |
| 7  | To abstain from frivolous talk is good.       |   |  |
| 8  | Absence from covetousness is good.            | } | Mental action<br>( <i>mano kamma</i> ) |
| 9  | Absence of illwill is good.                   |   |  |
| 10 | Right understanding is good.                  |   |  |

What are good roots?

Absence of greed, unselfishness, is a good root; absence of hatred, love, is a good root; absence of ignorance, wisdom, is a good root. These three roots are also called the seeds of nobility, seeds within each one of us that with careful, determined cultivation will grow into sublime powers. These powers lie latent in us, but they cannot grow until we discover them and make our hearts soft and warm with love so that they may grow to fulfillment.

### *Absence of Greed (Unselfishness)*

For this we must forget ourselves and substitute the world for ourselves. There is no evil in wanting universal happiness and peace, the evil arises when our desires are only for ourselves and not for others; or not in the sacred interests of truth. When we desire such things as we can share with others, our desires become wiser and more unselfish. The cultivation of unselfishness includes not only a feeling in the heart, although that internal feeling is essential, but also the performance of those outward actions by which that feeling is manifested; and it also includes the desire to put others perfectly at their ease, to save them from every kind of discomfort and to do all that we can to promote their happiness. The unselfish man puts himself in the position of others and tries to identify himself with all, regretting what he has done wrongly or has omitted to do, having an earnest desire to do better in the future and make amends for the wrong that has been done. He desires not to make himself a burden on his fellow men, but to be a blessing to them by making them happy, so that his unselfish disposition promotes social intercourse and adds to the pleasure of others. He appreciated benefits conferred on him and feels joy at the kindness of his benefactor to whom he has a great desire to return those benefits, or to give something more when possible. By being unselfish we develop in ourselves

the sense of sympathy, and we cannot enjoy happiness worthy of the name without being in sympathy with our fellow men. Our happiness soon palls upon us if we have no congenial companions for whom we can feel an affection, for in every case our happiness is rendered more intense and more permanent by being shared with friends. The best way to be happy, therefore, is to make others happy: every kind act is twice blessed, blessing him who gives and him who takes. If we are to promote the spirit of fellowship we should forget our 'I' in the service of all, we should do everything we can for the sake of others. In short, whatever deed we, whatever word we utter and whatever thought we think, should be for the good, peace and happiness not only of ourselves, but others. The result of this is peace, happiness and friendship.

### *Absence of Hatred (Love)*

To promote the spirit of world fellowship we must make the sublime seeds, the seeds of loving-kindness, grow in our hearts and minds till we are all love. To love one another we should realize that we are all brothers, and brotherhood must be applied with justice, for justice is a natural law. No judge has the right to use his power over a criminal to a greater extent than that permitted by the law of the court, which should be representative of the natural law of justice.

If we do any harm to someone we shall be paid back in the same coin; rather as when we throw a stone into a pond, causing ripples to spread over the surface until coming up against the edge of the banks. The water then moves back again until reaching the stone that has disturbed it. In just the same way the effects of our actions come back to us, and if our actions are good we shall have good effects, while bad actions will likewise produce bad effects. To produce good actions love is essential, so we must love everyone, no matter what may be the colour of his skin, whether he is rich or poor, wise or foolish, good or bad; and should love not only human beings but all beings in the world.

In the Metta Sutta, the discourse on loving-kindness, the Buddha says, 'As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her child, her only child, so let a man cultivate goodwill without measure among all beings. Let him cultivate goodwill without measure towards the whole world, above, below, all around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. Let him remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, walking, sitting or lying down. This state of heart is the best in the world.'

Most of us have not yet learned this lesson, and therefore the sense of a common humanity is ab-

sent from our minds, the world is full of pain and cruelty and all wild animals flee from us. There are few who have learned this lesson, they love everybody and everything, no wild animal flees from them and even a tiger will roll at their feet as a pet cat does at our's. If we learn this lesson our enemies will become our friends and wild animals our pets.

### *Wisdom*

Wisdom is the power of seeing things as they truly are, and how to act rightly when the problems of life come before us. The seeds of wisdom lie latent in us, and when our hearts are soft and warm with love they grow into their powers.

When a man has stilled the raging torrents of greed, hatred and ignorance, he becomes conscientious, full of sympathy, and he is anxious for the welfare of all living beings. Thus he abstains from stealing, and is upright and honest in all his dealings; he abstains from sexual misconduct and is pure, chaste; he abstains from tale-bearing. What he has heard in one place he does not repeat in another so as to cause dissension; he unites those who are divided and encourages those who are united. He abstains from harsh language, speaking such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear and which go to the heart. He abstains from vain talk, speaking what is useful at the right time and ac-

according to the facts. It is when his mind is pure and his heart is soft by equipped with this morality and mental development that the sublime seed, wisdom, grows. Knowledge of the properties of the magnetic needle enable the mariner to see the right direction in mid-ocean on the darkest night when no stars are visible. In just the same way wisdom enables a man to see things as they truly are, and to perceive the right way to real peace and happiness, Nibbana.

# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## PARAMI: PERFECTION

A Bodhisatta is a Buddha in the making, and is thus a being practising over an incalculable period of world cycles to attain to the highest level in ethical, intellectual and spiritual achievement. As a Bodhisatta, in each succeeding birth he practises the ten perfections (ten parami), a prerequisite for Buddhahood.

One need not think that the Bodhisatta ideal is reserved only for supermen; what has been accomplished by one could also be accomplished by another, given the necessary effort and enthusiasm. We should endeavour to work disinterestedly for the good of ourselves and others, having for our object in life the noble ideal of service and perfection.

The ten perfections are:

- 1 Generosity, giving (*dana*)
- 2 Morality (*sila*)
- 3 Renunciation (*nekkhamma*)
- 4 Wisdom (*pañña*)
- 5 Energy (*viriyā*)
- 6 Patience (*khanti*)
- 7 Truthfulness (*sacca*)
- 8 Determination (*adhitthana*)
- 9 Loving-kindness (*metta*)
- 10 Equanimity (*upekkha*)

## 1 *Dana*

Generosity, giving, is the first parami. It confers upon the giver the double blessing of inhibiting the immoral thoughts of selfishness on the one hand, and of developing the pure thoughts of selfishness on the other hand.

The object in giving is to eliminate the craving that lies dormant within oneself; apart from which there are the attendant blessings of generosity such as the joy of service, the ensuing happiness and consolation and the alleviation of suffering.

He makes no distinction in extending his love with supreme generosity, at the same time nor forgetting to use his judicious discrimination in doing so. If, for instance, a drunkard were to seek his help, but he was convinced that the drunkard would misuse his gift, the Bodhisatta would not hesitate to refuse him, for such generosity would not constitute parami.

If, however, someone would seek his help for a worthy purpose, he would express his deep obligation for the opportunity offered, and willingly and humbly render him every possible aid, free of the smallest trace of any forced air of dignity or without making any false pretexts.

A Bodhisatta is always ready to oblige others, but he will never stoop to beg a favour for himself. In



abundance he gives irrespective of caste, creed or colour, but selfishly he seeks nothing, for he is neither selfish nor self-possessive. He exercises this virtue of dana to such an extent that he is prepared to give away not only his wealth and other cherished possessions, but also his kingdom, his wife and children, even his limbs. He is ever ready to sacrifice his own life wherever such sacrifice will benefit humanity.

## 2 *Sila*

The second parami is morality, the purity of his conduct. If he be living the life of a recluse, he would try his best to observe the sila that pertains thereto: if, however, he leads the household life he would adhere to the five elementary principles of regulated behaviour, even in spite of his interests being at stake.

He would not kill, steal, lie or slander, and he would avoid unchastity, harsh speech, frivolous talk and intoxicants. He would endeavour to observe these elementary principles as strictly as possible, for to transgress one of them means creating fresh troubles and obstacles on the road to enlightenment. However, it must not be understood that a Bodhisatta is wholly infallible and totally free from evil, (see jataka No. 318), for one who had already attained complete perfection would have reached Buddhahood.

### 3 *Nekkhama*

The third parami is renunciation. It implies both renunciation of worldly life and pleasures by adopting the ascetic life, and practising the cultivation of jhana whereby the temporary inhibition of the hindrances towards progress, (wish for sense pleasure, illwill, sloth/torpor, distraction/remorse, doubt) is achieved. Though he may sit in the lap of luxury, immersed in worldly pleasure, the idea comes to him that household life is like a den of strife, but by comparison the homeless life is like the ever free and open sky. Realizing thus the vanity of worldly life he voluntarily forsakes his earthly possessions, and wearing the simple ascetic dress he tries to lead the holy life in all its purity. Here he practises morality to such a high degree that he becomes practically selfless in all his actions; neither fame nor wealth, honour nor worldly gain being capable of inducing him to do anything contrary to his lofty principles. Sometimes the mere appearance of a grey hair (see Jataka No. 9) is sufficient to compel a Bodhisatta to leave his uncongenial atmosphere in order to lead the independent, solitary life of a hermit, but the practice of renunciation is not as a rule observed by a Bodhisatta. In the Kusa Jataka (No. 531) for instance, the Bodhisatta was subject to much humiliation owing to his unrestrained desire to win the love of the beautiful princess, Pabhavati.

#### 4 *Pañña*

The fourth parami is wisdom. It means right understanding of the real nature of the world, seeing things as they are in reality. The Bodhisatta strives to acquire knowledge from every possible source, although never at any time does he show any desire to display his knowledge, nor is he ever ashamed to plead his ignorance. What he knows is always at the disposal of others, and that he imparts to them unreservedly.

#### 5 *Viriya*

The fifth parami is energy. It does not mean only physical strength as is ordinarily understood, but mental vigour or strength of character, which is undoubtedly far superior to the former and is defined as the relentless effort to work for others both in thought and deed. Firmly established in this virtue he develops self-reliance and makes it one of his prominent characteristics, viewing failures as steps to success; oppression merely doubling his exertion and danger increasing his courage.

#### 6 *Khanti*

The sixth parami is patience. Patience here means endurance, the highest form of endurance in the face of suffering which may be inflicted upon oneself by others; and it means the forbearance of oth-

ers' wrongs. A Bodhisatta practises patience to the extent that not even when his hands and feet are cut off will he become provoked.

## 7 *Sacca*

The seventh parami is truthfulness. By *sacca* is here meant the keeping of one's promises, and is one of the salient characteristics of a Bodhisatta. According to the *Haritaca Jataka* (No. 431), no Bodhisatta in the course of his life to life wandering ever spoke an untruth: although he may at times violate the other precepts, he makes truth his guide and holds to it firmly. He considers well before he makes a promise, but once a promise is made he fulfils it at any cost. In the *Mahasutasoma Jataka* it is stated that the Bodhisatta even went to the extent of sacrificing his life in order to fulfil a promise.

He is trustworthy, sincere and honest. He speaks as he acts and as he acts so he speaks. There is perfect harmony in his thoughts, words and deeds, and he never descends to flattery to win the hearts of others; neither does he exalt himself to win admiration.

## 8 *Adhitthana*

The eighth parami is determination. It may be interpreted as resolute determination, for this will-

power forces all obstructions out of his path, and no matter what may come to him in the form of grief or disaster he never turns his eyes from his goal. He could easily be persuaded to do good, but not so could he be tempted to do anything contrary to his lofty principles. He will be as soft as a flower or as firm as a rock, as occasion demands.

## 9 *Metta*

The ninth parami is loving-kindness. In this case loving-kindness is much deeper than goodwill, friendliness or kindness. It is this metta that prompts a Bodhisatta to renounce personal salvation for the sake of others, such is the great regard in which he holds all his fellow beings, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. And since he is the embodiment of universal love he fears none, neither does he instil fear into any; even the wild beasts in lonely jungles are his loving friends, for he ever cherishes in his heart a boundless love for all that live.

## 10 *Upekkha*

The tenth parami is equanimity. This literally means discerning rightly, viewing justly, or looking impartially, i.e., without attachment or detachment, without favour or disfavour; and here the term is not used in the sense of indifference or neutral feel-

ing. It is the most difficult and most essential of all the ten parami, especially for the layman who has to move in an ill-balanced world with fluctuating fortunes, where slights and insults are the common lot of humanity. Likewise are praise and blame, loss and gain, but under all such vicissitudes of life a Bodhisatta tries to stand unmoved, like firm rock, exercising perfect equanimity. In times of happiness and in times of adversity, amidst praise and amidst blame, he is evenly balanced.

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# PART THREE

## TALKS INVOLVING SAMADHI IN PARTICULAR

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# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## THE MIDDLE PATH

The Eightfold Path which the Buddha preached in his first sermon is known as the Middle Path because it is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Optimism tends to overestimate the conditions of life, whereas pessimism tends to underestimate them. To plunge on the one hand into the sensual excesses and pleasures of the ordinary worldly life is mean, degrading and useless. On the other hand, extravagant asceticism is also evil and useless. Self-indulgence tends to retard one's spiritual progress and self-mortification to weaken one's intellect. The Path is a Middle Way between the pairs of opposites, and the doctrine of the 'Way' may only be grasped by an understanding of the correlation and interdependence of the two. Yet, just as a fencer's weight seems ever poised between his feet, resting upon either foot only for so long as is needed to swing back the emphasis, so on the path the traveller rests at neither extreme but strives for balance on a line between, from which all opposites are equally in view. All extremes beget their opposites, and both are alike unprofitable.

For all people, the Middle Way of a good life lived in the world is in every way best and safest. The



Buddha said: These two extremes are not to be practised by one who has gone forth to the higher life as a Bhikkhu (who renounces the world). What are the two? That cojoined with passion, low, vulgar, common, ignoble. Avoiding the two extremes, the Buddha had gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which gives sight and knowledge and tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment.

Now, what is the Middle Path which gives sight? It is the Eightfold Path, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right attention and right concentration. Of these the first two form a starting point for the journey of life. Then follow three having to do with outward conditions and then three having to do with inward conditions. The immediate goal is to attain control of the mind; with this control all individual desire can be, and will be, rooted out and ended. The ultimate goal is the ending of all dissatisfaction and suffering through the attainment of perfect enlightenment, perfect wisdom.

The first step along the Path toward the goal is Right Understanding. This involves an understanding of the Four Noble Truths, namely the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the ceasing of suffering and the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. What now is suffering or pain? Birth is painful, old age is

painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair are painful. To be separated from pleasant things is painful, to be in contact with unpleasant things is painful and not getting what one wishes is painful.

Life is full of sorrow unless man knows how to live it. On the physical plane, birth, old age and death cannot be avoided, but there is another sense in which life is often sorrow, but a kind of sorrow that can be entirely avoided. The man who lives the ordinary life of the world often finds himself in trouble of various kinds. It would not be true to say that he is always in sorrow, but he is often in anxiety, and he is always liable at any moment to fall into great sorrow or anxiety. The reason for this is that he is full of worldly desires of various kinds, not at all necessarily wicked, but desires for worldly things; and because of these desires he is tied down and confined. He is constantly striving to attain something which he has not, and when he has attained it he is anxious lest he should lose it, this is true not only of money but of position, power and social advancement.

There are other objects of desire; for example, a man or a woman desires affection from someone who cannot give it to him or to her. From such a desire that comes often a great deal of sadness, jealousy and much ill-feeling. You will say that such a

desire is natural; undoubtedly it is, and affection which is returned is a great source of happiness. But if it cannot be returned, a man or a woman should have the strength to accept the situation and not allow sorrow to be caused by the unsatisfied desire. When we say that a thing is natural, we mean that it is what we might expect from the average man. But the student of Buddhism must try to rise above the level of the average man, otherwise how can he help that man? We must rise above that level in order that we may be able to stretch down a helping hand.

The Second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering. We have seen that the cause of suffering is always desire to possess and desire to preserve things possessed. The Buddha says that man's sense of possession is his greatest enemy, for the desire for accumulation steals from him his reason and intelligence. To be attached to a thing is to be sad at the loss of it. To despise or hate a thing is to be unhappy at the approach of it. Selfish desire for a worldly material object results in sacrificing spiritual treasure to secure the desired object which is probably of little value. Therefore, selfish desire destroys the sense of value, for selfish desire places worldly possessions above wisdom, and personalities above principles.

Some people express sorrow when they find old age coming upon them, when they find they are not so

strong as they used to be. It is wise for them to realize that their bodies have done good work, and if they can no longer do the same amount as before they should do gently and peacefully what they can, but not worry themselves over the change. Presently they will have new bodies, and the way to ensure a good one is to make such good use as they can of the old one, but in any case to be serene, calm and unruffled. The only way to do that is to let all selfish desire cease, and to turn the thought outward, helping others as far as one's capabilities go.

Now the Third Noble Truth, ceasing of suffering. We have already seen how sorrow ceases and how calm is to be attained; it is by always keeping our thought on the highest things. We may live in this world quite happily if we are not attached to it by foolish desire. We are in it, but we must not be of it, at least not to such an extent as to let it cause worry, trouble and sorrows. Undoubtedly our duty is to help others in their sorrows and troubles, but in order to do that effectively we must have none of our own selfish desire. If we take this life with philosophy we shall find that for us sorrow almost entirely ceases. There may be some who think such an attitude unattainable. It is not so. We can reach it, and we ought to do so, because only when we have attained it can we really and effectively help our brother man.

# NIBBANA

The cessation of craving or selfish desire means the removal all the hindrances, for all the others group themselves about this one root-factor; the result is called *Nibbana*. The Pali term *Nibbana* is formed of *Ni* and *Vana*. *Ni* is a negative particle and *Vana* means craving or selfish desire. *Nibbana*, therefore, literally means absence of craving. It may also be defined as extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance.

Now the predominance of this negative explanation of the Buddhist goal, *Nibbana*, resulted in the mistaken notion that it is 'Nothingness' or 'Annihilation'. Nevertheless we do find in the *Pitakas* such positive definitions of *Nibbana* as 'Highest Refuge' (*Parayana*), 'Safety' (*Tana*), 'Unique' (*Kevala*), 'Absolute Purity' (*Visuddhi*), 'Supramundane' (*Lokuttara*), 'Security' (*Khema*), 'Emancipation' (*Mutti*), 'Peace, (*Santi*), and so on.

The Sanskrit root 'Va' means to 'blow' and the prefix 'nir' is used to denote 'off' or 'out', being parallel to the Latin 'ex'. Hence *Nirvana*, in its Sanskrit form, means the 'blowing out'. What is blown out is understood to be the flame of personal desire. *Nibbana* is therefore not negative because it is the blowing out of the passive part of man, of his wishing tendencies. It is freedom, but freedom not from

circumstances, but from the bonds with which we have bound ourselves to those conditions. The man who is strong enough to say, 'Whatever comes I accept as best' becomes free, because he now lives in the process of the spiritual evolution of himself, not in the pleasure of personality, and he can make use of all things for the purpose of that evolution.

Freedom does not mean that one can do everything that one can imagine, that one can defeat a lion with a slap of the hand. It contains no such aggressive conceptions when properly understood. Some people may say that freedom of the will would mean that they could do anything they wish, but they forget that those very wishes restrict their freedom. Freedom means that one cannot be made a slave to any one or anything. A free man is able to use freely anyone or anything as a useful thing. Nothing, however, can use this man as its slave, because he is free from personal desire, and free from resentment, anger, pride, fear and impatience which arise through selfish desire. Such binding emotions are blown out like so many candles. That man is free on earth. He has reached *Nibbana* in this world.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Way leading to the end of suffering. It is the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path. So, the best way which leads to the end of all sorrow is the Middle Path.

Now let us proceed to the discussion of the other steps of the path. The second step is Right Thought. We should think about right things and not about wrong things. We can have at the back our minds always high and beautiful thoughts. Right thought must never have the slightest touch of evil in it; there are some people who would not deliberately think of anything impure or horrible, and yet they will cherish thoughts which are on the brink of that – not definitely evil, but certainly a little doubtful, wherever there is anything which seems in the least suspicious or unkind, it must be shut out. We must be quite sure that our thoughts are only kind and good.

There is another meaning of right thought, and that is correct thought. So often we think untruly or wrongly of persons just because of prejudice or ignorance. We get an idea that a certain person is a bad person, and therefore that all he does must be evil. We attribute motives to him which are often absolutely without foundation, and in doing so we are thinking untruly of him, and therefore our thought is not right thought. We are looking at one side of the person and we ignore the other side.

By fixing our attention on the evil in the man instead of the good, we strengthen and encourage that evil; whereas by right thought we might give

just the same encouragement to the good side of that man's nature.

The third step is Right Speech, and here again we should speak always of good things. It is not our business to speak of the evil deeds of others. In most cases the stories about other people which reach us are not true, and so if we repeat them our words will also be untrue. Even if the story is true, it is still wrong to repeat it. In a family if a husband or a wife or a son or a brother did something wrong, we could certainly feel that it would be wrong to advertise the misdeed of one whom we loved to many people who would not otherwise hear of it. We should speak with regard to others as should wish them to speak with regard to us. Some people allow themselves to fall into exaggeration and inaccuracy, and they make little things into enormous stories; surely that is not right speech. They also have the idea that when one meets a friend one must keep talking all the time, or the friend will be hurt. With the idea of seeming smart, they keep up a stream of constant half-joking or sneering talk. They must always be showing everything in a ridiculous or amusing aspect. Certainly all that comes under the heading of idle words. If we must talk, at least we might say something useful and helpful. Speech must be kindly, direct and forceful, and not silly.



The fourth step is Right Action. We see at once how these three steps necessarily follow one from another. If we think always of good things, we shall certainly not speak of evil things; if our thought and speech are good, then the action which follows will also be good. Action must be prompt and yet well-considered, and it must be unselfish. We should do what we can to help others. We do not live by ourselves. We live amongst others, so that whatever we think or say or do will necessarily affect a great many people. We should remember that our thought, our speech and our action are not merely qualities, but powers we possess to use. All are meant to be used for service, and to use them otherwise is to fail in our duty.

The fifth step is Right Livelihood, and that is a matter which may touch quite a large number of us. The right livelihood is that which causes no harm to any living thing. That affects such trades as those of a butcher or fisherman; but it reaches much further than that. We should not obtain our livelihood by harming any being, and therefore we can see that the selling of alcohol is not a right means of livelihood, because the seller is living on the harm he does to other people. The idea goes yet further. Take the case of a merchant who in the course of his trade is dishonest. That is not a right means of livelihood, because his trading is not fair

and he is cheating the people. When you trust a doctor or a lawyer you expect to be treated fairly. In the same way the customer comes to the trader, and therefore the latter should be as honest with his customer as the lawyer or the doctor is with his client or his patient. You have a right to make a reasonable profit in the course of your bargain, but you must also look to your duty.

The sixth step is Right Endeavour, and it is a very important one. We must not be content to be negatively good. What is desired of us is not mere abstinence from evil, but the positive doing of good. When the Buddha made a short statement in a single verse, he began by saying 'Cease to do evil', but the next line runs: 'Learn to do good'. Every person has a certain amount of strength, not only physical, but mental, and can do a certain amount of work. Every person has also a certain amount of influence among his friends and relations. That influence means power, and we are responsible for making good use of that power. All about us are children, relations, employees, and over all of these we have a certain amount of influence, at least by example. We must be careful of what we do and what we say, because others will copy us.

The seventh step is Right Attention. Vigilant attention leads us to see correctly and to attain a point of

view from which we see beyond the pairs of opposites. He who does not practise attention is the plaything of the multiple influences with which he comes into contact; he is like a drifting cork which is at the mercy of the waves. He unconsciously submits to the action of his physical and psychical environment.

We should be conscious of our movements and acts, both physical and mental. Nothing of what goes on in us should escape unnoticed. We should be conscious of the feelings which arise in us and recognize them. When the power of attention is enhanced, and one has reached the point where one misses none of the phenomena which arise in oneself, one proceeds to investigate them and to search for their causes. He will be aware of his anger when he is angry, and find the cause of it, and foresee the result of it. In this way he will check all his feelings, envy, sensuality, anxiety, etc. If he performs a charitable deed, he also should question himself as to the motives which he obeyed. The result of this kind of question will often be a powerful influence to minimize selfish moral values.

The practice of perfect attention is a means of learning to know oneself, to know the world in which one lives, consequently to acquire right understanding.

Another practice under this heading is the exercise of memory, for example, at the end of each day one recalls the actions which one has performed, the feelings which one has experienced, the thoughts which one has entertained. The examination is conducted backwards, that is to say, beginning with the last thought one has entertained, and working back until the first moments after waking. The aim of this exercise is simply to teach us to allow none of the things which our sense have perceived, or the ideas which have passed through our minds, to become obliterated. This practice of memory, when fully developed, will result in attaining the knowledge of remembering former births.

The eighth step is Right Concentration. It is the right concentration of thought upon a single object. Meditation is to be practised only after concentration. In concentration we start with simple objects, and in meditation we carry the clear conception of that simple object to the higher mental and intellectual levels. To make it clear, imagine someone pouring water from above into a jar. If there are many holes round the bottom and sides of the jar, the water will run out, but if the holes are all filled in, the water will rise. Most of us are like the jar full of holes, ready to leak, so that we cannot concentrate our thoughts. Meditation is like the pouring of water, concentration is like the filling of the holes.

Concentration makes our consciousness steady without leakage and meditations fills it with clear vision and wisdom. By meditation on a chosen object, you will observe that object clearly and understand the function of it in conjunction with other things. By meditation, therefore, we enlarge our knowledge and wisdom.

When your meditation is fully developed it opens up ways of intuition and many supernatural powers which some people call occult powers. These powers may be obtained even before one reaches the state of Nibbana. In a way it is true that they are occult powers because they are hidden from those who have not developed their minds in this way. On the other hand these powers are not occult because they are not hidden from those who have sincerely and strenuously practised right meditation, they just form an extension of the powers used in ordinary life. By the powers developed you can see things which you cannot see otherwise, because your consciousness, thoughts are so pure, like a polished mirror which reflects everything that appears in front of it. If the surface of a mirror is not clear you can see nothing in it. In the same way, without meditation your consciousness and thoughts may be mixed up with selfish desire, hatred and delusion, but when they are purified and developed by means of meditation, you will see things as they truly are and your wisdom will shine forth.

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## BUDDHIST METTA

Metta is the world's supreme need today, greater, indeed, than ever before. As you know, in the world now there is sufficient material and money and, as you can, we have very advanced intellects, very clever and brilliant authors, philosophers, psychologists, scientists and also religious people, ministers of law, morality, religion and so on. In spite of all these brilliant people, there is no real peace and happiness in the world. It shows that there is something lacking.

That is Metta, a Pali word which has been translated into English as 'Love'. When you use the word 'love' you have different ideas in the interpretation of this word and you may mean many other things, because it is a word that has been loosely used and in some cases misused or abused. Therefore when you talk about love, people may have a different concept. So we use the Pali word 'Metta' to mean Loving-kindness – not the ordinary, sensual, emotional, sentimental kind of love. As you know, the word 'Love' has been defined in many ways in the English language, according to the ideas in the minds of different people professing different religions.

For instance, a recently published booklet entitled 'Love' has been given to me for perusal and I would like to comment on it. I am not going to discuss any particular point in this book. I just want to show you how different from Metta a definition of 'Love' can be. The author of this book is a highly respected teacher of a certain theist faith. According to his definition of Metta, and he uses our Pali word, 'Love is God. Love emanates itself in any of the creations of God. Man is foremost'.

I would like to read a little about 'Love' towards animals from this book.

'Man requires vigour, strength or procreation to serve God... to protect him and others and to control the world successfully. In order to be strong and powerful man must eat nutritious food and for this reason God has instructed Man to kill and to eat bullocks, camels. He is not permitted to kill wild animals... otherwise he would himself become wild in course of time. By reason of the flesh of domestic animals being eaten by man, the goodness of these animals mingles with men's souls and thus (sic) indirectly obtain Heaven. This amounts to a good turn done to them by men – an act of compassion shown by men to them. This not cruelty in life'.

With due respect to the author I have read this passage out to you just for comparison. He equates

Metta with 'Love', with his, to us, rather peculiar logic and way of looking at things.

What is the Buddhist idea of Metta? Metta has been translated by modern translators in English as 'generous mindedness, loving-kindness, sending out thoughts of love towards others', but in the words of the Buddha, Metta has a far wider significance – a much more extensive implication than this. It means a great deal more than loving-kindness, harmlessness (Ahimsa), sympathy. I would like to mention a point here. According to the Christian Bible 'goodwill' is supposed to be very good. You remember the message of goodwill given by the angels when the child Christ was born. The angels, they say, gave a message of goodwill to the world, 'Peace on earth to men of goodwill, etc.'. When you examine this message you realize that the angels gave peace on earth only to men of goodwill not to all the people. That is the message. In Buddhism, Metta has been emphasized. It is much deeper than goodwill. Also harmlessness is a very, very good, grand principle but it is a negative aspect. This loving-kindness, according to the Buddha's Teaching has two aspects. One is negative, that is *adosa* (ami-ty) as explained in the Abhidhamma; it is an explanation of Metta but is negative, meaning 'absence of hatred and hostility'. Though absence of hatred is a grand thing, it is not good enough unless its active



aspect is emphasized – that is loving-kindness. Not to do evil is very good but it is only a negative aspect – to do good is the positive aspect. So also Metta has its positive aspect.

What is love? Love is defined in the Oxford Dictionary. According to it, love means ‘warm affection, attachment, affectionate devotion etc.’. These are the synonymous terms for love. They refer to sentimental, worldly love. Therefore, Metta has no full English equivalent because this Metta is much more than ordinary affection – warm affection. The Pali word Metta means literally – ‘friendliness’, – also love without a desire to possess but with a desire to help, to sacrifice self-interest for the welfare and well-being of humanity. This love is without any selection or exclusion. If you select a few good friends and exclude unpleasant persons, then you have not got a good grasp of this Metta. Love is not merely brotherly feeling but a principle for us to practise. It is not merely benevolent thought but performing charitable deeds, active ministry for the good of one and all. A subject – not to be talked about but to be – to put it in your being – to suffuse it within ourselves. It is, then, dynamic suffusing of every living being, excluding none whatsoever, with dynamic creative thoughts of loving-kindness. If the thoughts are intense enough, right actions follow automatically.

People talk about ideas to counteract other ideologies. We Buddhists do not need any new ideologies, we have enough in the teachings of the Buddha. Out of the four Brahma Vihara – this Metta – which is one of them, is good enough to create anything noble, anything grand to make peace and happiness at home, in society and in the world.

Metta – pure loving-kindness – embraces all beings everywhere, either on earth or in the skies or Heaven. It also embraces all beings high or low, without measure because the poor people, lowly people, evil people, ignorant people are most in need of it. Because in them it has died out for lack of warmth or friendliness- this Metta becomes with them like a weak stream running in a desert. This Metta includes loving, unloving good and bad people.

You may ask, ‘Should we love foolish people – fools?’ It is a common question asked in foreign countries. ‘Should we love snakes?’ European ladies also asked ‘Should we love mice?’ European ladies do not like mice. But we should not hate a person just as a doctor does not hate a patient; but his duty is to quell, to get rid of the disease the patient is suffering from, to take out anything that is wrong in that person. Therefore, it should include all beings without measure.

This Metta is entirely different from sensual lust which has passed as 'love' in the world today, which has also been admired and talked about as emotional love. This Metta is much higher – in fact it is the highest form of love. It is much higher than sentimental, sensual love.

In its outward appearance sentimental love seems to be very sweet but it is like a fire – indeed far worse than fire. Once it is born it grows rapidly, flowers at one moment and then it scorches and burns the possessor in another moment leaving ugly wounds and scars. That is why in Burmese we say 'Achitkyi, amyetkyi'. The more sentimental love you have, the more hate you have and the more suffering you have; because it is like fire which burns very easily. But Metta has a cooling effect like the soft touch of a gentle hand – soft but firm – without changing its sympathy. So it only creates a calm, pleasant atmosphere.

Sorrow for loved ones is not a sign of this love – Metta. Love is strength, because it is pure and gives strength. It is not weakness. I could like to recite, not Pali but a translation of a passage from the Metta Sutta – a very valuable Sutta. You hear Sayadaws recite this Sutta in Pali on almost every occasion.

This passage gives an example of what love is. This is not a perfect example, but for want of a better example the Buddha has chosen the love of a mother. He says in the Metta Sutta: 'Just as a mother, even at the risk of her life loves and protects her child – the only child – so let a man cultivate this Universal Love – towards the whole universe; below, above, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of opposing interest. Let him remain steadfastly in this state of mind, all the while from the time he awakes, whether he be standing, walking, sitting or lying down. This state of heart is the best in world.'

This is the model held up by the Buddha to the world. This is the ideal of what man should be to man. This is the appeal to every heart. It is a service for all in the form of a mother's love. Does a mother merely radiate her love in the bringing up of her child? Can any one express this deathless love of a mother's love for her child that she has within her heart? If you consider a mother's love for her child you will find that it is boundless. Therefore it is called 'Appamana' in Pali. It has no limit.

The love of a mother who has only one child is the example chosen by the Buddha. Imagine a mother's love; when a child is hungry she is watching carefully to feed it before it asks her for it. When the child is in danger, she will risk her own life. Thus in

every way she helps her child. Therefore the Buddha asks us to love all beings as a mother loves her only child. If we can do it even up to a certain extent, I think the world will be a different place – happier and more peaceful.

Though we talk much about love and repeat the formula ‘Sabbe satta avera hontu, avyapajjha hontu etc.’ (May all sentient beings be free from danger; may they be free from oppression, etc.) without this love how can it be effective? This passage is not merely to be recited. The Buddha does not ask us to learn any of his teachings for recitation only. They are in the nature of prescriptions. The doctor may diagnose, find the cause of your disease and will give you a prescription according to his findings. Will the disease be cured by merely reciting the formula backwards and forwards? You may have a recipe how to cook food, how to cook curry. You may recite it backwards and forwards but you will not have the result. So recitation is nothing practical. Theory is good but is not good enough, because it is not the end of a thing, it is only the beginning of it. So recitation of the *Metta Sutta* is good but the Buddha did not mean it to be merely recited. He exhorted us to follow his instructions in it so that we might realize Metta, the best state of heart in the world. Therefore my advice is, do not be satisfied with the mere recitation of the Sutta but to

strive to know its meaning with a view to practising it and 'to become it' – to make it suffuse your being. That is the point. Meditation does not mean merely to think about it, but to practise it in our daily life.

I would like you to do a short meditation on Love. So as to make you familiar with meditation, I would like to show you a practical method which you can practise wherever you go.

Now, coming to the message of Love. We are asked to be loving towards all beings as a mother loves her only child. Therefore, Metta must go hand in hand with helpfulness, with willingness and a spirit of sacrifice for the welfare of other beings.

In the Digha Nikaya, it is said by the Buddha that almost every virtue such as unselfishness, loving sympathy and loving-kindness is included in this Metta. If you have real Metta you can be almost everything; you can radiate a noble, grand peace. It is this Metta that attempts to break away all barriers which separates beings one from the other.

Some people may doubt as to whether Love can be a basis of policy for settlement. Many people look upon this Love – Metta – as a feminine virtue. They say it is a soft feminine virtue. But true Love is a masculine dynamic power which breaks all the barriers and builds. Who has built the most lasting

empires? Is it Alexander, Caesar or the Buddha? We often talk about the Roman Empire, French Empire, Russian Empire. Where are those empires now? Those empires lasted temporarily because they were based on hatred, pride and conceit. They were not based on love. Any policy used, which is not based on love, cannot last very long.

In this connection, I would like to use a simile. Life is like a big wheel in perpetual motion. This great wheel has numberless small wheels in it each of which has its own pattern. The great wheel and the smaller wheels – the great Universe and the individuals are so linked together that we depend one on another for service, for happiness, for development. Therefore, our duty is to bring out the goodness in each one of us – which is in harmony with the pattern of the world. For all the wheels to revolve in harmony, the highest good in each one of us should be produced. For instance, in a car, to make it in running order – to use it – every part should be in order. If we are going to create a happy family, happy house, everybody in the house, at least the majority, must be in good order. If we are to create a good harmony in ourselves, the majority must be in good order so that it will be in harmony with happiness and peace. It can be done here and now by the performance of daily, hourly duties with love, courtesy and honesty.

The ideal placed by the Buddha before us is mutual service – men being in need of each other, bear each other's burdens. We have three types of work as mentioned in the Nikaya – three modes of conduct for the Buddhist. In Pali we call it 'Buddhattha Cariya, Natattha Cariya, Lokattha Cariya' (striving for Buddhahood, working for the benefit of one's relatives and friends, and working for the benefit of the whole world). Similarly, each one of us has three modes of conduct – 'Atta-Cariya' is striving for self-development so that one may attain happiness, self-culture and self-realization. The second mode of conduct – Natattha Cariya' is working for the benefit of one's relatives and friends. The third mode for us to follow is "Lokattha Cariya' to work for the benefit of the world without making any distinction as regards caste, colour or creed. The Buddha has asked us to practise these three types of conduct. Buddhism being a method of development – self-development, is an education of the heart. Therefore our task is to practise these principles laid down by the Buddha, to refine our own nature, to elevate ourselves on the scale of beings.

Modern education, as you know, is mainly education in the means to make money, how to arrange things and control them. Buddhism is an education of the heart. Therefore, if religion is taken only as an intellectual faith in the mind, it has no force. If



religion is not followed by practice, we cannot produce any result. In the Dhammapada the Buddha said: 'A beautiful word or thought which is not accompanied by corresponding acts is like a bright flower which bears no fruit. It would not produce any effect'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is action, and not speculation; it is practice, not theory that matters. According to the Dhammapada, 'Will' if it is not followed by corresponding action, does not count. Therefore, practice of the noble principles is the essence of Buddhism.

In this connexion I also want to say that this Metta – Universal Love – is generally taken to exist in connexion with other people, but in reality love for self comes first. It is not a selfish love, but love for self – pure love – comes first. When we meditate on love, we meditate on love of self first. (*Aham avero homi* etc.) (May I be free from harm). By having pure love, Metta, as we defined it, for self; selfish tendencies, hatred, anger will be diminished. Therefore, unless we ourselves possess Metta within, we cannot share, we cannot radiate, we cannot send this Metta to others. Supposing you have no money how can you send even a few small coins? So meditation on love is to be started within ourselves. You may say that we love ourselves. If you can say that you love yourselves, can you harm yourselves by having

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1. Dhammapada—Pubbhavaggo, verse 51.

angry thoughts within yourselves? If you love a person will you do harm to him? No. To love the self means to be free from selfishness, hatred anger, etc. Therefore, to clear ourselves from these undesirable feelings we must love ourselves. According to Buddhism self-love comes first. Buddhism always is a method of dealing with ourselves. Therefore, it is self-help. By helping ourselves we can help others effectively. We talk about externals, meaning by this the duty to help others; but as pointed out by the Buddha, if a person cannot help himself well, he cannot help others well.<sup>1</sup> Also in the Dhammapada<sup>2</sup> it is said no enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving – thoughts of hatred, thoughts of jealousy and so on. If one cannot find happiness in himself, he cannot find happiness anywhere else. It is also said that people who cannot control themselves cannot find happiness. In the social service, the so-called social workers are not happy in the performance of their duties unless they are calm themselves. If they are not calm in themselves, they cannot produce calm in others. We must, therefore be properly trained not only in outside organization but in our inner culture. In the case of many so-called social work-

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1. One should first establish oneself in what is proper; then only he should advise another; such a wise man will not be reproached' — Dhammapada verse 158

2. Dhammapada 42

ers, the real thing they are doing is telling others what to do like dictators. And they say that, 'We do our best but others are not willing to accept our help'. Everybody is in need of help if the help is properly given in the way they like to be assisted but in the ways others want to help them. So a true social worker should be a person who has true love for himself first – filled with a love which is nothing but pure, unselfish love. Then he can confer a double blessing; that is, he, having pure, true love, enjoys himself while helping others, at the same time making others happy.

You remember the Jataka stories where the Bodhisatta, the Buddha-to-be, is always trying to strengthen himself by helping others – so that other people will be happy, so that he will be stronger to give greater help.

Again if a person cannot be right with himself, he cannot be right with others. He should be like an engineer who first perfects himself in his trade and then only produces perfect work because he perfected his training first. A doctor without the required qualifications may try to help patients but he may do harm instead. Therefore, a leader of any kind, social, political, religious, if he has no mental culture, may be leading his followers in a wrong direction.

We are so used to seeing external training that we forget inner training, the training of ourselves. We like to train other people and forget to train ourselves. We tend to take it for granted that we are always right and others are in the wrong. It seems to be a characteristic of people that they blame others; even when they are late, they blame others – because of wife, because of friends or somebody else, etc. I do not mean to say that we should blame only ourselves. There is a saying of Confucius – a very wise, useful saying: ‘An uncultured person blames others, a semi-cultured person blames himself, and a fully cultured person blames neither’. The problem is, ‘What is wrong and not who is wrong’.

According to the Buddhist method, training oneself comes first. Individual perfection must be first, so that the organic whole may be perfect. The state of the outer world is a reflection of our inner selves.

To conclude I would like to ask you to meditate for a few minutes on love, so that our thoughts, actions and words may be filled with love. From trained minds, come right thoughts, right actions and right words.

In true meditation, first you fill yourself with love mentally, ‘May I be well and happy’. ‘May all beings of the Universe be well and happy’. Mean it and feel

it. Also try to see that the world is filled with your love, with a great desire that they may be happy, a desire such as a mother has for her only child.

If you send out these thoughts of Metta before you go to sleep, I am positive that you will have extraordinarily peaceful sleep. If you can maintain these thoughts of Metta, you will have a serene, peaceful, successful life and you will be loved because you are loving. The world is like a great mirror and if you look at the mirror with a smiling face you will see your own smiling beautiful face. If you look at it with a long face, as the English say, you will invariably see your own ugly face. There is also an expression in the form of the greeting. 'Well friend, how does the world treat you?' The usual answer is 'Well, I am all right'. Your answer should be, 'Well, the world treats me as I treat the world'.

If you treat the world properly, kindly, the world will treat you kindly. We should not expect other persons to treat us kindly first, but we should start by ourselves treating them kindly.

# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## COMPASSION

COMPASSION IS THE ENGLISH translation of the Pali word 'karuna', which may be further expanded as: that which moves a good man's heart at the sight of suffering of other people. Its main characteristic is the desire to remove suffering from people; its chief function being the overcoming or discarding of cruelty. It is not just a feeling, but a principle, going beyond mere wishing by the actual doing of kind and helpful actions. True compassion goes hand in hand with helpfulness and willingness to sacrifice self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. It should be realized and remembered that its indirect enemy is grief, grief and sorrow not being compassion in the real sense of the word since they are morally weak states, whereas true compassion is morally strong and gives strength. By cultivating the principle of compassion in ourselves we overcome cruelty, in the course of which we cultivate wisdom, and perfect wisdom is the crown of compassion.

The four sublime states (*brahma-vihara*) are: pure love (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*), and these four

principles constitute the moral and spiritual foundation of man, being at the same time real sources of peace and happiness. How as ordinary worldlings do we acquire them? If we say it is impossible, that means we are unwilling to try, and we do no better than those who deafen their ears to avoid hearing the cry of the distressed because they are absorbed in their own selfish griefs and joys. Bound up in these they cannot feel compassion, and although there are those who can find it possible, for many people acquiring of such a quality does not seem possible.

Compassion is generally taken to exist in connection with other people, but really, true and pure love or compassion for oneself should come first in order to diminish our own cruel tendencies. In meditation, therefore, we first meditate on compassion for ourselves for the purpose of achieving this aim; moreover, it is impossible to radiate thoughts of love and compassion unless we ourselves have properly developed these qualities. If one can say that one loves oneself and is compassionate towards oneself, one should by meditation, help oneself to entertain always pure and beautiful thoughts so that any words or deeds, as a result of which they may become manifest, are also pure and beautiful. Can we, I wonder, really say we love ourselves and are compassionate towards ourselves

in a true sense? If so, we should never do harm to ourselves by having thoughts, words and deeds of craving, anger and delusion to arise, for by such action we should definitely be harming ourselves. In the form of self-help, therefore, pure love and compassion in the true sense should be for oneself first.

The Buddhist method is always to deal with oneself first, for by so doing we are helping ourselves to be in a position to understand and help others more effectively. Should we ourselves have selfish angry thoughts and misunderstanding, we not only harm ourselves but other people at the same time. Very often it seems to some people that by talking and dealing with external matters it is easier to help others rather than to help oneself, but if one is incapable of helping oneself efficiently one is certainly not capable of helping others efficiently. 'One who profits himself will profit others', and it should constantly be remembered that no enemy can harm one so much as one's own evil thoughts and craving, these are our inner enemies who follow us day and night, and from whom we must try to keep away. If a person cannot find happiness within himself, he will not be able to find it anywhere.

People who cannot control themselves cannot find happiness by performing services for others, be-



cause since they themselves are not calm they cannot create a calm atmosphere. Those same people in performing social services may be telling others what to do, but they still find unhappiness in themselves and so tend to blame other people, saying, 'We do our best but others are not willing to accept our services', and so on. Such people are not fit to render these services. A person with true compassion based on understanding, confers a double blessing; he helps others with a true, pure motive, and because of his own calmness he feels happiness within himself as well as happiness in helping others. It takes great effort to cultivate pure compassion for oneself, but to tell others what to do needs only words. It will be observed in the Jataka stories that a Bodhisatta always tries to strengthen and help himself, and so to improve his work for the welfare of humanity.

Again, we cannot be right with the world if we are not right with ourselves. The engineer perfects himself in training, and as a consequence produces perfect, reliable work because he has first perfected himself in training. A doctor with merely good intentions but no qualifications may try to help, but in actual fact he may really do harm; and a leader of any kind, social, political or religious, may lead his followers in the wrong direction instead of the right if he has no mental or moral culture.

Meditation is mental training, and from a trained mind spring right thoughts, words and deeds. We are so used to seeing external training that we forget the inner training of ourselves. Why is that we do not think of self-development? Buddhist teaching reveals how self-development may be achieved, showing that the individual must be perfect in order that the organic whole may be perfect, the inner world coming first, since the outer world is only a manifestation of the inner world. So often we tend to blame others, thinking that it is we who are right, without even bothering to examine ourselves.

Thus compassion for oneself is first, and we can achieve it by clear thinking and by self-discipline; but to attain it we must also try to understand and find out the right way to bring up both ourselves and our children. Clear thinking can be superficial unless we practise it from childhood. In the case of compassion, for instance, which includes absolutely all beings including animals, it is difficult to imagine how we can expect to introduce humane education when parents give nursery rhymes such as Three Blind Mice and The House that Jack built. These bring dreadful thoughts to children's minds, completely defeating the object of trying to introduce right thinking and self-discipline.

In the Teaching of the Buddha, as already emphasized, compassion for oneself comes first; so, self-

pity, being sorry for oneself, will do harm because such thoughts are of a selfish nature, and will be followed by misunderstanding and anger. Some people, though, are proud to speak of 'my anger' but anger can never be righteous or justified, because it harms the producer as well as others.

When a person has eventually cultivated the principle of compassion in himself he is in a position to extend it, and he should develop it until he covers the whole of society, the whole country and the world, without distinction whatsoever with regard to class, colour or creed. If in so doing he should demand acknowledgment of any kind, this is not true compassion.

It is a good thing to meditate, because training of the mind is the starting point, but I should be happy if the students who attend these classes would also give a thought to compassion. People who come to study classes and lectures should consider what is taught to them and make up their minds to practise accordingly, but they should not take themselves too much for granted and forget what they have been taught.

First, then, meditate on compassion for yourself, until your heart and mind are full of it and become it, then enlarge that compassion until it embraces all beings throughout the whole universe.

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## THE WAY TO NIBBANA

*Lecture to the High Court Buddhist Association, Rangoon*

### *Part One*

The title of our talk this afternoon is ‘The Way to Nibbana – the way to the highest happiness’.

To sum up all the teachings of the Buddha, we have a stanza:

*To refrain from all evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind .  
This is the teaching of (all) Buddhas.*

~ Dhammapada 183.<sup>1</sup>

It is a very short stanza; yet it covers all the teachings of the Buddha. It embodies three stages on the Highway to Highest Happiness – *Nibbana*. I think most of you know that stanza in Pali and therefore I need not repeat it. There are three stages of devel-

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1. Khuddakanikaya Dhammapadatthakatha. 14  
Buddhavagga. 4–Anandatherapañha vatthu; Verse 183

oping ourselves in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path (*Attha Magganga-Majjhima Patipada*) is classified into three groups, namely, *Sila* (Morality), *Samadhi* (Concentration) and *Pañña* (Wisdom). The first two steps of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Understanding, i.e. understanding the nature of self, and the nature of the universe, and Right Thought are grouped under *Pañña*, Wisdom; the next three, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood are grouped under *Sila*, Morality. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration are grouped under *Samadhi* (Concentration).

You may ask, as it has frequently been asked; – why three stages – why not one stage only as a basis? The reason is, we have three stages of defilements – *Kilesas*, (impurities) such as *Lobha*, *Dosa* and *Moha*, etc. Each of the 10 *Kilesas* (defilements) has three stages. For instance, greed or anger has three stages. The first stage, the root, is called in *Pali*, *Anusaya*. At this stage the defilement such as craving, anger, etc. are lying latent in each of us. They do not become manifest up to the level of thoughts, feelings and emotions, yet they lie latent in each of us. We can prove it. The fact that we can be made excited and angry show that we have certain tendencies like anger, hatred – though for ordinary purposes we may be called ‘good’ people We are good only when other people are good; other-

wise we can be made angry and emotional. This proves that we have certain tendencies.

If one's actions are according to the law of Morality, then that is Right Action. When your action not only is harmless but also helpful – of great service to you as well as to others, then you can say your action is right. There are many things which we think to be good but they are only good to us, good only from our own standpoint.

In order to do right your mind must be free from selfishness, illwill, hatred, jealousy, etc. When your mind is pure you can see and know things as they really are. Take for instance the case of a pot which is filled with water. It is filled in three stages – the bottom, the middle and the topmost parts. *Anusaya* is the first or the root stage where the evil tendencies are lying latent. The fact that you can provoke a person into anger clearly shows that there is anger, or the root of anger lying latent within him. The first stage is very quiet – so quiet that we seem to be sacrosanct.

Even at the second stage – *Pariyutthana*, we are still in the realm of thoughts, feelings. The English saying 'Silence is Golden' is not always right. We may say that mere silence is sometimes far more dangerous than a big noise.

Then in the final stage we become fierce, dreadful, uncontrollable both in words as well as actions. (*Vitikkama*). That is the top part of our defilements. So *Anusaya*, *Pariyutthana* and *Vitikkama* – these are the three stages of defilements.

Buddhism teaches a method of how to control, how to overcome these evil tendencies lying latent in us. To exercise this control, we need three stages of training towards development – *Sila*, *Samadhi*, and *Pañña* – Morality, Concentration, Insight.

First comes *Sila*, Morality, the observance of precepts. The observance of precepts would enable one to overcome only the last stage – the outward, visible stage of defilements and not the other two stages. It is like cutting a tree by the branches at the top. Morality can control only your words and actions, not your mind. It can only make us good ladies and gentlemen in the worldly wise sense and not make us righteous people – don't you say sometimes, when you are in the process of observing the Eight Precepts, 'When I am out of this observance, you will know what I am?' It is necessary for us to have three stages of defilements that is in us

But as there remain two stages undisputed by morality, the defilements that we have got rid of will grow up again, and that very soon. Therefore, we

need the second stage of training – *Samadhi* (Concentration or meditation) in order to enable us to dispel the second stage of defilements left undisputed by the practise of *Sila* – Morality. Concentration is mind-control and mental culture. It is like cutting a tree by the trunk, but as there remains the first or root stage undisputed the defilements will rise up again. But Concentration can clear away the defilements for a considerable time so that they will not rise again so soon. Clearing away of defilements by Morality – *Sila* – is called *Tadanga Pahana* in *Pali* (temporary suppression of defilements). Just like the temporary cutting away of the topmost branches of a tree. Putting away of defilements by means of *Samadhi* (concentration) is called *Vikkhambhana Pahana*. Concentration represents a more powerful and a higher mental culture, so it is far more effective than *Sila*.

Coming to the third stage of development, *Pañña* (Wisdom):

By means of developing one's insight, Wisdom, one is able to dispel the first stage – the *Anusaya* stage. It is like cutting a tree by the root so that it will never grow again. If defilements are cut by means of Wisdom, such defilements will never rise again. This is called *Samuccheda Pahana*.



As these three stages are interdependent and inter-related., *Sila, Samadhi and Panna* should be practised at the same time and not separately. Only to put them in order in the *Dhamma* we put down three stages separately, but in practice we must practise them simultaneously. While to practise Concentration it is easier for you to live rightly and understand things rightly. In the same way, practice of right understanding or insight enables one to live rightly. This applies not only during periods of mediation but in one's daily life as well.

We should be rational beings. We should react to surroundings, circumstances and events of daily life reasonably and instinctively or emotionally.

What we need in this world is to be rational – to try to exercise our reasoning powers – but it is rather bad for the world that in most cases human beings judge according to their emotions or instincts.

The standard of mental development is very low because the method of public education is wrong, the method of upbringing of the children is also wrong. I can prove how wrong it is. Even the nursery rhymes taught to the infants portray stories full of cruelty and killings without an atom of love in them. Again, a group of moralists in the west went round the educational institutions in order to test

the psychology of the children studying there. A child was asked to make a sentence comprising the words 'Mother', 'Baby', and 'Cat'. The child answered, 'The cat scratches the baby and the baby cries. Mummy gets angry and beats the cat'. The same question was asked in every school in the whole province and there was only one child who gave the following answer and was given a prize as it contained some love and affection that should exist between the different beings on earth. 'The cat plays with the baby. Mummy is so pleased with the cat that she gives some milk to the cat to drink'.

I myself witnessed a woman who bought a cane from a seller and gave it to her little boy to play with. The boy instead beat her with it. Many parents do not train their children to be good, tame and docile, but encourages them to be cruel, quarrelsome and aggressive by giving them toy revolvers, toy swords and air rifles. So the method of training children in the present, scientific world is very wrong. In cinemas most of the picture shown are all wrong – they encourage shooting and the telling of lies.

What then is the Buddha's method? First, morality. These rules of morality are firstly explained in the *Panca-sila*. Not to kill not to steal, not to have sexual misconduct, not to tell lies and not to take any

intoxicating liquors and drugs. In Burma most people think that all is well if you observe these five precepts only negatively. To merely abstain from killing is not enough; so we should emphasize the positive aspect of the principle of non-killing – to have compassion on all beings including animals.

In the Discourse on Metta we said *Adosa* is the negative aspect of it, but having *Adosa* is not all. In the practice of Metta you have pity, compassion and loving-kindness towards all beings in the whole universe. So also in the case of practising the Five Precepts. Non-killing is understood by many as not taking life, but this term ‘not to kill’ is broad enough to include all kind and loving acts.

The second precept – taking what is not given to you freely. The standard of mental development in the present world – even of adults – seems to be much lower than an intelligent child of twelve. It seems that modern man, because of his physical body, cannot be styled as an animal but by actions many people nowadays behave worse than animals. The positive aspect of this second precept of *Panca-sila* is not only to refrain from stealing but to offer material help. Then we do not need to have a big police force or courts to try criminal cases or a Bureau of Special Investigation.

Then comes sexual misconduct.

Then the next precept '*Musavada*' – to abstain from telling lies is very difficult to observe. Not to tell lies is the negative aspect. The positive aspect is not only to tell the truth but to use such words as are soothing, kindly and comforting to the people who hear them. As for telling lies, if the majority of our race do not tell lies, even these law courts might not be necessary.

As for the last of the five precepts – not to take intoxication liquors and drugs – this has almost become an everyday habit taken at every meal in civilized society. Really, no drinking of any liquor is necessary to keep one healthy mentally, morally and spiritually. Once in England my audience argued that since I have not taken any liquor in my life, since I am complete teetotaler, I cannot know the benefits derived from drinking. Drinking makes you lose control of your mind at least temporarily, and those who drink to excess can be said to become quite mad. Taking liquor is against the law of nature and also the precept laid down by the Buddha. Drink causes distraction, dullness of mind. When done to excess you can become a stark lunatic. According to Buddhism, drink is the cause of all misery, all troubles. By taking drinks you become emotional and it is easy for a drunkard to tell lies or to commit murder, etc.

To conclude, I would like to ask the audience and Sayadaws as well as the Upasakas and Upasikas to emphasize the positive aspects of these five precepts, the *Panca-sila*, I would like to mention also that the Buddha's way of life is a system of cultivating ourselves – our higher consciousness. It is a way of a good, righteous and happy life. The Buddha says what when a good act is performed several times there is a definite tendency to repeat this act. So in time it becomes a habit. Men are creatures of habit. By habit they becomes slaves of drink, slaves of gambling, slaves of lust and scores of other vices. Also I would like to quote a Japanese proverb, 'Man takes drink first, then the drink takes a drink and finally drink takes the man'.

Any physical action, if repeated for sometime becomes a habit. In the same way, any thought which is allowed to rise up again and again gives rise to a definite tendency to reproduce that type of thought and therefore becomes a habit. The Buddha's method is to use the reproductive power of the mind as well as the body for the development of ourselves. By cultivating good habits of mind and body we develop ourselves fully. It is called *Parami* in *Pali*, meaning fulfillment. In other words, to make counter habits whenever you have a tendency to be angry, and then you can develop mental states of loving-kindness and compassion so that these mental

states will be repeated again and again. And in the end they will become habits so much so that you will never entertain thoughts of hatred, anger, jealousy and the like. These evil tendencies will disappear before the tendencies of loving-kindness, even as the darkness of the night fades away before the dawn of the rising sun. This is the method given by the Buddha. It is a practical system of changing and developing our inner selves.

## PART TWO

It is a continuation of our discussion on the three stages of mental development. They are: *Sila* (conduct), *Samadhi* (concentration) and *Pañña* (wisdom). We dealt with the first stage at the last lecture. This time I am going to deal briefly with concentration (*Samadhi*) which is meditation and also wisdom. These are rather serious, because when we come to practise concentration we usually find that it is a dull process. Meditation is not be talked about, but to do, to practise. You are not willing to do things normally. To talk about things is very easy. To organize things is very easy. Some people think it needs a genius to organize; but do is far more difficult even than to organize.

This afternoon I am going to read from the book that I have written on the subject of concentration and how to go about meditation.

## *Concentration (Samadhi)*

The spiritual man, having been equipped with morality and mastery of the senses, is inclined to develop higher and more lasting happiness (i.e. than worldly happiness) by concentration (*samadhi*) control and culture of the mind, the second stage on the path to Nibbana.

Concentration is mental culture without which we cannot attain Wisdom. By concentration we can acquire happiness – a happiness which is much higher than ordinary worldly happiness. Worldly happiness is dependent. It needs the support and cooperation of a partner. Higher mental happiness does not require any external help or any partner. This happiness can be attained through *Jhanas*. *Jhana* (Skr. Dhyana) is derived from the root *Jhe*, to think closely of an object or to burn adverse things, *nivarana*, hindrances to spiritual progress. *Jhana* has been translated as trance, absorption or ecstasy, but it is a special ultramundane experience.

In Burma we do not talk about *Jhana*. We talk very much about *Vipassana*, *Samatha* (meditation; calm) or *Jhana*, is not thought much of in Burma because the Burmans think that it is not the highest but only the second stage to Nibbana. That is one reason. Another reason is that those who are interested in *Vipassana* meditation think that it is a

short cut to Nibbana. In some cases, it is thought that it is a matter of days or a few weeks' practice for one to attain Nibbana. They like to go to Nibbana straightaway without waiting for a long time. They have three day courses, seven day courses for it. To attain *Jhana* you have to prove it by performing a miracle – walk on water, sit on water, raise the dead. But to attain Nibbana in the stage of Sotapanna needs no proof. That is still another reason why people are interested in *Vipassana*.

The Buddha himself was highly qualified in the *Jhanas*. I would like to say something about these *Jhanas*. Some people suggest that if we are going to spread Buddhism effectively throughout the world, we must do something different from what we have done now. By *Jhana* you are able to fly up in the sky. You can appear and disappear in the air. So, some people say that Buddhism can be spread far quicker than otherwise if we can prove Buddhism through the *Jhanas*. Anyway, these *Jhanas* are a part of the Buddha's teaching. *Jhana* means to think, to concentrate on the object to overcome Hindrances. *Jhana* also means to burn the adverse things, nivarana, Hindrances to spiritual progress. From this same derivative we have 'Jhar-pan-na' in the case of death, decay (funeral). *Jhana* has been translated as trance, absorption or ecstasy, but is a kind of spiritual experience, ultra-mundane experience.



The spiritual man selects one of the forty objects enumerated in the Visuddhi-magga. The object of which he selects should appeal most to his temperament, such a emotion, anger and so on. Those forty objects are divided into six groups, according to the types of temperament of the people. So if you are going to practise concentration, meditation, for the attainment of *Jhana* you will have to choose one of the objects suitable for your temperament.

The method is fully explained in the Visuddhi-magga. This object is called *Parikammanimitta*, preliminary object. He concentrates on this object for some time, maybe some days, weeks, months, some years, until he is able to visualize the object without any difficulty. When he is able to visualize the object without looking at it, he is to continue concentration on this visualized object, *Uggahanimitta*, until he develops it into a conceptualized object, *Patibhaganimitta*. At this stage the experienced spiritual man is said to be in possession of proximate concentration, *Upacara-samadhi*, and to have overcome temporarily the five Hindrances (*nivarana*); namely sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubts.

To illustrate what we have said. If you are going to take our *Pathavi-kasina* (device of earth) as your object, you get hold of a circle made of clay which is

called *Kasina*. In English it is translated as a hypnotic circle which is not very correct. So you get a circle of clay about one span and four fingers. You can make it as smooth as possible and paint it with the colour of the dawn. This circle is placed before you about two and half cubits away. Some people do this practice even in the West at present. In India it was done long ago and therefore is very common. The people in the West try to practise it just to see if it works. By this practice some have acquired a very strong power of concentration. So you prepare that circle, place it in front of you at a convenient distance so that you can look at it at your ease. While looking at it you must keep your head, neck and back erect. The purpose is to keep your mind with the circle. Ordinarily, without concentration you do not know where your mind is. Anyway you try to concentrate on it, on this physical object, *Parikammanimitta*. As explained in the book, it may take day after day, month after month, year after year, until you are able to visualize it without the physical object.

The Buddha advised us not take anything too seriously. You must not strain your mental faculty. You must consider yourself as if you are at play, enjoying it with a cheerful mind just as some young people enjoy witnessing a cinema show. At the same time the Buddha advised us not to keep our

minds in a very light spirit. You do it for the sake of helping other people, to add your happiness to the happiness of others. Taken in this spirit, even the sweeping of the floor can become interesting. So also in meditation you must think of it as if you are at play so that it becomes interesting, because it is a good thing to do, a necessary thing to do. Unless we clear our minds like this we can never practise the first stages of the Dhamma, let alone attain Nibbana, the highest goal in Buddhism.

So you concentrate on this physical object until you can visualize it without the object. This visualization in Pali is called *Uggahanimitta*. It is the exact replica of the object seen. When you come to this stage you do not require the physical object. Then continue your concentration on the visualized object. The difference between the first object and the second object is the first being physical and the other mental. But it is exactly the same object. You carry on concentrating until this object becomes bright, shining like a star. The difference between the second and the third stages is that in the second you see the object with certain defects, but in the third stage there is no defect whatsoever. It is like a shining star. It is called *Patibhaganimitta*, conceptualized object. At this stage the experienced spiritual man is said to be in possession of proximate concentration, *Upacara-samadhi* and to have

overcome temporarily the five Hindrances (*nivara-na*); namely, sensual desires, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubts.

His concentration gradually becomes so enhanced that he is about to attain *jhana*. At this stage he is said to be in possession of *Appana Samadhi*. He eventually attains the five stages of *jhana* step by step, and it is when he reaches the fifth stage of *jhana* that he can easily develop the five supernormal powers (*Abhiñña* – Celestial Eye (*Dibbacakkhu*), Celestial Ear (*Dibbasota*), reminiscence of past births (*Pubbernivasanussati-Nana*), reading thoughts of others (*Paracitta-vijanana*) and various physic powers (*Iddhividha*). By these powers you can see things which the naked eye is not capable of seeing – no matter how far the objects are, there is no barrier which can prevent you from seeing them. You can see through mountains, you can see long, long distances without any obstructions in between. Even today there are Yogis in India who possess these supernormal powers, for this *Jhana* practice is not necessarily confined to Buddhism, Hindus also practice it. In Buddhism the practice of *Jhana* is a great help toward the attainment of Nibbana. Those who have reached such high a level of experience as *jhanas* have their minds highly refined and it is easier for them to attain the *lokuttara* stages of development, yet they are not entirely free

from all evil tendencies – the reason is that concentration As has been stated above, can overcome only the second stage of defilements temporarily. As there remains the first stage untouched, undisputed, the passions which have been inhibited by concentration would arise again.

The five supernormal powers (*Abhiññā*) are sometimes called occult, or hidden, or secret power in English. In Buddhism they cannot be called occult powers because their powers are for every one to possess, if they practise hard enough.

Morality makes a man gentle in his words and deeds, concentration controls the mind, makes him calm, serene and steady. Wisdom or Insight (*Panna*), the third and final stage, enables him to overcome all the defilements completely. As a tree which is destroyed by the root will grow, even so the defilements which are annihilated by Wisdom (*Panna*) will never rise again.

The spiritual man who has reached the third stage of the path to *Nibbana* tries to understand the real nature of his self and that of the things of the world in general. With his highly purified mind he begins to realize that there is no ego-principle or persistent identity of a 'self' in either internal or external phenomena. He perceives that both mind and matter which constitute his personality are in a state of

constant flux, and that all conditioned things are impermanent (*Anicca*), subject to suffering (*Dukkha*), and void of self-existence (*Anatta*). To him then comes knowledge that every form of worldly pleasure is only a prelude to pain, and that everything that is in a state of flux cannot be the source of real, permanent happiness.

The aspirant then concentrates on the three characteristics of existence, namely, transiency (*Anicca*), suffering (*Dukkha*), and being void of ego or self-existence (*Anatta*). Having neither attachment nor aversion for any worldly things, he intensely keeps on developing insight into both internal and external phenomena until he eliminates three fetters, namely, Self-illusion (*Sakkayaditthi*), Doubts (*Vicikiccha*) and Clinging to vain rites and rituals (*Silabbata paramasa*). It is only when he destroys completely these three fetters that realizes *Nibbana*, his ultimate goal for the first time in his existence. At this stage he is called a *Sotapanna*, one who has entered the stream, the Path that leads to *Nibbana*. The Buddha has described this stage as follows:

*More than any earthly power,  
More than all the joys of heaven;  
More than rule over all the world;  
Is the entrance to the Stream.*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Dhammapada verse 178

Symbolically one who has reached the first Aryan stage is said to have entered the stream, because just as the water of a river never comes backwards towards its source, but flows steadily and inevitably towards the ocean, so, rapidly and with certainty, the aspirant will attain his final enlightenment. As, however, he has not eradicated the remaining seven fetters, he may be reborn seven times at the most.

When the aspirant develops deeper insight and weakens two more fetters, namely, Sensual Craving (*Kamaraga*) and Ill-will (*Patigha*), he becomes a *Sakadagami*, Once-Returned. He is so called because he is reborn in the world of desires (*Kam-aloka*) only once if he does not obtain final release in this present life.

The third stage is that of *Anagami*, Non-returner, who completely discards the above two fetters. He will not be reborn in this world or any of the realms of sense-pleasure, but he, if he does not attain full enlightenment in this life, will be at death reborn in one of the higher suitable planes, and from thence pass into *Nibbana*.

The fourth stage is that of *Arahat*, perfect saint, who completely annihilates the remaining five fetters, namely, Craving for existence in the world of form (*Rupa-raga*), Craving for existence in the im-

material world (*Arupa-raga*), Pride and conceit (*Mana*), Restlessness (*Uddhacca*) and Ignorance (*Avijja*). He then realizes that rebirth is exhausted, the holy life is fulfilled and what was to be done has been done. This is the highest, holiest peace. The Arahant stands on heights more than celestial realizing the unutterable bliss of *Nibbana*.



# CHAPTER TWENTY

## MIRACLE

In the four week after attaining enlightenment the Buddha began to contemplate and review the Dhamma he had realized near the Bodhi tree. When he began to revise the Abhidhamma Pitaka it was not until he delved into the depths of the most subtle and abstruse Dhamma in the Maha Patthana, which deals with twenty-four casual relationships which invariably occur in any phenomenon, event, or thing that he experienced real rapture. The psychological pleasure and feelings of happiness were so great that due to the resulting pureness and brilliant condition of the blood flowing through his healthy and pure heart, accompanied by compassion and wisdom, six coloured rays emanated from the body of the Buddha.

How did this almost incredible phenomenon take place? When the mind is pure and the heart warm and soft with love and compassion, and consciousness is accompanied by wisdom, the material qualities of the blood are strong, sparkling and brilliant, and the colour of the skin is changed. Man is a combination of mind and matter, which are interdependent and interrelated, therefore when the

mental qualities are fine and brilliant the material qualities are also fine and bright.

The outward form so fascinates modern man that he puts all his faith in it and imagines that it can provide the answer to questions. Buddhism teaches us to realize the need for a deeper knowledge of our inner mental forces, that there is an inner factor which can cause disease or which can be employed in the cure of ill-health. Happiness is a mental state; the ultimate source of all happiness or misery is the individual mind. Individual happiness is essential for the happiness of society, and the happiness of society means the happiness of the nation; happiness of nations, in turn leads to the happiness of the world.

According to the scriptures the Buddha also possessed unlimited miraculous powers, supernormal powers, but he did not use them unnecessarily and he even asked his disciples who attained such powers not to use them. You may ask if the Buddha performed any miracle. Yes, he did, the great miracle called the Twin Miracle. The reason for this was to dispel the wrong views of heretics and to prove that he possessed the attributes of a Buddha.

What is the Twin Miracle? It is the miracle of water and fire. He caused a stream of water to issue from the upper part of his body, and flames of fire from

the lower part; then suddenly the reverse process took place. Then he caused fire to issue from his right eye and a stream of water from his left eye, and so on from his nostrils, ears to right and left, in front and behind. The same wonder, too, produced streams of fire succeeded by streams of water which did not mingle. From each of his hairs the same wonderful display feasted the eyes of the assembled people; the six glories, as it were, gushed from every part of his body and made it appear resplendent beyond description. At intervals the Buddha preached to the crowd, who rejoiced and sang praises to him; according to their dispositions he expounded the various points of the Law. Those who heard him and saw the wonderful works he performed acquired great merit and became his followers, both bhikkhus and laymen showed greater zeal and faith to follow the Eightfold Path and attain Nibbana.

The Buddha then, out of compassion for the devas and brahmas, went to the Tavatimsa Devaloka where he preached the Abhidhamma for a full three months to his deceased mother, who was reborn as Santusita Deva, and to the other devas and brahmas there assembled, hoping to make them realize the four ultimate things for which knowledge of Abhidhamma is absolutely necessary, because it deals with the highest and ultimate sense of things springing into being as facts as distinct from mere names.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

## WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

What is happiness? Happiness is a mental state which can be attained through the culture of the mind, and is therefore different in origin to physical sources such as wealth, name, fame, social position and popularity which are merely temporary sources of happiness. Whatever we do, we do essentially for happiness, though you may perhaps say this is for money, that is for power, but actually whatever we do is really for happiness. Even in religion what we do is done for happiness, but do we attain it? No. Why? Because we look for happiness in the wrong places.

People think they can find happiness in money, so they try their best to be wealthy, but when they are wealthy are they happy? If wealth is a source of happiness, then wealthy people would be happier than poor people, but we find in many cases that the ordinary people who are not very well-to-do are happier than the rich. We have heard even some millionaires who have tried to commit suicide. They would never think of committing suicide if wealth were the main source of happiness, so it is evident that wealth is not really a source of happiness. Then

power, name or fame may be temporary sources of happiness, but when people lose their fame or name they are in a state of anxiety, worry. It shows that name, fame or power they are is not the main source of happiness either, because it can also be a source of worry and is subject to impermanence. Some people think that a partner, a good congenial partner, may be a source of happiness, and it may be so to some extent, but not to the fullest extent. Some people think that children might be a source of happiness, but when they are separated for some reason or other, as sooner or later they will be, they feel unhappy. Some people think horse racing and dog racing might be a source of happiness, so they bet, but even when they are winners they are happy only for a short while. Then there re those who hope to find happiness in drinks, and for a short while they are happy, but eventually they become as unhappy as ever. The outside sources are not the real source of happiness, the main thing is the mind: but only the mind which is controlled and cultured is the real source of happiness.

Now, how to obtain happiness. How do we define happiness? Happiness is a state, a mental state, which is agreeable to one's nature or which appeal to one's nature, satisfies one's nature, and it can be applied to such levels as: material, or materialistic, emotional; intellectual; spiritual.

To make it clear, take a delicious lunch or dinner. Should the occasion arise for you to have a delightful lunch or dinner, if you were a person proud of your physical attainments you would have happiness of a material, physical nature; you would enjoy your food of physical culture, for physical health, and have happiness of a material nature from the food. If you happen to eat something which you had been longing for, you would have happiness of an emotional nature, you would say, 'I like it, because it is very good and very nice' you would attain happiness from it, through it, and so your happiness would be an emotional nature, you would not care whether it was for strength or health but merely for taste. If you were intellectual, concerned with reasoning, and happened to be on a diet, you might have happiness of an intellectual nature and say, 'This food is very good because it is suitable for my health', you would judge the food from an intellectual aspect. If you were of a spiritual nature you would still find happiness through the dinner or lunch, but you would say, 'This food is good because it is pure, it is good moral principles; good, since its effect is helpful to me for meditation'. So your happiness in this case would be different, your judgement, also, different from others. The selfsame food or lunch will be appreciated, and happiness attained, according to the nature of the people. The highest happiness one can attain is a

state, a mental state, which is agreeable and satisfactory to all levels, but such a state is not always possible to be achieved. If we cannot have the highest happiness which is satisfactory to all levels, then the next one is harmony with the lower levels.

We judge, react and take things according to our nature, therefore it is necessary for each of one us to know what type of person we are. We act and react to outside stimuli according to our nature; that is, we see everything through coloured glasses of our own, therefore if a person is supposed to be broad-minded and prejudiced he can be so only to the extent of his particular nature. Unless we are spiritually advanced none of us can be broad-minded and unprejudiced to any great degree because we see and judge things with our own coloured glasses which we have made for ourselves, not anybody else's which he made for himself. How, then, can we know which type of person we are? It is only by a personal study of our own reaction to outside stimuli, outside objects, by watching and taking notice of our reaction that we know or put ourselves under one of the categories.

Now, first, the material or physical level. A person at this level, being materialistic, will be interested in material gain; his main consideration and concentration is concerned with material acquisition, and

material, physical comfort is of importance to him. These materialistic persons are very practical and would like everything, even religion or philosophy, their interest will be in physical comfort and ideas which gave them material gains. So there is no wonder why many people are not interested in any religion, because religion, as you know, does not directly give anybody material or physical wealth. How many do you think there are in the world who have lost interest in religion? To most people material gain is so very important. When we say we are busy, we are busy about gain, money; what for? For physical pleasure, happiness, comfort, dress, food, home, any physical convenience; so we can realize that most of us are rather materialistic.

Next is the emotional level. People who are on this level are very sensitive, and are mainly concerned with likes and dislikes, pleasant and unpleasant feelings, sensations. They judge things according to their emotions, no matter whether this judgement is right or wrong. These emotional people are interested in devotional religions which suit their emotions, they find any religion which has no ceremony very dull.

The third level is intellectual. Those who are of this level are mainly concerned with reasoning, studying things intellectually. They find happiness in lit-



erature and science, etc., gained happiness through intellectual pursuits, but being mentally active they are not so active physically. They know many things through their readings or learnings, but in practice they are not active.

The fourth is the spiritual or moral level. Those who are on this level are concerned with service and sympathetic understanding; they emphasize the importance of justice or fair dealing: they are realistic. So you see, each person acts or reacts to things, criticizes, feels and judges according to his own particular nature, according to this own particular level. Knowing how and why we differ in thinking, feeling, judging and on our outlook in life, we are able to make ample allowances for other types to act according to their nature, thereby cultivating a sense of tolerance, patience towards others.

When we are less advanced spiritually it is the material and emotional pleasure and happiness that appeals to us most. Unfortunately some of us never try to get out of this rut: even in this lower stage some are very proud of it, they do not wish to get out of it, thinking they attain happiness when they feel that they have pleasure of the world. They will not like Nibbana which sound dull to them. Why? Because they are less advanced in spiritual evolution. When they progress in spirituality, studies in

literature, science and philosophy can appeal to them. Some people cannot appreciate even reading and learning, they think it is a waste of time and that reading will not do any good. Most Western people are very practical, very busy and very active physically. On one occasion a clergyman of the Church of England asked me something about Nibbana. 'I could not tell you about Nibbana in a few words and in so short a time'. I replied. He said he was always busy, so I asked him, 'If you are busy, how much time could you give me?' He said, 'I have no time, just tell me in two or three words'. I said, 'Nibbana is a state which is free from suffering, old age, death, sickness and the state of the highest happiness which is free from all troubles, worries or hardships'. He said, 'Do you mean to say that if you reach Nibbana, you have nothing to do?' I said, 'Yes'. Then I would not like it, because I should always like to do something', he replied. Another man said that he could not appreciate poetry or science, both of which seem to give people peculiar pleasure. He said that he had been to the National Gallery where the most beautiful pictures are shown, but he thought that viewers there were fools, for if they wanted to see the actual beauty, why should they see those imitations. Poetry, he thought, was to spoil the language, for there was no proper order of words. To him literature was nothing. So you see, there are many stages of development. When we

grow older we realize that moral or spiritual happiness is the genuine highest happiness because it is real and lasting. According to his practical nature a man acts and reacts and thereby he makes himself either happy or miserable.

This growth, this progress from lower level to higher level can be attained, it is not really very difficult. Nibbana itself can be attained in this life, but it is as difficult as most of us think, why do we have six special qualities of Dhamma? The Buddha himself repeated these six qualities of Dhamma many times, one of which is *sanditthika* i.e., immediate effect. If that is true, why should we not attain happiness of a true nature? Nibbana can be attained at any time, *akalika*, there is no tomorrow, no next month, you can attain it according to your effort and understanding. Some people have asked me whether there is a purpose of life, to which I say, 'Yes, there is'. The purpose of life is growth, progress from ignorance to enlightenment and from unhappiness to happiness. The Buddha himself said many times that the purpose was for his enlightenment. One of the Greek philosophers said that he came to this world only for one purpose, that was to perfect himself. So this growth, this progress, is possible here and now. As we can develop our own muscles by constant exercise, so our mind can be developed; we can surely come towards perfection

spiritually through the attainment of happiness and realization of Nibbana, intellectually through the attainment of knowledge, emotionally through the control and good use of our emotions, and physically through exercise and also through control of the body, thereby attaining perfect health.

At every level there is action which has a past that leads up to it as well as a future proceeding from it. An action is the manifestation of the mind, and a desire for anything stimulates the mind. At every level there is action and reaction, i.e. cause and effect, so it is our reactions to outside stimuli that we have to control. This action and reaction works at all levels, at the physical level of movement, emotional level of feelings, intellectual level of thinking and the spiritual level of realization. At each level there is a good side and a bad side, good aspect and bad aspect. A person, for example, demonstrating the bad side of his materialistic nature can do harm physically which will produce pain, he uses his material strength, material weapons. On the good side at a material level he can do good actions physically. So everybody should do physical action for service, for thereby he can grow from this level to the higher level.

Whatever you do mentally and emotionally is not perfect until you do it physically. There is a story.

Once upon a time there was a washing stone. I would say a washing stone is not usually understood by Westerners, an English lady in the audience once asked me, 'What is a washing stone?'; she had never heard of such a thing. I explained that a washing stone is a flat stone used in the East for washing dirty clothes on, the clothes being soaped and beaten on the stone. Well, at one time, outside a village, there was just such a stone being used by local villages when one day, a geologist came and saw that the stone contained many pieces of precious stones. He thought that the villagers were very ignorant, using such a valuable stone for washing only, so he persuaded all of the people including the head of the village to exchange the stone for a new and better one. They all agreed, and he gave them a broader and more beautiful stone and took the old one away. All the villagers were delighted and thankful, and he was more thankful to them for the stone out of which he could get the valuable precious stones.

The Buddha advised us all to be like the geologist and not the ignorant villagers. We should use our bodies not only for pleasure but for service, so that whether we have sought it or not we shall have a perfect figure, perfect health. The Bodhisatta acted everywhere he went for service mentally and physically, even in his last life as the Buddha. You re-

member the story of a sick monk who fell in his own filth? There was nobody to help him. The Buddha without hesitation took the dirty, filthy clothes of the monk and washed them himself, there being nothing in the world below his dignity.

Since everything in this the world is subject to impermanence there can be no true and lasting happiness in the material things of this world. This would be a most pessimistic outlook were it not for the fact that there is a way out, a real happiness beyond the material, which changes it to a realistic and optimistic outlook.

Culture is the answer; culture not necessarily of the body but of the mind and further, of the higher moral nature, to achieve Nibbana.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF BUDDHISM

The foundations of Buddhism are the four great truths, the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering and the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

What is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering, not to get what one wishes is suffering.

What is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering? It is craving, the craving which seeks delight, now here, now there; the craving for sensual pleasures (*kamatanha*) and for existence (*bhavatanha*).

What is the truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the cessation of desire, the total destruction of this very craving, the deliverance from it.

What is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is the Noble Eightfold Path which consists of right views, right thought,

right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Whether Buddhas arise or not these four truths exist in the universe, Buddhas only reveal these truths which lie hidden in the dark abyss of time. Scientifically interpreted the Dhamma may simply be called the law of cause and effect, and this law embraces the entire body of the teachings of the Buddhas. Craving is the cause of sorrow; sorrow is the effect of craving. Adherence to the middle path is the cause of Nibbana; Nibbana is the effect of adherence to the middle path.

There is no denying the fact that there is suffering in this world. What we call happiness or pleasure in the world, is merely gratification of some desire, but no sooner is the desired thing gained than it begins to be scorned. Worldly bliss is the only a prelude to pain; sorrow is, therefore inseparable from existence and cannot be evaded, and suffering will exist as long as there is craving. Suffering can only be annihilated by treading the Noble Eightfold Path and attaining the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

These four truths can be verified by experience, hence the Buddha Dhamma is founded on the bedrock of facts which can be tested and verified. Buddhism is, therefore, rational and opposed to specu-



lative systems; it appeals more to the intellectual than to the emotions, and is concerned more with the character of the devotees than with their number.

One occasion Upali, a follower of Nigantha, approached the Buddha and was so pleased with his teaching of the Dhamma that he immediately expressed his desire to become a follower of the Buddha; but the Buddha cautioned him, saying, 'O householder, make a thorough investigation first, it is advisable for a distinguished man like you to make a thorough investigation'. Upali was overjoyed at this unexpected remark of the Buddha, and said, 'O Lord, if I had been a follower of another religion they would take from street to street in a procession, proclaiming that such and such a millionaire had renounced his former religion and embraced their's; but, O Lord, you advise me to investigate further, so I am much more pleased with this remark of your's'. For the second time he repeated the formula, 'I seek refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha'.

Buddhism is saturated with the spirit of free enquiry and complete tolerance. The Buddha extended this tolerance to men, women and all living beings, and it was the Buddha who first abolished slavery and strongly protested against the caste

system which was firmly rooted in India. According to the word of the Buddha it is not by mere birth that one becomes either an outcast or a Brahmin, but by one's actions. Neither one's caste nor one's colour prevents one from becoming a Buddhist, or from entering the Order; fishermen, scavengers, courtesans, together with warriors and Brahmins, were freely admitted to the Order and enjoyed its privileges equally. Upali, the barber, for instance was appointed chief in matters concerning the Vinaya discipline: and Sunita, the scavenger, was admitted by the Buddha himself to the Order and thus enabled to attain saintship. Angulimala, the robber and criminal, was converted to a compassionate saint: the fierce Alavaka sought refuge in the Buddha and became a sotapanna; the courtesan, Ambapali, entered the Order and attained arahatship. Such instances can be easily multiplied from the Tipitaka to show that Buddhism is wide open to all, irrespective of caste, colour or rank.

It was also the Buddha who put a stop to the sacrifice of poor beasts, and exhorted his followers to extend their loving-kindness to all living beings, even the tiniest creature. A genuine Buddhist will exercise this loving-kindness towards every living being and identify himself with all, making no distinction whatsoever with regard to caste, colour or rank.

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# CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

## THE REALITIES

According to the Abhidhamma philosophy there are two kinds of realities, relative and ultimate. Relative reality is conventional truth in which things are dealt with in ordinary sense, whilst ultimate reality is abstract truth which exists as the irreducible, immutable, fundamental qualities of phenomena. Of the two relative reality is expressed in ordinary conventional terms, but only in the ordinary conventional terms such 'cup exist', 'plates exist', and so on. This expression is true, but only in the ordinary conventional sense; in an ultimate sense no cups or plates actually exist, only the essential elements which comprise their manifestation. These essential elements which exist in an ultimate sense are fourfold:

- 1 *The element of extension*, which is the fundamental principle of matter. It is an element which enables objects to occupy space, and the qualities of hardness and softness of all material objects are due to this element. It can be found in earth, water, fire and air, but it preponderates in earth and is therefore called the element of earth, or, in modern terms, the element of extension.

- 2 *The element of cohesion.* This element preponderates in water, although it is also present in the three other fundamental principles of earth, fire and air. It coheres the scattered atoms of matter and forms into mass, bulk or lump.
- 3 *The element of heat.* This element matures all objects of matter and although it preponderates in fire and is therefore called the element of heat (fire), it includes cold since heat and cold are two phases of the element.
- 4 *The element of motion,* which is the power of supporting or resisting. All movement and vibrations are due to this element.

These four elements are inseparable and interrelated, and all forms of matter are primarily composed of them. Every material object is a combination of these elements in one proportion or another, but as soon as the same matter is changed into different forms, the composite things are held to be mere conceptions presented to the mind by the particular appearance, shape or form. Take a piece of clay for example. It may be called a cup, plate, pot, jar and so on, according to the several shapes it assumes in succession, but these objects can be analyzed and reduced to fundamental elements which alone exist in an ultimate sense. The term cup, plate, and so on, are mere conceptions which have

no separate essential substance other than the elements. Although these four elements exist in an ultimate sense they are subject to the law of change, but their distinctive characteristics are identical in whatever shape they are found, whether as a cup, plate, pot, jar and so on.

Relative reality includes such ideas as land, mountain the like, being derived from some mode of physical changes in nature. House, train, boat, etc., derive from various presentations of materials. Man, woman, etc., derive from the fivefold set of aggregates. Locality (i.e., the location of east, west, etc., in relation to the sun), time, etc., derive from the revolutions of the moon and so forth.

Although all such distinctions as have just been mentioned do not exist in an ultimate sense, they do exist in the sense of relative reality. Buddhism is therefore not nominalism, because it does not say that things such as land, mountain, etc., are mere names and nothing else; neither is it conceptualism, because it does not say that they exist only in the mind and nowhere else. It is realism though, because it teaches that the four basic essentials do actually exist as fundamental material qualities.

The categories of ultimate reality are four: consciousness, mental properties (mental concomi-

tants), matter and Nibbana. Absolutely all things, mundane and supramundane, are included in these headings. Of the four, Nibbana, the supramundane, is the only absolute reality, and is the ultimate goal of Buddhism. The other three are called realities in as much as they exist within and around us as irreducible, immutable and abstract things.

So-called man is composed of mind and matter. The latter is of twenty-eight types of which the first four, as mentioned earlier, are the fundamental elements upon which the remaining twenty-four are dependent for their arising. Six of the twenty-four are:

- 1 The eye-basis, which is the sensorium within the eyeball where consciousness of sight is generated.
- 2 The ear-basis, which is the sensorium within the organ the ear where consciousness of sound is generated.
- 3 The nose-basis, which is the sensorium within the nose organ where consciousness of smell is generated.
- 4 The tongue-basis, which is the sensorium on the surface of the tongue where consciousness of sound is generated.
- 5 The body-basis, which is the sensorium pervading the whole body from head to foot, where consciousness of touch is generated.

- 6 The heart-basis, which is the a kind of very fine, subtle matter within the organ of the heart where mind consciousness is mainly generated.

Of these six bases, the first five are also called sense-doors, through which man receives information about the outside world. The sixth one is called the mind-door, through which man receives information about the inner world, the world of the mind, the mental world.

Through the eye-door man receives information about colours, appearances, forms and shapes that come within reach; through the ear-door he receives various kinds of sounds; through the nose-door, different kinds of odours; through the tongue-door all the different kinds of taste, such as sweet, sour, and so on; through the body-door he receives various feelings, the sensing of physical contacts of various kinds. So man receives information about the outer world through the five sense-doors, and he also receives through the mind-door information about the inner world, the mental world, the vast world of thoughts and ideas. In this inner world the attention is constantly being called from many directions at once.

Although there are six doors through which information about the inner and outer world is received,



the receiver is the same, the mind of man. This invisible but powerful mind of man, which can be diverted either to heaven or hell according to his desires, is compared with a spider running about in a web of ideas. This spider finds himself surrounded with various alluring baits, so it is this spider that we have to control in order that it may always run in the direction which we have chosen, and thus improve the ability to see things as they truly are and reach the final state of perfection.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

## HOW THE MIND WORKS

According to Buddhism the aggregates of feeling, perception, mental properties (concomitants) and consciousness, these four form the mind, and matter forms the body; man is, therefore, a combination of mind and matter.

The mind of man is compared with the current of a river, the Buddhist idea of conscious existence. To most people who might stand on the bank of a river, they will think that the river is all the same from beginning to end; due to the flow, though not a particle of water which may be seen at any given point remains the same as it was a moment ago. And in just the same way as the beginning and end of a river receive the special names of source and mouth, even though they are composed of the same material as the body of the river itself, so also the source and mouth of the river of conscious existence are respectively termed birth and death, even though composed of the same water of conscious existence. This continuing process goes on without end until the causes which bring it about are removed.

In order to understand the working of the mind it is necessary to acquire some idea of the process of

consciousness according to Abhidhamma. Abhidhamma teaching explains the process of consciousness in detail, and records in an analytical way how the subject, consciousness, receives objects from without and within. When, for instance, a person is in a state of profound sleep his mind is said to be vacant, or in other words in a state of *bhavanga*, the passive state when our minds do not respond to objects. This flow of *bhavanga* is interrupted when objects enter the mind, it vibrates and passes away. At the rising and passing away of the next conscious state the passive flow is checked, arrested. Then a state of conscious that adverts towards the objects arises and passes away. Following immediately, if the object is visual, visual consciousness arises and passes away, knowing but yet no more about the objects. This sense of operation is succeeded by a moment of reception of the object so seen. Next comes the investigating faculty, or momentary examination of the object so received. After this comes the stage of representative cognition termed the determining consciousness, on which depends the subsequent psychologically important stage, that of active consciousness. It is important because it is at this stage that one does either good or bad action, *kamma*.

The process of cognition about the outside world takes place through the five sense doors, eye, ear,

nose, tongue and touch, and is therefore called the course of cognition through which we cognize ideas as in memory or imagination, when the object is not presented but represented. The process of this cognition is called the course of cognition through the mind door.

The former of these two, the process of cognition through the five sense doors, may be roughly explained by the simile of a man sleeping under a mango tree. A man, lost in deep sleep, is lying at the foot of a mango tree, when a fruit falls and rolls to his side. He is suddenly aroused from his slumber, wakes up and tries to find out what has disturbed him. He sees the mango fruit nearby, picks it up, smells and examines it. Having ascertained that it is quite ripe and good he eats it.

Here (1), the deep sleep, is compared with the passive state of mind when it is running its own course, undisturbed by any kind of impression. (2), being aroused from his slumber, is the disturbance of bhavanga. (3), waking up, is like bhavanga being arrested. (4), trying to find out what has disturbed him, is like that hazy state of mind when the subject feebly tries to make out whether the stimuli came through the eye, or ear, nose, tongue or touch. This is called adverting, turning towards impressions at the five sense doors. (5),

seeing the fruit, is like the arising of the particular sense involved, in this case eye consciousness. It is the pure and simple function of seeing, free from any reflection over the object. (6), picking up the fruit, is like the mind receiving stimulation from an independent object existing in the outside world. This is called 'receiving consciousness'. (7), smelling and examining the mango fruit, is like the mind reflecting on the object, and trying to understand it in the light of previous experience. This is called 'investigating consciousness'. (8), ascertaining that the mango fruit is quite ripe and good, is like the mind giving the object a definite in its field of knowledge. This is called 'determining consciousness'. (9), eating the mango, is like the mind tending to adjust the object according to its own suitability. This is the most active state of consciousness in which the subject is fully conscious of itself, and determines its own attitude towards the object. This is called 'active consciousness'.

In the course of cognition through the mind door, the object of cognition is not a stimulus from the outside world but an image arising from within, which presents itself with an already ascertained character. Here the same function of mind is called 'consciousness turning towards impressions at the mind door'.

So one sees that the process of thinking can be divided into distant functions, each thought moment being distinguishable from its previous and succeeding thought moments by the kind of function it performs. And as already said, it is the most active conscious moment that is all important, since it is at this point that we determine our future by whether the quality of our action, mental, verbal or physical, is accompanied by greed, hatred and ignorance, or by generosity, goodwill and insight. The more we practise the latter, the weaker the former will become, until the time when they become so weak it is possible to cut them off altogether.

Only by learning about the nature of our mental make-up can we sift the dross from the gold, and thus, with practice and patience, achieve that purify of mind defined by the Buddha for the attaining of release from all suffering in any form.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

## MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

That which we call man is composed of mind and matter, *nama* and *rupa*. In essence, mind (*nama*) is a stream of consciousness which can be expressed by the word 'thought', but thought is not of itself a physiological function, it is a kind of mental energy something rather like light or electricity except that the latter are of the material realm. Thoughts and the radiation of currents of thoughts are mental elements of the mental world which correspond to the four material elements of the physical world. We are essentially the manifestation of our thought forces, and these forces, the currents of our thoughts, although subject to change are never lost.

If the forces of thoughts are sufficiently strong to overcome the gravitational sphere of the plane of sense desire (*kamavacara bhumi*), they become by their degree of perfection finer and higher energies of thought, and if they are developed even further they become the finest and highest energies of thought. It is with these finest and highest energies of thought that we are able to attain to the state of Nibbana, the end of suffering, sorrow and dissatisfaction. The currents of thoughts which are not ca-

pable of overcoming the gravitational sphere of the plane of sense desire must remain within that sphere of desire, within the circulation of all things; but those currents of thought are never lost, they will form a new, next life, and the process will continue, manifesting as the consciousness of an individual called a being – a man or a woman. In this way the process of life and death goes on continuously and endlessly until and unless it is checked by the developing of one's own thoughts.

According to Buddhist philosophy there are three classes of thought, namely, consciousness of the plane of sense desire, higher grades of consciousness and supramundane consciousness. Of these three, consciousness of the plane of sense desire – worldly desires – is mainly of two types, good and bad. That which is accompanied by the three good roots of unselfishness, goodwill and insight, is called good, and any word or deed done with this good thought is called good kamma, or good action, such as kindness or helpfulness, etc. These actions produce good effects such as having a philanthropic nature (*alobha*), a compassionate and loving nature (*adosa*), and a sharp, intelligent nature of clear understanding (*amoha*).

The types of consciousness, thoughts, that are accompanied by the three bad roots of greed, hatred



(illwill), and ignorance, are called bad. Any deed done or word uttered with bad thoughts is called bad kamma, bad action, things such as killing, stealing, lying, etc. This produces bad effects such as short life, miserly nature (*lobha*), irritable and quarrelsome nature (*dosa*) and dull or deluded nature (*moha*).

Thus in the world of desires there are two main types of thought, good and bad; and, accordingly, two main types of beings, good and bad. However, by purifying his thoughts, purging them of the three bad roots of greed, hatred and ignorance, a bad person can be changed into a good one by developing his lower nature into a higher one, thereby acquiring the three good roots of unselfishness, goodwill and insight. A good person can develop himself still further into an even better and higher type.

There are three stages of development, namely, morality (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*pañña*). According to the order of development the Noble Eightfold Path is classified into three groups thus: the first two, Right View and Right Thought, come in the category of wisdom (*pañña*). The next three, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, come within the category of morality (*sila*); and the last three, Right effort, Right Mindfulness

and Right Concentration, come in the category of concentration (*samadhi*).

Why are there three stages of development? It is because there are three stages of defilements. In the first stage the defilements merely lie latent in each one of us, not in any way becoming manifest in words or deeds. In the second stage, when awakened or disturbed by any object, pleasant or unpleasant, they then rise the latent stage up to the level of thoughts, emotions and feelings. In the third stage they become so fierce and ungovernable that they produce evil actions in words and deeds. In order, therefore to dispel the three stages of defilements, the three stages of development are necessary.

Of the three the development of morality is able only to temporarily put away or inhibit the third stage of the defilement, leaving the first and second stage unchanged; and since this stage is only able to be inhibited by morality, and would therefore sooner or later arise again, it is called the temporary putting away (*tadangapahana*).

The development of concentration is able to put away or second stage, but not the first. The defilements would still arise again, but in this case not so soon because concentration represents higher mental

culture and is more powerful than morality. The putting away or inhibiting by concentration is therefore called putting away to a distance (*vikkhambhanapahana*)

Only the development of wisdom, insight, is able to entirely the first stage of the defilements that are unaffected by morality or concentration. The stage of the defilements eradicated through insight will never arise again, it is like cutting a tree by the root; therefore the putting away by insight is called the permanent cutting away (*samucchedapahana*).

As the three stages are interdependent and interrelated, all of them should be practised together and at the same time. For example, when living a right life, a moral life, it is easier to have right concentration and right view. In the same way that practice of right concentration helps one to live a right life and to have right view, so right view enables one to live rightly and to concentrate rightly; but to try and live a right life without right concentration, which is mind control, also without right view, means that the result cannot be effective. You may think a thing is good at one moment, and may not think it is so at another; at one moment you may be happy concerning it, and at another sorry, because you lack right view. Right concentration cannot be attained without living a right life and having right

view, and it is not possible to have right view without right living and right concentration.

### *Concentration*

There are three stages to concentration: concentration, meditation and contemplation. These ideas are rather mixed in translation, some translators of the Eightfold Fold Path using contemplation, others concentration, and others again meditation. On the surface they seem to have the same meaning, but they are different stages.

Now concentration means the narrowing of the field of your attention, or focusing your thoughts. If we do not concentrate our thoughts they are scattered and diffuses. We are thinking all the time we are awake, whatever we are doing; these thoughts of our's are floating, spreading, diffusing, without any purpose, so they get us nowhere. But they can be concentrated on one object, if we will. Everybody can do this. It sounds rather serious, but you are doing it most of the time; while you write you are concentrating, while you are eating you are concentrating. Some people make a habit of reading during meals, and try to read and eat at the same time, but in this way they spoil both things: they cannot enjoy food, neither can they read properly. So you should concentrate on one thing at a time.

We concentrate, then, in order to make ourselves normal beings. There are two kinds of lunatics. There is the kind that have no control over their thoughts, their movements, their emotions: while they eat they may dance and sing, or do something else quite contrary to what they are supposed to be doing. They are neither of use to themselves nor to others. But we, too, are a kind of lesser lunatic because most of us cannot properly control our thoughts. If we try we can, but we do not try consistently. For instance, at a meeting people are to listen to a lecture, but if they do not concentrate on it they will be thinking of something else. They may be thinking of their own troubles at work or at home, or of work to be done, or a trader may be thinking of his goods. If we read with concentration we can finish a book in a short time, but if we do not concentrate we may hold a book open in our hand without remembering anything of what we read. This is why it is necessary for everyone to learn to concentrate. When you really feel a job is of importance and must be done, then you should concentrate on it. You can do nothing properly without concentration.

By concentration on a chosen object you obtain a clear picture of the object, and the vividness of the picture is the result of concentration. On concentration you focus your thoughts on a particular

spot as though you were using a torch. While you concentrate there are many disturbances; even while you are trying to concentrate on one thing, you may find yourself troubled by what somebody said or did, or by what is likely to happen tomorrow. Sometimes they are small disturbances, sometimes very big ones. Your thoughts will then be so occupied by your worries that you can do nothing, and then you will say you cannot concentrate. But these disturbing thoughts can be cast away, you can rid yourself of the intruding thoughts which have nothing to do with the object of your concentrations. The best way to do it is quite simple. What do you say if someone wants to see you and you are busy? You say, 'I am too busy'. When you hear anyone speaking against you, if you do not mind this, you say, 'I take no notice of it', but if you allow yourself to think of what they say about you, anger and irritation will arise. In concentration you can use the same method. The disturbing thoughts can be cast aside merely by using the ordinary formula, "I am too busy". When one of the intruders come to disturb you, to catch you mentally say, 'I am too busy'. Just ignore them and continue concentrating on the object you have chosen. Do not fight, that will only encourage the intruder. For instance, if you take notice of what people say or how they look at you, it will encourage them. If you take no notice, that person feels shy. Even a dog can sense this,

and if you do not take notice when a dog barks at you he will go away. In the same way, if a thought intrudes on your concentration, take no notice and it will disappear.

You can concentrate on any object. Then you will have the ability, a habit of mind, to keep on one object until you have brought to bear on it all your possible thoughts in connection with it. Start by concentrating on simple objects; later on the ability to concentrate can be applied to any object, however difficult and abstract. People who can study very quickly are those who can concentrate.

### *What is Meditation?*

The difference between thinking and meditation is, that, in thinking generally you have no definite object or purpose, while in meditation you think exclusively of definite object chosen by your will. By thinking without purpose your thoughts may lead you to dangers and troubles, but by meditating on a chosen object you will gain benefit. By meditation you enlarge your intellect and develop your power of knowing or seeing things as they truly are.

Meditation is to be practised only after concentration. Some people try to jump straight to meditation, but if they do so they fail to obtain a clear picture of the object or the clearness of consciousness

which concentration gives. Concentration is mere focusing of our thoughts on the object, but in meditation we keep that clear mental picture of the object. Not only that, but we expand and develop the field of it, and also develop our knowledge, expand the field of our knowledge of it. That is why meditation without concentration is a failure. In concentration we start with simple objects, but in meditation we carry the clear conception of that simple object to the higher mental levels. To make it clear, imagine someone pouring water from above into a tall jar. If there are many holes round the bottom and sides of the jar, the water will run out, but if the holes are filled in, the water will start to rise. Most of us are like the jar full of holes, ready to leak, so that we cannot concentrate. Meditation is like the pouring of the water, filling our consciousness with wisdom and clear vision. Concentration is filling the holes, making the consciousness steady without leakage. By meditation we shall observe clearly the object chosen and shall understand the function of the object in conjunction with other things. In this way we develop our wisdom and knowledge.

We see now the difference between thinking and meditation. In thinking, as we have said, we have either no specific object or too many objects, but in meditation we think of a definite object, and that is



why meditation is a real constructive practice of thinking. We develop by meditation our power of seeing the objects without knowing anything of its nature. That is why meditation is very necessary, it purifies the thoughts, otherwise they are mixed with many things, especially with ignorance. We cannot see anything properly when we are hypnotized by ignorance. By meditation we see the object as it really is; our thoughts become pure and we develop wisdom.

### *What is Contemplation?*

Contemplation is not very different from concentration, but although it is concentration, one's attention is fixed and steady; contemplation is the fully developed stage of concentration. Contemplation opens up ways of intuition and of many powers which people call occult, and we can gain these powers even before we attain the state of Nibbana. In a way it is true that they are occult powers because they are hidden from people who have not developed themselves in this way, but these powers are not hidden from those who seriously practise concentration and meditation, they just form an extension of the powers used by everybody in ordinary life. For instance, it may sound spiritualistic, but is not: by the power developed you can see and hear certain things more than you usually do, because your consciousness, your thoughts, are of

the purity of a polished mirror. When the surface of a mirror is not clear you can see nothing in it. Without meditation your consciousness, your thoughts, are dull, but when they are purified, not mixed with evil tendencies, you can see and hear certain things which cannot be discerned by the ordinary physical sense organs.

Then the object – what can you choose? Choose your own object according to your own individual character. If you choose the right object it will be easier for you to increase your intellect and also your higher thoughts. If the object you have chosen is suited to your character it will be very interesting to you, and when something interests you, you do not leave it. When pictures appeal to you, you go several times to see them, and you will go anywhere where there is something of sufficient interest to you. How, then, can we choose the proper object? We must understand our own nature, that is the most important thing. It is very trying to attempt to concentrate on an unsuitable object, and you can achieve nothing by so doing. You realize you have weak points, but also strong ones, meditation on the right object will strengthen you where you are weak, and also weaken you where you are strong in the wrong things. For instance, if you have evil tendencies and habits, by meditation on the right objects they will disappear gradually, and good ten-

dencies and habits will be formed. So you must know what you really are. I think in most cases people do not know their real tendencies and what their real nature is.

Even when we know that what we do is wrong, we often go to other people merely from habit or to obtain confirmation of our own wishful thoughts. But if we are sincerely trying to meditate we must know ourselves as we really are. You can sometimes judge your own character by your habitual thoughts and acts. When you do certain things again and again, that is a sign of your character. Character can be developed or changed by meditation on the right object.

There are different kinds of characters and each person has his own. How can we tell which is our true character? There are cases where people do such diverse things that they cannot judge the dominant character. In Buddhism there is a classification in which characters are divided into six classes, and everybody's chief character is one of them. They are: (1) lustful, greedy, emotional. (2) angry, impatient, easily annoyed, irritable, quick-tempered. (3) dull-witted, ignorant, very dull and intelligent. (4) credulous, ready to believe everything people say. (5) intelligent. (6) speculative.

You can identify your own character and judge the most dominant in your. Once you know what it is you can choose the object for meditation that will help you. If you are a quick-tempered person, the object must be one that will help you to be patient. To make you patient you should choose something opposite, such as goodwill or peace, or love (*metta*). Now to meditate on love you must know something about it. What it is and why it is good to meditate on it. To purify your thoughts you must be free from hatred, then you will see things as they really are, and by so doing you will be see the disadvantages of hatred and impatience and also realize the advantages of love. Having now some idea of love we can meditate on it as follows: first for oneself, as one cannot radiate thoughts of love unless one possesses them. Begin by repeating mentally the short formula, 'May I be well and happy'. Hold these thoughts for a few minutes and think that the whole of your nature is filled with love and that there is no place for any other thought at all. Continue until you feel that you are filled with love, and that you have become nothing but love. Then send out thoughts of love towards all beings throughout the universe by repeating mentally, 'May all beings be well and happy'. Hold these thoughts for a few minutes and think that the whole universe is filled with love and that there is no place for any other idea at all. Continue until you feel that there is

nothing but love pouring forth for all beings. When this meditation has been practised long enough, success will be obtained. A certain mental tranquility, an unusual sense of contentment, a hitherto unknown happiness and an astonishingly clear consciousness will be obtained. These mental states may be experienced by anyone who succeeds in radiating thoughts of love towards all beings without measure.

Later on, higher stages of development may be obtained by this meditation.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

## JHANA TO INSIGHT

From training by way of meditation on in-and-out breathing the four jhanas are produced. When jhanas are developed, the mind of the aspirant is considerably purified although he is not wholly free from passions, for by concentration the evil tendencies are only temporarily inhibited, they may rise to the surface at quite unexpected moments. Discipline, or morality, regulates word and deed; concentration controls the mind, and insight enables him to annihilate completely the passions not inhibited by the other two. Therefore the attainments of the jhanas, in which one has tasted the high happiness of a Brahma God, though supernormal, is still only mundane. For the attainment of the supramundane by the insight method, the aspirant turns his keen, very pure jhana mind to penetrate the nature of things as they really are, by on three means of meditation on the three fundamental characteristics of mind and matter, namely, transience, suffering and non-self (*anicca, dukkha* and *anatta*). The method to do this is:

### 1 *Examination*

The aspirant examines his own object of meditation, i.e., the in-and-out breathings which are de-

pendent on the body, and the factors of jhana. On examination he finds as follows:

The body is merely the manifestation of the four elements and their derived qualities, i.e., (1) THE ELEMENT OF EXTENSION. Without it objects cannot occupy space. The qualities of hardness and softness are two phases of this element. (2) THE ELEMENT OF COHESION, which coheres the scattered atoms of matter and gives the idea of body. (3) THE ELEMENT OF HEAT (and cold). Preservation and decay are due to this element, the vitalizing energy. (4) THE ELEMENT OF MOTION. Movements are caused by this element. Motion is regarded as a vibratory force.

These four are the fundamental units of matter, and are invariably combined with the four derivatives, namely, colour, odour, taste and nutritive essence. The four element and the four derivatives are inseparable and interrelated; thus, according to Buddhism, matter consists of forces and qualities which are in a state of constant flux.

The factors of jhana are the dominant mental concomitants of a mind which has attained to that state. Mind, which is the most important part of man, is a complex compound of fleeting mental states, namely, feeling, perception, mental concomitants and consciousness. All states arising in consciousness are non-material. These states constantly change, not

remaining for two consecutive moments the same. We worldlings, veiled by the net of illusion, mistake this apparent continuity as being something eternal, an unchanging soul, an *atta* (atman) the supposed doer and receptacle of all actions.

If one were to say that by soul or self is meant the process of this psycho-physical phenomenon that is constantly becoming and passing away, then there would be no objection to the term. The Buddha himself uses the term *atta*, but only to indicate the collections of the *khandhas*, or aggregates. Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in an empirical sense, but it does show that it does not exist in an ultimate sense. The Buddhist philosophical term for an individual is *santati*, i.e., a flux or continuity. It includes both the mental and physical element. The kammic force of each individual binds these elements together. This uninterrupted flux or continuity of bonded psychological phenomena, which is conditioned by kamma, and not limited only to the present life but has its source in the past and its continuation in the future, is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego of other religions.

## 2 *Seek out the Cause of Personality*

All things, personality included, spring from and are conditioned by a cause or causes. The existence of a 'self' is due to:



- 1 Ignorance in the past. From ignorance desire is born
- 2 Craving for phenomenal existence.
- 3 Attachment to life, persons and things.
- 4 *Kamma* (action); the physical, verbal and mental action in the past.
- 5 Food absorbed in this life.

Personality is the result of these five causes. Just as the past activities have conditioned the present, so the present will condition the future. Seeing thus the causes and their effects, he transcends all doubts with regard to past, present and future.

### 3 *Meditation*

The aspirant then understands that all conditioned things are transient, subject to suffering and devoid of any immortal soul. To develop this understanding (insight) he keeps on meditating upon one of the three characteristics, having chosen the most suitable. Impermanence is a suitable subject for everyone. Suffering is too depressing for certain natures to meditate on. If it is impermanence he keeps on saying mentally: All things are impermanent. Everything around us is impermanent. Everything within us (thoughts, feelings, etc.) is impermanent. He continues until there is no attraction or aversion for any conditioned state or object, any worldly object. Reaching this point of mental culture he intently

keeps on developing insight in that particular direction until that glorious day comes to him when, to his indescribable joy, he realizes Nibbana, his ultimate goal, for the very first time.

Thereafter, gone forever are false views, doubts and beliefs in rites and ceremonies. He is no more a worldling but an ariya. He is absolved from states of woe and misery, for he is destined to enlightenment. As said in Dhammapada 13, Loka Vagga. v. 179, 'Greater than emperorship, than god-state, is the fruit of this first step of sainthood!' For just something, never in this life even imagined as possible, has been actually experienced.

It may be mentioned that jhanas and supernormal powers would undoubtedly be a valuable asset to the possessor, but they are not *sukkha-vipassaka*, who without the aid of jhanas attain to arahantship straight away by merely cultivating insight.

#### 4 *Meditation on the Body*

Mindfulness as to the body is one of the basic meditations practised by even young boys and girls in Buddhist countries, because body is all they know. This meditation proceeds by reasoning from the known to the unknown. It is to train one to observe attentively the inner workings of the body and mind as well as the external phenomena of the universe.

By means of this meditation we may verify one of the three characteristics, at least impermanence, which characterizes all forms of existence. As soon as this has been understood one begins to be detached from the illusions of senses or conditioned things. The unstable, the impermanent, that which is eternally becoming, perpetually changing is regarded as unable to ensure any lasting peace and happiness.

Meditation on the body should teach us to understand that our personalities, composed of the five khandhas, are always changing, and that the so-called ego, which is only the sum total of the associated components, cannot be permanent. Such a conclusion is discouraging to the ego-centric, the selfish man, but will not trouble anyone who has understood the law of cause and effect which he has practised, since he knows that deliverance from the limitations of personality is to be found upon attaining the transcendental state of Nibbana.

## 5 *Meditation on the Body by way of the Postures*

Surely children and the rest, when going, are conscious of their going. They know it, but such knowledge does not shed the notion of a being, nor uproot the perception of self, and it is not the subject of meditation or the culture of the arousing of mindfulness. But the knowledge of a practising yogi

sheds the notion of a being, and causes the uprooting of the perception of self; it is both subject of meditation and the culture of the arousing of mindfulness.

## 6 *Examination*

Who goes? It is not a being or person that goes. Whose is the going? It is neither the going of a being nor of a person. Owing to what is the going? By reason of mind-activity and the spread of the element of motion (vibration). Therefore he understands as follows:

The thought, 'I shall go', arises. That produces motion (vibration). Motion produces (bodily) intimation. Going is the carrying forward of the entire body through mind-activity and the spreading of the element of motion. The same is the method in standing, and so forth. The thought, 'I am standing' 'Lying down, (the stretching horizontally of the whole body through)' .

He knows this and thinks in this way, 'People say a person goes, a person stands; but in an ultimate sense there is no person (being) whatsoever going or standing'. Just as people say. 'A cart goes, a cart stands', but in an ultimate sense whatsoever called a cart goes or stands; when a horse has been yoked and a driver is driving, it is just conventional to say,

‘A cart goes, a cart stands’. In the same way the body is like the cart, because it is lacking motive force in itself. Like the horse is the mind-born motion: like the driver is the mind. So, when the thought, ‘I go’ or ‘I stand’ has arisen, the element of motion causing the production of physical intimation arises. Through mind-activity and the spread of the element of motion, going and the rest proceed. Then it is bare convention to say, ‘A being goes, a being stands, I go, I stand’.

Just as for a butcher the cow percept does not disappear as long as he does not divide the cow, part by part, but only after having cleft it; following which meat-percept arises. And sitting at the junction of four crossroads selling the pieces laid out in front of him he does not think, ‘I am selling cow’, but ‘I am selling meat’, so also for the yogi – the person or being percept does not disappear until he reflects upon the four bodily postures by way of element, and consciousness is fixed by way of element.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

## STAGES OF PURITY AND KNOWLEDGE

This summary will enable the disciple to compare the various stages of development cited, with his own personal experiences. He may then decide for himself what stage he has reached in regard to maturity of insight.

The disciple who takes up the course of training in the Satipatthana Vipassana will have to pass through different stages of:

- A** Sevenfold purity (*visuddhi*) and
- B** Seventeenfold knowledge of insight (*vipassana ñana*).

The different stages of sevenfold purity (*visuddhi*) are listed as 'A', the sevenfold knowledge of insight (*vipassana ñana*) listed as 'B'.

- A1 Purity of character (*sila visuddhi*). This is gained by strict observance of the rules and discipline laid down for the observance of the lay disciples and monks respectively.
- A2 Purity of mind (*citta visuddhi*). This is gained when one's attention or contemplation is fixed on the object of meditation without any wavering.

- B1 Knowledge of the twofold division of mind and matter (*nama-rupa pariccheda ñana*). While practising meditation (contemplation) it becomes clear that there are only two processes, mental and physical, and thus the first degree of knowledge is gained.
- A3 Purity of view (*ditthi visuddhi*). As soon as the disciple clearly understands that various actions of the physical body are one thing, and that the knowing of these actions is another, also that there is no other entity besides these two chief things, he has attained purity of views.
- B2 Knowledge of cause and effect (*paccaya pariggha ñana*). While practising meditation the preceding causes and the effects that follow them are noticed. Thus the second degree of knowledge is gained.
- A4 Purity by the removal of doubts (*kankhavitaraṇa visuddhi*). As the preceding causes and the effects that follow them are clearly noticed in the course of meditation, the disciple is satisfied that these two factors alone existed in the past, and they alone will exist also in the future. Thus he perceives clearly, and therefore attains the stage of purity by the removal of doubts.

- B3 Knowledge of impermanence, suffering and no soul (*sammasana ñana*). While practising meditation it is noticed that objects successively come up and disappear. Thus he understands the real nature of anicca, dukkha and anatta. He therefore gains the third degree of knowledge.
- B4.i Knowledge of arising and subsiding (*udayabbaya ñana*), initial stage. When the disciple is well advanced in the exercise of his meditation he can meditate on the required objects without much effort. At this stage he generally beholds a supernormal light (*obhasa*), feels a thrill of zest (*pīti*), calmness (*passadhī*), determination (*adhimokkha*), great energy (*pagga-ha*), happiness (*sukha*), deep insight (*ñana*), intensity of mindfulness (*upatthana*), equanimity (*upekkha*), a mild desire for this state (*nikanti*). He can also notice how each object of meditation arises and how it passes away. Thus he gains the initial stage of the fourth degree of knowledge.
- A5 Purity by discriminating between what is the right path and what is not (*maggamagganadassana visuddhī*). At this stage a wise discrimination arises thus: merely pondering over the fact of beholding a su-



pernormal light and feeling other peculiar states, being thus satisfied with oneself, is not the true achievement, one must proceed with the practice of meditation without stopping. Having taken this decision he attains the purity of discriminating between what is the right path and what is not.

B4.ii Knowledge of arising and subsiding (*udayabbaya ñana*), final stage. While proceeding with his meditation without pondering, the disciple can clearly observe the beginning and end of every object of meditation. Thus he gains the final stage of the fourth degree of knowledge.

A6 Purity of following the right path (*patipadannanadassana visuddhi*). From the final stage of the fourth degree of knowledge (*udayabbaya ñana*), up to knowledge of conformity, the thirteenth degree of knowledge (*anuloma ñana*), the disciple clearly understands the right method of practice.

B5 Knowledge of falling, or disappearing (*bhanga ñana*). On proceeding with the meditation the disciple clearly realizes the fact that the object and the awareness always disappear. Thus he gains the fifth degree of knowledge.

B6 Knowledge of the fear of existence (*bhaya ñana*). On proceeding with the meditation

the disciple realizing the fact that objects and states always disappear and are therefore of a destructible nature, feels alarmed and frightened at the actual state of things. Thus he gains the sixth degree of knowledge.

B7 Knowledge of disgust and dread (*adinava ñana*). On proceeding with the meditation the disciple on realizing the fact that objects and states always disappear, and are therefore of a destructible nature, feels disgust or dread at the actual state of things. Thus he gains the seventh degree of knowledge.

B8 Knowledge of weariness (*nibbida ñana*). On proceeding with the meditation the disciple on realizing the fact that objects and states always disappear and are therefore of a destructible nature, feels weary of the actual state of things. Thus he gains the eighth degree of knowledge.

B9 Knowledge of the longing to escape (*muncitukamyata ñana*). On proceeding with the meditation the disciple realizing the fact that states disappear, and the consequent misery due to this destructible nature, longs for escape. Thus he gains the ninth degree of knowledge.

B10 Knowledge of special effort (*patisankha*

*ñāna*). On realizing the full facts the disciple makes a special effort and proceeds with meditation in order to achieve escape. Thus he gains the tenth degree of knowledge.

B11 Knowledge of detachment from conditioned existence (*sankharupekkha ñāna*). The disciple is now in a state of equanimity and proceeds with his meditation automatically. Thus he gains the eleventh degree of knowledge.

*Six qualities of the knowledge of detachment from conditioned existence (sankharupekkha ñāna).*

- 1 There is absence of fear and pleasure.
- 2 There is complete indifference to either happiness or misery.
- 3 The meditation is usually carried on automatically and without any effort.
- 4 The state of equanimity in meditation lasts a long time.
- 5 As meditation becomes longer, it becomes finer.
- 6 The meditation is fixed and steady, and the mind does not wander to any other objects.

B12 Knowledge of emergence – from woeful states and conditioned things – leading to the Path (*vutthanagamini ñāna*). From this state of steady meditation the

progress distinctly quickens, and the disciple has a clear knowledge of where he is going. Thus he gains the twelfth degree of knowledge.

B13 Knowledge of conformity (*anuloma ñana*). In these mundane states of mind, the last stage of knowledge is the knowledge of conformity. Thus the disciple gains the thirteenth degree of knowledge.

B14 Knowledge of the overcoming of worldly ties (*gotrabhu ñana*). The entering into the Path (*ariyamangga*), on severing connection at the last stage of mundane knowledge, is knowledge of the overcoming of worldly ties and marks a special progress to the supramundane state. The disciple thus gains the fourteenth degree of knowledge.

This is the transitional stage between the mundane and the supramundane.

### *Sotapanna*

B15 Knowledge of the Path, the state which dispels defilements, and knowledge of the Fruit of the Path (*maggaphala ñana*) is the realization of the cessation of all conditioned things. Thus the disciple gains the fifteenth degree of dual knowledge, knowledge of the

Path and the knowledge of the Fruit.

- A7 Purity of knowledge of the Path and Fruit (*ñānadassana visuddhi*), the dual knowledge which accomplishes purity of insight by the discernment of Nibbana; clear understanding of the four Noble Truths.
- B16 Knowledge of retrospect (*paccavekkhana ñāna*). The disciple then reflects on the whole process of meditation, how he has reached this stage and how he can return. Thus he gains the sixteenth degree of knowledge, that of retrospect.
- B17 Repetition of knowledge of the Fruit (*phalasangama*). The disciple again proceeds with his meditation. When he gathers sufficient strength in concentration he again reaches the same state of knowledge of the Fruit. By this procedure the disciple can regain repeatedly the state of knowledge of the Fruit.

### *The Characteristic Qualities of a Stream Winner (sotapanna angani)*

In the Dhammadasa Sutta the Buddha mentions four chief characteristic qualities of a stream winner. They are called mirrors, or looking-glasses, and anybody who by virtue of matured insight possesses these qualities can rest assured he has attained the first Path of Sotapanna.

These qualities are:

- 1 He possesses unshakable faith in the Buddha, because he now understands the most exalted qualities of the Buddha.
- 2 He possesses unshakable faith in the Dhamma, because by working earnestly he, in his own person, realizes the supreme truth and wisely penetrating, beholds it face to face.
- 3 He possesses unshakable faith in the Sangha, because he now knows their excellent qualities.
- 4 He naturally observes the five precepts, *panca sila*, which is the most cherished moral code of the noble Order.

Thus he is free from false view (*ditthi*), he does not hold the view that the aggregates of mental and physical processes are man, women, person or creature, etc.

He is free from doubts (*vicikiccha*), he possesses unshakable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha.

He is free from belief in rites, rituals and ceremonies (*paramasa*), he realizes that no other method than that of cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path, and attaining an inner realization of the four Noble

Truths, will bring eternal peace.

He is also free from envy (*issa*), and from meanness (*macchhariya*).

The Buddha said, 'Greater than emperorship, that god-state the fruit of this first step of sainthood.' But now something never in this life even imagined as possible, has been actually experienced.

### *Nibbana*

At the moment of attainment of Nibbana there are three different modes of apprehension:

1 *Lakkhana*

The characteristic mark of Nibbana: meaning there is cessation the cutting off of the ever-flowing stream of nama-rupa, the mental and physical processes (*santi lakkhanam*).

2 *Rasa*

The inherent functional property of Nibbana: meaning the freedom from the mundane course of change, deterioration and decay (*Accutorasam* = eternal, changeless).

3 *Paccupatthana*

The resultant appearance of Nibbana: meaning there is neither sign, symptom nor form (*Animitta paccupatthanam*).

## *The Four Noble Truths*

- 1 The coming into existence and the passing away of all sankharas is suffering (*dukkha*).
- 2 The craving for the sankharas, because they are considered good, is the cause of suffering (*dukkha samudaya*).
- 3 The ceasing of the ever-flowing stream of the mental and physical process (*nama-rupa*) is Nibbana (*dukkha nirodha*).
- 4 The personal intuitive apprehension of *nirodha* (cessation) is the Eightfold Path (*atthangika magga*), (*dukkha nirodha gamini patipada*).

## *The Manner of Perceiving the Four Noble Truths*

*Question:* How are four Noble Truths perceived at one and the same time?

*Answer:* In the winning of the personal intuitive apprehension of Nibbana (third Truth), the discernment of suffering (first Truth) is achieved, together with the expulsion of its cause, craving, (second Truth); and all three Truths are accomplished only by developing the requisite maturity of insight (treading the Noble Eightfold Path – fourth Truth). In this way are the four Truths perceived at one and the same time.



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# PART FOUR

## TALKS INVOLVING PAÑÑA IN PARTICULAR

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# CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

## THE ABHIDHAMMA PHILOSOPHY

The Pali term Abhidhamma is composed of *Abhi* which means subtle or ultimate, and *Dhamma* which means truth or doctrine. Abhidhamma therefore means subtle or ultimate truth of doctrine.

All the Teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one word: Dhamma, Dharma is the Sanskrit form. In the Pali language which the Buddha spoke, it is softened to Dhamma. It means truth, that which really is. As it enables one to realize truth the Doctrine is also called Dhamma.

The word of the Buddha, his entire Teachings called Dhamma, consists of three aspects, the doctrinal (*pariyatti*), the practical (*patipatti*) and realizable (*pativedha*). The doctrinal aspect is preserved in the Scriptures called Three Pitakas or baskets of the Canon. It has been estimated by English translators of the pitakas to be eleven times the size of the Christian Bible.

This Pitaka which contains the words of the Buddha consists of three baskets, namely the Basket of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), the Basket of Dis-

courses (Sutta Pitaka) and the Basket of Ultimate Things (Abhidhamma Pitaka).

The Vinaya Pitaka deals mainly with the rules and regulations of the Order of monks (Bhikkhus) and nuns (Bhikkhunis). It also gives detailed account of the life, ministry of the Buddha and the development of the Buddhist Order. It is subdivided into five books. The Sutta Pitaka contains the discourses delivered by the Buddha to individuals or assemblies of different ranks at different places on different occasions. It is divided into twenty-six books. The Abhidhamma Pitaka consists of the four ultimate things, Mind (citta), Psychic-factors (Cetasikas), Matter (Rupa) and Nibbana. It is the most important and most interesting to a deep thinker. It is subdivided into seven books.

The main difference between the Sutta and the Abhidhamma Pitakas is that in Sutta the doctrines are explained in the words of conventional, simple language, but in the Abhidhamma everything is analyzed and explained in purely philosophical terms true in the absolute sense. Thus, in the sutta, stones are called 'stones', animals 'animals' and men 'men', but in the Abhidhamma realities of physical and psychical phenomena are described and elucidated.

Abhidhamma is a philosophy in as much as it deals with the most general causes and principles of things. It is also an ethical system because it enables one to realize the ultimate goal, Nibbana. As it deals with the working of the mind, thoughts, thought processes and psychic factors, it is also a system of psychology: Abhidhamma is therefore generally translated as The Psycho-Ethical Philosophy of Buddhism.

The discourses in the Sutta Pitaka were generally expounded to suit temperaments of different people and so they are rather like prescriptions. In the Abhidhamma Pitaka all these doctrines are systematically elucidated from the philosophical, psychological and physiological standpoint. As such Abhidhamma is underlying all the Teachings of the Buddha. A knowledge of it is therefore essential to understand clearly the Buddhist Doctrine.

Abhidhamma is highly prized by deep thinking students of Buddhist philosophy but to the average student it seems to be dull and meaningless. The main reason is that it is so extremely subtle in its analysis and technical in treatment that is very difficult to understand without the guidance of an able teacher.

Of the four ultimate realities with which Abhidhamma deals, one is mind. Now, what is mind? Mind

has been explained by many philosophers and psychologists in various ways.

According to Abhidhamma, mind is power to think, to know. The power of the mind stands no comparison with anything known by us, but we may compare it with colossal energy inherent in electricity, or perhaps with atomic power. Even as electrical power could be utilized for different purposes, good, bad or indifferent, so also our mind. The atomic power now utilized for human destruction could be utilized for the alleviation of human suffering as well.

Mind may be said to be like pure, transparent water which can be mixed with anything. When it is mixed with mud, it becomes thick and defiled and you cannot see through. In the same way this supreme, incomparable energy known as mind, which is by nature clear, bright and transparent, becomes dirty, defiled and poisonous by ill use. Take another power known to us; steam power. It can be utilized for the purpose of hauling or dragging huge weights of materials under proper control or an intelligent use. If this power is misused, or uncontrolled, the result is disastrous. A steam boat carrying a large number of passengers can bring destruction to life and property if the steam power is not controlled and dexterously used. The abuse of the mind can destroy hundreds of times more than any physical power can.

But the same mind, when it is developed and trained for good purposes, can perform wonders. For instance, see the mind of the Buddha who, by the supernormal powers of his well trained mind, is able to influence millions of people throughout the world and bring them to light and understanding, to joy and happiness.

A pure mind is defiled by thoughts of greed, anger and ignorance. There are some people who have attained positions of eminence, and because their minds are so defiled they have brought ruin not only to themselves but also to large sections of the people. They are utilizing their powerful minds in a wrong direction. It is just like a revolver in the hands of a monkey.

Here in this article, for want of space, I may deal with only one aspect of the mind, to show how it can easily be made impure. I may deal with the aspect that works through the eye. When we see an object, we do not see its real or intrinsic nature, we see only its appearance. An image of the object is formed only if we keep our eyes in the right directions so that the waves of light which have been reflected by it enter our eyes. Though these waves are incessantly beating on the outside of our sense organ, eye; if the eyelid is closed they make no sense impressions. It is not, then any soul from within us that goes out to seize upon and grasp the object,

but the phenomena are, as it were, making their way into our consciousness through the sense door. All our thoughts or concepts based on those sense impressions are therefore indirect, secondary to truth and not free from personal prejudice. We therefore, in actual fact, have no direct knowledge of what really exists in the world of physics: nevertheless the objects in the outside world of physics are real but not as an observer sees them. The objects in the outside world of physics exist independent of our awareness. These physical objects, according to the Buddhist philosophy, consist of four aggregates or elements. Therefore what we see is only the appearance, the image of the object which appears in the retina of our eye. We imagined that what we see is real, but it is our imagination of appearance. Therefore our knowledge of what we see is composed of appearance; hence we mistake the appearance for an object, the shadow for the substance. Ignorance of this nature leads to delusion in which imagination plays a great part, giving rise to craving for what does not exist.

It reminds me of a little story. There was once a fox which was looking for something to eat. He stopped at a tree covered with red flowers. He looked up and waited till a bunch of flowers fell. He then ran towards it thinking of eating with relish, because he imagined that what he saw on the tree was some

deep red flesh. He smelt it, but to his dismay discovered that it was not what he expected. But he did not lose heart. He said, 'Not this, but those up there are'. So he waited; some more bunches of flowers fell, and every time they came down, he repeated the same experience. Thus he remained the whole day starving, imagining that the real thing was still on the top of the tree.

We worldly people think that things exist when they do not really exist. We are usually looking for something new and sometimes for things which do not really exist. We look to appearances without realizing their intrinsic values.

Now, we come to the question whether 'I' exist, whether 'you' exist. This is a common question. It was asked not only at the time of the Buddha, but also long before he appeared. The Buddha was asked this question and he has answered it again and again; but people have not been satisfied, and today we are asking the same question. According to the Buddhist philosophy, 'I' am real, and 'you' are real, they exist; but they exist not in the way we see them. What we see is an illusion because what we see, or what we think we see is not real. It is only an appearance, a phantom which our mind has created out of appearance or image. We therefore can say that there are two 'I's' and two 'you's'.



The 'I' exists and has being in the world, and another 'I' that exists only in the world of the senses and so is not real. The former 'I' exists in its real sense, in its intrinsic value, and can be realized only by a well trained mind, unobscured by the illusory nature of phenomenal existence. According to Buddhist philosophy, this 'I' consists of five aggregates. The combination of these five aggregates in varying degrees constitutes the appearance to which we attribute different names. It is right knowledge that makes us discriminate the ultimate nature of things from superficial appearances, the real from the unreal, and truth from imagination.

The object coming to the view of an ordinary man would be seen only in the light of his own limited knowledge, in the light of his own imagination. He does not realize the aggregates that have made up the view represented by the object. He then attaches qualities that are either attractive or repulsive, desirable or undesirable. He often imputes qualities to people, but these qualities are in point of fact created out of his own imagination, because he sees only the image of the person concerned. He thereby makes mistakes because he does not go beyond the appearance.

A Buddhist annotator gives this simile in this connection. He says that people who have no insight as

to the ultimate reality of things are acting like a dog in a story. It appears there was a dog which came across a dry, lean bone. Being hungry, it began to lick it and try to eat it. In the process its saliva made the bone wet, and it soon began to chew the bone with great relish imagining that it was fat, juicy flesh.

An ordinary world observer is like the dog in the story. He imagines he is happy when he really is not. He imagines something to be substantial and therefore permanent, when in point of fact by its very nature, it is the reverse. He imagines something which does not really exist, thus giving rise to sorrow, worry, suffering.

We talk of attractive and unattractive qualities. Now, do these qualities exist? According to Buddhist philosophy, there is nothing definite, because what is agreeable or desirable to one may be disagreeable or undesirable to another.

Qualities are usually thought to be good or bad accordingly as one imagines. Dead flesh that appears to us to be bad looking and having a foul smell, appears to a vulture to be good looking with a fine taste and smell. Hence what is attractive to one may be repulsive to another. What is lovely in one's eye may be ugly in another's. Good or bad, beauti-

ful or ugly, therefore, depends on one's taste and habitual outlook.

There is a little story to illustrate the fact that what is attractive to one may not be attractive to another. The story is that once there was a golden royal swan, living in the Himalayas, surrounded by beautiful flowers and crystal clear streams, and living on sweet and juicy fruits of various kinds. One day, he flew out to see the conditions on the flat surface of the earth. He was surprised that the condition had changed. The water was muddy and surroundings were ugly. He then spied a crane in a muddy pool, ardently spying for something. The golden swan, seeing the plight of his brother, took pity on him, and flew down. Approaching the crane, he asked sympathetically: 'My poor brother, I am very sorry to see you in this wretched condition. You look so thin and unhappy. Please tell what you are doing now'. The crane replied. 'I am looking for food'. 'What do you eat?', enquired the swan, getting interested. The crane replied that he lived on fish caught in the pool. This made the swan feel unhappy. 'Fish is not good food, it has such a nasty smell', said the golden swan, 'besides, you are living by killing others' lives. Come with me to the Himalayas where you can get sweet, juicy fruits, beautiful flowers and pure water', and he gave a very beautiful account of the life and conditions there.

‘Yes, brother swan’, said the creature of the lowlands, ‘your account is so interesting and so beautiful indeed, but pray tell me, is there any muddy water where I can catch fish?’ The swan ultimately had to give up his attempt, laudable though it appeared to be.

The quality of attraction and repulsion, desirability and undesirability depends on convenience, customary practice and predispositions. We may all agree that a certain living thing is beautiful, but the sense of appreciation varies with various individuals. There is nothing definite about what is beautiful in the real sense. I remember I was at one time in the National Gallery in London, and there I saw a group of people quarrelling amongst themselves as to which picture was more beautiful. One said this and another said that, and nobody agreed on any. So there is nothing definite about what is beautiful and what is not, what is attractive and what is not, what is desirable and what is not. So long as we base our knowledge on sense impressions, imaginations, appearances, we cannot hope to arrive at truth, the ultimate nature of things.

There is therefore a clash of visions, a clash of judgements amongst the people of the world. One man’s view of idealism is different from that of another, one man’s view of any subject is not in strict

conformity with that of another. We talk of peace, but how can we attain peace, real peace, when people do not have clear visions? Our visions are covered with ignorance, selfishness and hatred. We are living in a world of imagination rather than that of truth. There can be no possibility of attaining peace either here or hereafter if we do not rid ourselves of greed, misunderstanding and hatred. Our task as students of philosophy, therefore, is to keep our minds pure, clear and bright, so that our minds will become powerful instruments for the service of humanity at large. Then we can become peace makers and builders of a united world.

To achieve this end, we must cultivate our minds to become great by culture and mental training, by service, selflessness and understanding.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

## ABHIDHAMMATTHASANGAHA

*Final talk in the series of 16 classes on the Citta Chapter given at the London Buddhist Vihara during the summer of 1983*

According to the Buddhist Teaching there are three kinds of world, 'loka' in the Pali Language, Kamaloka, Rupaloka and Arupaloka, three kinds of planes of existence. Kamaloka is called the plane, or we may say sphere, of sense of pleasures, this world – according to Buddhism, the world of the sense of desires. Kama, desire, plays the greatest part in this world, desire through the eye, desire through the ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; desire, meaning greed, is predominant in this world, therefore the name Kamaloka. We can realize in our actions that thing which we have most in everyday life: wish – 'I wish this', 'I wish that'; wish, the desire to have. As consciousness, 'citta' in Pali, it is consciousness of belonging to, the Plane of Sense Desire; that is, this world.

In this world, Kamaloka, there are altogether for ordinary puthujjanas fifty-four types of consciousness (except one, *hasituppada*, the smile of the ara-

hatta). We experience some of these fifty-four types, which you have already studied; first of all the akusala states, the eight bad types of immoral, greedy consciousness; the two hateful types of consciousness; the two ignorant types of consciousness rooted in dullness and delusion – lobha, dosa, moha, altogether twelve. We all of us experience these twelve, I can say every day, every hour if not every time.

Now, resultant types of consciousness, which arise as a result of our immoral actions also the result of our moral actions; they are known as rootless, ahetuka, and are eighteen in number. Looking at the chart we see resultant, ‘vipaka’ in Pali; bad resultant seven types, good resultant of lower kind eight types, and three inoperative. Thus in all so far, thirty types: twelve immoral plus eighteen rootless resultant.

Then in this world we also have good types of consciousness known as sobhana, beautiful types of consciousness. There are eight active moral (*kusala*) types known as beautiful, *sobhana*, which we experience also more or less every day. Good, moral consciousness means we can do good actions with one of these eight types; anything we do good, we do with one of these types of consciousness. As a result, therefore, we have eight types of good result-

ant (*vipaka*) consciousness because of our actions, physical, verbal or vocal and mental. Because of our beautiful thoughts we utter beautiful words and we do beautiful actions, known as moral actions, as the result of which we have, mentally, eight types of beautiful resultant consciousness. Verbally, as a result of good thoughts (mental action), what we say will be very good, useful, helpful, pleasant; people will like us, love us, appreciate what we say. As a result we shall have everything good, verbally. These types of consciousness can also be experienced by the arahatta, perfect beings like the Buddha and paccekabuddhas, but their actions are not cumulative, their consciousness does not accumulate, does not produce any result, therefore they are only inoperative, 'kiriya' in Pali. Thus with eight inoperatives types of sobhana consciousness, there are in all twenty-four sobhana states making a total of fifty-four types of consciousness that can be experienced in this world, or plane, Kamaloka.

Now we can go higher by developing our good consciousness into higher types of consciousness. For the attainment of the next, higher, plane of consciousness, Rupaloka, the Plane of Form, beings have very fine, refined bodies in that existence, they are all jhanic persons, very highly developed mentally, so high that they can live thousands of lives,



in some cases millions of lives, without eating. Wherever they want to go they can fly without bothering to buy tickets, making arrangements, without looking after cars or aeroplanes, in the Rupaloka. Because their physical body is so refined, beautiful; that is one way of explanation of the nama Rupa for existence. Another explanation is that to reach that state, to be born in that world, one's object of meditation is form, not the mind; that is why it is called Rupaloka, the Plane of Form, and the conscious states are known as consciousness of the Plane of Form. In that world their moral actions are five: first, second, third, fourth and fifth jhana, good (*kusala*) consciousness. And there are five inoperative, *kiriya*, types for the Buddhas, also arahattas; in all, therefore, fifteen. In this world fifty-four types of consciousness, and in the Plane of Form fifteen.

Now one can go still higher, Arupaloka, the Formless Plane, where they have no form – as already explained in an earlier class. In that existence there are four moral (*kusala*) actions, four resultants (*vipaka*) and four inoperative (*kiriya*) states, altogether twelve. So in these three planes of existence there are altogether eighty-one types of consciousness known as mundane types of consciousness: in Kamaloka fifty-four, Rupaloka fifteen and the Formless Plane twelve. Though the Rupa and Arupa types of consciousness are much higher than this world, yet

they are still mundane, not supramundane. By attaining these highest types of mundane consciousness we can enjoy life, the great lengths and periods of which are explained in this book. (*Abhidhammatthasangaha*), but still they are only mundane.

When we should like to attain even higher, that highest type of consciousness is called supramundane, Lokuttara. There are four kusala types of Lokuttara consciousness and four types of resultant, making a total of eight types of supramundane consciousness. Thus, including every type of consciousness, eighty-one plus eight, there are in all eighty-nine types of citta.

To study supramundane consciousness please refer to the book, *A Manual of Abhidhamma* by *Narada Mahathera* (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1980) page no. 61, 'Moral Supramundane Consciousness'. There are four types of consciousness, Path consciousness: sotapatti Path consciousness, sakadagami Path consciousness, anagami Path consciousness, arahatta Path consciousness. In Pali they are called sotapattimagga, sakadagamimagga, and so on; magga is translated in English as path. So, altogether four types of Path consciousness; these are the four kusala, or moral types of supramundane consciousness. There are exactly the same number of resultant types of su-

pramundane consciousness, 'phala' in Pali, in English, fruit; *sotapatti* fruit consciousness, *sakadagami* fruit consciousness, *anagami* fruit consciousness, arahatta fruit consciousness. Now, reading from the book, 'These are the four types of supramundane moral and resultant consciousness. Thus end, in all, the eight types of supramundane moral and resultant consciousness. Differing according to the four paths the moral consciousness is fourfold. So are the resultants, being their fruits. The supramundane should be understood as eightfold'. And, still following the book, 'Thus the "immorals" are twelve, the "morals" are twenty-one, the "resultant" are thirty-six, the "functionals" (inoperative" are twenty). In the Sensuous Sphere, they say, the wise say, are 'fifty-four types of consciousness; in the Form Sphere are fifteen; in the Formless Sphere are twelve; in the Supramundane are eight'.

Next, the explanation of how, why, eighty-nine types of consciousness become one hundred and twenty-one, see page 63 in the book: 'How does consciousness which is analyzed into eighty-nine become one hundred and twenty-one?' You already know eighty-one types of mundane consciousness, and now the eight supramundane are further divided into forty, eighty-one and forty totalling one hundred and twenty-one. The eight supramundane become forty in the following way, as shown in the

book, 'The first jhana sotapatti Path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness' you have already studied these jhanic states in Rupaloka, the Plane of Form. 'Second jhana sotapatti Path consciousness together with sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness', and so on, third jhana, fourth, fifth, altogether five. Thus there are five types of sotapatti Path consciousness because of these jhanas, as is also the case with saka-dagami, anagami and arahatta Path consciousness; each is developed into five by way of the five jhanas, making exactly twenty types of Path consciousness. Similarly there are twenty types of Fruit (phala) consciousness, making in all a total of forty types of supramundane consciousness.

Referring to the summary in the book on page 64: 'Dividing each (supramundane) consciousness into five kinds according to different jhana factors, the supramundane consciousness, it is said, becomes forty. As the Form Sphere consciousness is treated as first jhana consciousness, and so on, even so is the supramundane consciousness. The Formless Sphere consciousness is included in the fifth jhana'.

Here again some explanation is needed. In the Sphere of Form there are three first jhanas – one kusala, one resultant and one inoperative. In

Lokuttara there are eight first jhanas – one each in total eleven first jhanas. Similarly there are eleven second jhanas, third jhanas and fourth jhanas. When, however, it comes the fifth jhana, not only are there eleven in the way just described, but because all the twelve types of consciousness in the Formless Sphere are of the category of fifth jhana this brings the total fifth jhana states to twenty-three. Fifth jhana has only two dominant factors, equanimity and one-pointedness of mind. Because all the twelve arupa types of consciousness have only those two dominant factors, they are included in that category.

Referring to the book again, ‘thirty-seven are morals, fifty-two are resultants; thus the wise say that there are one hundred and twenty-one types of consciousness’. Kiriya, the inoperative states, are not mentioned here. ‘Thus ends the first chapter of the Abhidhammatthasangaha which deals with the analysis of consciousness’.

Now to show how this supramundane consciousness can be experienced, how only with supramundane consciousness can one attain Nibbána, and not with any of the mundane states. Nibbána is the highest types of happiness and is attained only by the highest types of consciousness. Lokuttara states, not ordinary states of consciousness, there-

fore ordinary puthujjanas cannot know what Nibbána is, will not understand what it is. If one wants to talk about it one can, but one will not realize it, one cannot appreciate it; by mere thinking, no matter how high one's thoughts are, as long as they are mundane one will never realize Nibbána.

He who practises meditation is called a yogi, and the yogi who wishes to realize Nibbána tries to understand things as they truly are; one must understand what things are. From the book, page 65: 'With his one-pointed mind he scrutinizes his self – scrutinizes, examines thoroughly, deeply his self; that is, the so-called 'I'. What is self? What is 'I'? If one wants to attain Nibbána one should first examine what 'I' is, what we are: so – 'he scrutinizes his self, and on due examination discovers that his so-called ego, or ego-personality' – so-called soul – is nothing but a mere composition of mind and matter. If you analyse your body, including the so-called 'I', you or soul or spirit or, you will discover that the so-called ego-personality, the so-called 'I', is nothing but a mere composition of mind and matter. 'The former', that is mind, 'consisting of fleeting mental states' – that arise as a result of senses coming into contact with sense stimuli – i.e., an object – 'and the latter' – i.e., matter, body, the composition – 'of forces and qualities that manifest themselves in multifarious phenomena' – many and various

kinds of phenomena. So by analysing mind and body one discovers these forces, four kinds of elements and qualities. These forces are only qualities.

‘Having thus gained a correct view of the real nature his self, – having analysed the so-called body and mind, and gaining a correct view of the real nature of his self, the so-called ‘I – ’ freed from the false notion of an identical substance of mind and matter’ – one sees what mind is, what matter is – ’ he attempts to investigate the cause of this ego-personality’ – this so-called self, or soul, or spirit. ‘He realizes that everything worldly, himself not excluded, is conditioned by causes past or present, and that this existence is due to past ignorance (avijja)’ – as we said in Paticcasamuppada, this existence, our own existence, is due to past ignorance – ’craving (*tanha*), attachment (*upadana*), kamma’ – that is our action – ’and physical food (*ahara*) of the present life’ – because of food we exist. On account of these five causes this personality’ – this soul, so-called ‘I – ’has risen and as the past activities have conditioned the present, so the present will condition the future. Meditating thus, – that is what we call meditation, studying what the so-called ‘I’, you, is composed of. So, meditation: what is meditation?

Some people use the word contemplation. What is the difference between meditation and thinking, be-

tween meditation and contemplation? For the attainment of Nibbána the pali word is vipassana, and it is translated into English as meditation, which is not an actual equivalent; for the want of words we use the term meditation. Meditation is not the real complete meaning, it does not convey the full meaning of the Pali term vipassana. Vipassana means 'vi' and 'passana'. 'Vi' has two meanings, visesana and vividha. Visesana means specially; passana means seeing; so, to see the object specially, not in an ordinary way is the meaning of visesana. That is to say, when one tries to meditate, when one uses or practises vipassana, one sees objects differently, specially, not in an ordinary way. Ordinarily, when one is not trying to meditate, if one sees a man one is conscious of, aware, there is a man, a woman, there is a dog, cat and so on, that is the ordinary way of seeing. In a meditative way, in the vipassana way, one does not see a man or woman, one sees specially, one sees that so-called man and woman are just a composition of mind and matter. One should go beyond the surface, beyond the appearance, that is what we call vipassana, seeing in a special and not ordinary conventional way. One will never realize truth if one sees things in an ordinary way.

Now, vividha, the other meaning of 'vi' means differently, in the light of the Three Characteristics. As a meditator one sees not the body, not the appear-



ance, one sees the so-called object in the light of the Three Characteristics; that is what we call vipassana. This so-called body and mind is subject to change; changing, changing, like the second hand of a clock or watch, changing, following, following. So when one sees an object one sees it in the light of transiency, impermanence: and anything that is changeable is not really desirable. That is dukkha. Then another, the third Characteristic, is, there is no permanent, eternal substance in anything in the world we see, that is to say in animate beings like human beings, animals, there is no eternal principle in a body, no immortal soul. When we say a body, that body is moving, changing; mind and body are moving, and so on. So when as a meditator we see the object specially, not in an ordinary conventional way, we see it in the light of the Three Characteristics. That is meditation, that is vipassana.

If one refers to the dictionary, meditation means thinking, thinking about, therefore it is entirely different from the meaning of the word vipassana. If one wants to practise Buddhist meditation it means vipassana meditation, to see objects specially, not in the ordinary way, to see objects in the light of the Three Characteristics (anicca, dukkha, anatta).

Now, the book, still on page 65 – 'Meditating thus he transcends all doubts with regard to the past,

present and future (*kankhavitaranavisuddhi*). Thereupon he contemplates that all conditioned things are transcient (*anicca*), subject to suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of an immortal soul (*anatta*). Wherever he turns his eyes he sees nought but these Three Characteristics standing out in bold relief. He sees them clearly. 'He realizes that life is a mere flowing, continuous undivided movement. Neither in a celestial plane nor on earth' – earth does not mean the ground, but this world. So, neither in a celestial or divine world, i.e., heaven – 'does not find any genuine happiness, for every form of pleasure is only a prelude to pain'. If one sees this, one sees things as they are, suffering. To ordinary worldly people everything pleasant is supposed to be very pleasurable, enjoyable, but to that person such pleasure is only a prelude to pain. 'What is transient' – impermanent – is therefore subject to suffering, and where change and sorrow prevail there cannot be a permanent ego' – cannot be a permanent soul.

'As he is thus absorbed in meditation', – vipassana – 'a day comes when, to his surprise, he witnesses an aura emanating' – coming forth – 'from his body (*obhasa*)'. If his meditation is enhanced he sees an aura, he experiences an unprecedented pleasure, happiness and quietude – 'He becomes even-minded, strenuous. His religious fervour increases' –

that is, his strength – and mindfulness becomes perfect and insight extraordinarily keen.

‘Mistaking this advanced state of moral progress for sainthood’, – the meditator may think, ‘Ah! I have attained sainthood, sotapatti’ – ‘chiefly owing to the presence of the aura, he develops a liking for this mental state. Soon the realization comes that these new developments are only obstacles’, – the hindrances – ‘to moral progress’, they are not real— ‘and he cultivates the purity of knowledge with regard to the Path and non-Path (*maggamaggañána-dassanavisuddhi*)’. So he tries to see whether the path he is following is the real Path or not.

‘Perceiving the right path’, – so he chooses – ‘he resumes his meditation on the arising (*udaya ñana*) and passing away (*vaya ñana*) of conditioned things. Of these two characteristics the latter becomes impressed in his mind, because change is more conspicuous than becoming’. This also needs explanation. This is one of the stages of the ñánas when one is meditating on the arising and falling way of one’s consciousness, gradually one sees more clearly the falling apart than the arising part; that is what it means – ‘more impressed in his mind, because change is more conspicuous than becoming. Therefore he turns his attentions to the dissolution of things (*bhanga ñána*). He perceives

that both mind and matter which constitute his personality, are in a state of constant flux', – change – 'not remaining for two consecutive moments the same. To him 'comes the knowledge that all dissolving things are fearful (*bhaya ñána*). The whole world appears to him like a pit of burning embers, a source of danger. Subsequently he reflects on the wretchedness and vanity (*adinava ñana*) of the fearful world', – to him the world is to be feared – 'and feeling disgusted with it (*nibbida ñana*), wishes to escape therefrom (*muncitukamyata ñana*).

'With this object in view he meditates again on the Three Characteristics (*patisankha ñana*), and thereafter he becomes completely indifferent to all conditioned things', – he is not interested in worldly things – 'having neither attachment nor aversion for any worldly object (*sankharupekkha ñana*). Reaching this point of mental culture he takes for his object of special endeavour one of the Three Characteristics that appeals to him most, and intently keeps on developing insight in that particular direction, until that glorious day when, for the first time, he realizes Nibbána, his ultimate goal.'

Now continuing on page 67 in the book, there is a kind of diagram showing how the process of consciousness takes place. Then – 'When there is no *pari-kamma* thought-moment, in the case of an individual

with keen insight, there arise three phala thought-moments'. Just the process of consciousness.

'These nine kinds of insight', – namely, udaya-vaya ñána, and so on – 'are collectively called *patipadanñánadassanavisuddhi*, purity of knowledge and vision as regards the practice.

'Insight found in this supramundane Path consciousness is known as *ñánadassanavisuddhi*, purity of knowledge and vision.

'When the spiritual pilgrim realizes Nibbána for the first time he is called a *sotapanna*, one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbána for the first time. He is no more a worldling (*puthujjana*) but an ariya' – noble one. 'He eliminates three fetters, namely, self-illusion (*sakkayaditthi*), doubts (*vicikiccha*), and adherence to wrongful rites and ceremonies' – rituals – '(*silabbataparamasa*). As he has not eradicated all the fetters that bind him to existence, he is reborn seven times at most' – in this world. In his subsequent birth he may or may not be aware of the fact that he is a *sotapanna*', – first noble one – 'nevertheless, he possesses the characteristics peculiar to such a saint.

'He gains implicit confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha' – then he becomes a real Buddhist, re-

ally, otherwise one's confidence is very shaky. When one reaches the state of sotapanna, the first, initiative state of ariya, one's confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, is fixed, established – ' and he would never violate any of the five precepts. He is moreover, absolved from states of woe, for he is destined to enlightenment.

'Summoning up fresh courage as a result of this distant glimpse of Nibbána, the ariyan pilgrim makes rapid progress, and perfecting his insight becomes a sakadagami (once returner), by attenuating two other fetters, namely, sense-desire (*kamaraġa*) and illwill (*patigha*).

'In this case, too, and in the case of the other two advanced stages of sainthood, a javana thought-process runs as above '

Now, just to conclude easily, please read to the end of this section and turn to the last paragraph on page 69.

'It will be noted that the fetters have to be eradicated in four stages' This comes in the section just mentioned for you to read for yourselves. The Path (*magga*) thought-moment occurs only once. The Fruit (*phala*) thought-moment immediately follows. In the supramundane classes of consciousness the

effect of the kusala cittas is instantaneous. Hence it is called akalika (of immediate fruit):.’

So in the case of supramundane consciousness, moral (kusala) consciousness, one experiences the result immediately, not like ordinary worldly moral actions, lokiya, mundane states, where ‘effects may take place in this life, or in a subsequent life, or at any time until one attains Parinibbána.

‘In mundane consciousness kamma is predominant, while in supramundane consciousness pañña, or wisdom is predominate. Hence the four lokuttara cittas are not treated as kamma’. Kamma is only a worldly function. In the case of supramundane moral consciousness, this moral action is now known as kamma because it will produce an ordinary worldly result; that is the attainment of Nibbána.

‘These eight cittas’, – types of consciousness – ’ are called *Lokuttara*. Here loka means the *pancupadanakkhandha*, the five aggregates of attachment. Uttara means that which transcends. Lokuttara therefore means that which transcends the world of aggregates of attachment. This definition strictly applies to the four Paths. The Fruits are called Lokuttara because they have transcended the world of aggregates of attachment’. Lokuttara is really the name for Path consciousness, because the Path is

really the work which cuts, or transcends the world. The Fruit is only the result, that is what it means.

Now the rest of this first chapter in the book explains how the eight types of supramundane consciousness become forty. That is the end of the section on citta; consciousness.

Just to conclude our study, our talk, I would like to read, not much, just a little about Nibbána. The book explains how to reach the state of Nibbána; what I am going to read is, what is Nibbána?

Nibbána is the result of the cessation of selfish desires. That is the literal meaning, 'ni and 'vana'; 'ni' means not, and 'vana' means selfish desire. It may also be defined as extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance, freedom from lust, hatred and ignorance. So Nibbána means the cessation of selfish desire, the absence of craving, hatred and ignorance.

The Pali word is Nibbána, formed, as just said from the negative particle 'ni' and 'vana'. The Sanskrit word Nirvana comes from the root 'va', which means to blow and the prefix 'nir' which means off or out; hence Nirvana in its Sanskrit form means the blowing out of the flame of personal desires.

Both explanations are negative explanations of Nibbána. The predominance of the negative explana-



tion of Nibbána resulted in the mistaken notion that it is nothingness; some people even translate Nibbána as nothingness, or annihilation. Annihilation of what, though? They will not say what, but just that Nibbána means annihilation or nothing. If that is so why should the Buddha have wasted his time for attaining nothing.

However, in the Buddhist scriptures we find many positive definitions of Nibbána, such as: Nibbána means the highest refuge; safety; unique; absolute purity; supramundane; security, emancipation; peace; and so on, there are many positive definitions. Nibbána is, therefore, not a negative concept; because it is the cessation of craving, the blowing out of man's selfish desires, and that blowing out of desires leaves a man free. Nibbána is, therefore, freedom. Freedom, though, does not mean freedom from circumstances, nobody is free from circumstances. It is freedom from the bonds with which we have bound ourselves to circumstances, my circumstance, my activities, my, my; so we bind ourselves to our circumstances, makes circumstances as our own. Thus Nibbána is freedom from those bonds.

That man is free from selfish desire, hatred, illwill, ignorance. That man is free who is strong enough to say, 'Whatever comes I accept as best'. Who can

say that? Though we may express it, some people may say it, but actually only the man who is free from these evil fetters can truly say so, only he is really free.

Freedom does not mean that one can do everything that can be imagined; people may think freedom means that one can do anything one likes. Freedom does not mean that one can defeat a lion with a slap of the hand. Some people might think that if one had that kind of power that would be freedom. Freedom to do anything we wish is not freedom, because still there is a wish, which is a return to the bondage of our desires. Freedom means that one cannot be made a slave to anyone or anything. One is free because one is free from personal desire, free from resentment, from all craving. Such a man's binding emotions have been blown out like so many candles; that man is free here on earth, he has reached Nibbána in this world.

May all be well, healthy, happy, wealthy – you may like to be wealthy – and successful in all your noble undertakings. May you attain this state of Nibbána without much difficulty, and as soon as possible.

# CHAPTER THIRTY

## PATICCASAMUPADDA

*A talk given at the London Buddhist Vihara on  
9th October 1983*

The subject of my talk this evening, as the chart evidence on the blackboard shows, is Paticcasamuppada.

*Paticcasamuppada* is a Pali term meaning the Law of Dependent Origination, or Dependent Arising, the arising of a state dependent on the antecedent state. The Discourse in Pali on Paticcasamuppada is one of the very well known and very important discourses, because without this aspect of the Teaching it is rather difficult to understand why and how one becomes a being, a human being. This mainly answers three great questions which had always puzzled the Bodhisatta, the Buddha to be, before he became the Buddha. As the Bodhisatta he had for countless lives practised all kinds of austerities, searching for truth, approaching many well known philosophers and meditation masters, from all of whom he had received all kinds of answers.

Of these three great questions the first is, 'Where did he come from?' Sitting here this evening you

may say, 'I came from my home, from my flat' and so on, but this question is not asking an ordinary question; 'Where did we come from into this world, into this existence?' is the question being asked. Do you think you may be able to answer it? For immeasurable lives the Bodhisatta had looked for the answer, but none of the philosophers in any of those periods whom he approached was ever able to give him a satisfactory reply to this question, some saying that if you want to know where you have come from you should know the beginning of life.

There are sixty-two views, wrong views, about existence, where beings come from, how they start; however, if I deal with the sixty-two views you will be remaining here in this vihara all night, so I will take only three views which the Bodhisatta received from those well known philosophers, religious teachers.

The first view was that the beginning of life is your fate, you must have faith in fate; you cannot do anything by yourself, you have to rely on your fate. Thus they taught that fatalism is the beginning; whatever comes to you it is because of your fate, and you cannot do anything about it. That in Pali is known as sahetuka, the cause of your existence; consequently you cannot make any plan for own development to be free from all suffering.

And what is suffering? You already know, I think, the very well known Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, the first sermon preached by the Buddha in which he expounds the Four Noble Truths – Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering and the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. In Paticcasamuppada suffering is also explained, where it is shown that suffering is together with jati, the Pali word for birth. Birth is suffering. Consider your own birth, how difficult it was, what a dreadful state in a mother's womb as a foetus; to begin with a tiny spot, so tiny that no magnifying glass would help to identify it, then gradually developing, in some cases for seven months, in some for eight, nine months in a mother's womb; that is suffering. If you were to live in a house say twenty feet wide by twenty feet long, you may so, 'Oh! What a very narrow house, very narrow'. It would not be very comfortable and you would not be regarded as a very rich person if you had to live within such confined conditions, yet consider the room you occupied when as a foetus in a mother's womb. And the suffering of birth is followed by jara, byadhi, old age and decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, grief and despair; and a little more than that – to be separated from beloved ones is suffering, to be associated with those whom we dislike is suffering, not to get what one wishes is suffering, and so on; such is dukkha.

Unless one knows this Paticcasamuppada one cannot begin to understand the real nature and function of cause and effect, the cause of suffering, how suffering arises. And in meditation there is a stage where one becomes free from doubt about one's own existence; this again means a knowledge of Paticcasamuppada, a proper understanding of cause and effect, so that no doubts exist as to how one arises and passes away as a human being.

But getting back now to the Bodhisatta's quest for an answer to, 'Where did we come from?' As has already been said, the first view given by one of the well known philosophers was that the beginning of life is due to fate.

The second answer he received was that life started, or has started, without any cause, it just happens, there is no cause.

The third view was that the beginning of life is neither really fatalism nor causeless, the beginning of life is due to a creator, a supreme being, he started it.

So, with the third view that the beginning of life is due to the creation of a supreme being, supreme god, he received those three different answers from the well known philosophers of those times, but the Bodhisatta was not satisfied with any of them. If a

supreme being is the cause, he also must have a cause. Without a cause how could he live, who gave him his power of creation, the power to create? The unlimited power of which a supreme god is supposed to be possessed; where did that power come from, originate, how did he start, was there not a prior almighty being who created him, and so on? If you say, 'Oh well, it is normal, it is just natural'. Then you say of yourself too, 'I come to this world naturally'; but it still does not answer the question of what cause, what preceding condition gives rise to such a natural, normal happening.

It was not until the Bodhisatta realized this doctrine of Paticcasamuppada, the wheel of life, the continuous process of cause and effect, that he was able to find the answers to his three main questions. On the chart on the blackboard we can see there a big circle, depicting the wheel of life. Of the twelve sections, links in the chain, the wheel, can we say which is the beginning, which is the end? The explanation will come.

The Bodhisatta's second question was, 'Why are we here?' Why are we here in this world as human beings, why? We do not know, any more than we know where we came from: ordinary students, ordinary beings do not know the answer.

And the third great question was, 'Where are we going?'

Now, the answer very briefly to the first question, 'Where did we come from?' We come from, out of the past, even as today comes out of yesterday. This life is the result of the past life, before this life. We come from out of the things we have done before, out of the past labours unfinished. Although we have laboured, our work is not complete, if it were we should not be here, we should somewhere higher. We come out of past vices and virtues, vices and virtues we have accumulated, out of the darkness of our own ignorance, out of our own desire. We should, we desire, to live here; and we should like to come again, we have a great desire to come, but in a better way, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally – any way a little better, if not too much. In the way of wealth we should like, we desire, to be richer, physically more beautiful, to live longer, and so on. Thus we have come down into the present, bringing with us an unlimited accumulation of vices and virtues; therefore we can do evil things, but also we can do wonderful things, good things. In Paticcasamupadda it explains how the process works.

But proceeding now to the second question, 'Why are here?' We are here because of the past, for the



past gives birth to the present, and from the present is born the future. We are brought here by our own joys, our own sorrows, but most of all we are led here by our desires, and here we remain. For how long? Until the last selfish desire is annihilated. Desire for self: 'I want', 'I have a desire to do this and that', countless desires. All selfish desires must be totally annihilated, if there is one left we shall not attain Nibbana yet. To the wise man the life he lives here is an opportunity to rid himself of the burden which he has accumulated in the past; to rid himself of his own wrong doings, his wrong view points, to rid himself of his wrong concepts of life death, and leaving them all behind, to place his feet upon the Middle Way. Until then we shall be here, coming back again and again.

And the answer to the third question, 'Where are we going?' 'We are going to the effects of our causation, the results of our actions, the effects of our causes. Those whose labours are unfinished will go around the wheel of life, known in Pali as samsara. Samsara means going round the wheel of life, returning again and again.

So those whose labours are unfinished merely go around the wheel of life, samsara, and return again to labour towards fuller completion. Those who have followed the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path,

and finished their labours, reach the state of Nibbana, complete cessation of all suffering.

Until the Bodhisatta, just before he became the Buddha, realized Paticcasamuppada fully, he was continuously searching for the answers to the above mentioned three great questions which had always puzzled him.

Now, the wheel of life, how do we start? If we refer to the chart we can see there avijja, ignorance. This life begins with – not very pleasant – ignorance, that is how we start, because of ignorance; if we had attained wisdom we should not be here. But in taking avijja as the starting point in the circle, the wheel, the questions arises as to what is the cause of avijja? The answer will come later. The wheel does not show the supreme ultimate beginning, the commencement of samsara, it shows the present life, the life we are living now and its relation to the past and future.

So we starting at avijja, ignorance, in the circle. Ignorance of what? Ignorance, mainly, of the Four Noble Truths; also ignorance of Paticcasamuppada, ignorance of one's own past and present. If we really realize the Four Noble Truths we shall attain wisdom, we shall attain Nibbana, but this circle, Paticcasamuppada only deals with mundane states

because we are as yet mundane beings, it does not deal with supramundane states in which Nibbana is the object of consciousness. So it shows the wheel of life of puthujjanas, ordinary beings. Puthujjana, very thick-skinned, thick with greed, hatred and ignorance; therefore we ordinary people are called puthujjana, that is one of the etymological explanations of puthujjana. So Paticcasamuppada refers only to puthujjana beings, and as such we are going round and round in the whirlpool of this circle without finding the outlet.

In order to discover the outlet our job is to know the Four Noble Truths. The Truth of Suffering, as briefly discussed earlier, everyone experiences from the beginning in a mother's womb. The Truth of the Cause of Suffering: the cause is craving, craving for existence, greed for this and that. The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, release from suffering; that is Nibbana. The Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering: that is the Eightfold path. If one knows the Four Truths really, not theoretically but with full realization, one can get out of this circle.

Next to avijja in the circle comes sankhara. Sankhara is translated in different ways – literally it means doing, acting; it means activities, mainly mental activities. Abhidhamma students who are present here will know the twenty-nine possible

types of active conscious states that may take place in the case of puthujjanas, the twelve immoral states, eight moral and nine meditational states. Sankhara, here means these twenty-nine types of consciousness. Owing to ignorance sometimes we do good actions, but mostly we do bad actions because mostly we do things rooted in greed and hatred. Under the influence of ignorance we do all kinds of actions. We are ignorant really of which is right and wrong, although we may know just generally that certain actions might be good, certain actions might not be good. Therefore, blinded by ignorance we do wrong actions, although sometimes we do good actions, but not commonly. Generally we do actions because we like, which means based on greed; in the main greed is our guide, desire is our guide, we are guided by greed. So we like this and that and the other all the time, all the time wanting, wishing. And why? Because of avijja, not understanding the result of greed, without knowing the influence or power of greed. If we do not get what we want we are disappointed, frustrated, we get angry and wild; but the result of this is not mentioned yet, here.

There are altogether twelve factors in this circle, Paticcasamuppada, and there are three periods, i.e., past, present and future. As the starting point we have mentioned avijja, the first factor, ignorance

of the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Hoping to get a good result, we do actions; that is sankhara, the second factor. These two factors, avijja and sankhara, are the past period, and they have brought us to this world. Our past good actions such as giving, offering dana, observing certain precepts, having some good thoughts; because of good kamma in the past we come to this world.

So, because of sankhara the third factor arise, viññana, rebirth consciousness in this world. Viññana is the present period, resultant section, arising as the result, the outcome of the past avijja-sankhara, the cause. Viññana, here, means not all types of consciousness but rebirth consciousness after death. Thus, beginning this present life, we have first patisandhi consciousness – relinking consciousness – that which links this present life with the past. Rebirth consciousness arises, we are reborn, that is why we use the word rebirth, not reincarnation which means soul, we do not use the word reincarnation or incarnation.

Consciousness cannot work alone, it has some associated mental factors which work together with it, in Pali known as cetasikas; and being mind it cannot exist alone, it needs body as result of past actions. Therefore because of our relinking consciousness, dependent upon our relinking consciousness,

we have mind and body, nama and rupa, the fourth factor in the circle. The translation given on this chart here is mentality for nama and materiality for rupa, but mind and body is rather easier to understand.

Then, because of mind and body, depending on mind and body, you have six bases, the fifth factor in the circle. We have five external sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue and body (touch). We also use the Pali word *dvara*, meaning door, because of two functions, coming and going. The term base is used in the sense of a base upon which consciousness can function. And the sixth is an internal base, or inner door. It has two meanings, for it is not only a base or door but it is our life-line as well – in Pali, *bhavanga* – which leads us on from birth to birth, following this wheel round and round. Physically the heart is mentioned as the base for thought. And so, depending on nama and rupa, mind and body, we have six bases.

Depending on these six bases, because of them, there is contact, the sixth factor in the circle. Contact in Pali, *phassa* – impression, impingement. Contact means there is contact between an external sense object and the appropriate sensory surface, or sense base. For example, when a visible object and the sensitive surface of the eye, the eye base,

are at a correct distance and there is proper light, then contact between the two arises, the visible object impinges on the sensitive surface of the eye. Similarly with sounds and ear base. In the Abhidhamma it is fully explained how it works with forms and sight, and so on. Because of the five sense-doors, and mind-door, because of these bases, or doors, we have contact. When something touches the physical body, then contact arises via the body-door (touch); that is phassa, contact.

Now because of contact one feels, feeling arises, the seventh factor in the circle. When there is contact with an object of touch via the body-door, one feels. If the touch is smooth one may have a pleasant feeling, if the touch is rough or coarse one may have an unpleasant feeling, a neutral feeling, and so on. So because of feeling contact arises – in Pali, *phassa paccaya vedana*.

Looking at the circle on the board we can see that *avijjasankhara* are the past period. From *viññana* (rebirth consciousness) to *vedana* (feeling) inclusive, these five are the present period. Because of the past we are born in this life, to begin with, rebirth consciousness; because of which there is mind and body; and because of body there are the six bases; because of the six bases there is contact; and because of contact feeling arises. These five in

the present life come as a result of avijja-sankhara, our past actions, and are shown on the chart as the present resultant section.

When pleasant feeling arises, liking arises, 'I like it', greed arises, craving – tanha – eighth factor in the circle. It is due to feeling that craving arises; without feeling greed cannot arise. When we see something, hear something, if it is pleasant. 'Ah! I like, I must have it. I cannot do without it', pleasant sights, sounds, and so on, mostly selfish desire or wish for self. Then what about feeling? In Paticcasamuppada, when greed arises depending on feeling, how can we have greed for something which we dislike. The answer to this question is given in Visuddhimagga. In the case of unpleasant feeling, say one is ill, sick, one has a very painful ache, still greed arises because we have a desire to get out of that pain, to be free from that pleasant or unpleasant feeling.

Some people who are poor would like to be rich, this is desire. Some rich people desire to be richer; so, greed by the poor, greed by the rich. The more one gets the more one wants, more greedy really. This greed, this desire in this present life does not belong to the resultant section which ends at vedana, we go on now to the new thing, the new activity, doing, committing, producing that which is



the cause of our future. From these activities, as a result of them, so our future so our future will manifest itself. Thus tanha, craving, is new fresh activity, the commencing factor in this period shown on the chart as the present casual section.

To repeat – because of the past, avijja-sankhara, we have five present resultants: viññana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa and vedana. Nama-rupa, as you know, is counted as one factor. So how are here enjoying our past, the result of our past action, and now we are going to do new things. If we try to stop going round this wheel, to get out of this circle, we shall have to become without tanha, craving, greed.

Once tanha has arisen then attachment follows, in Pali upadana; that is the ninth factor in the circle. The difference between tanha (craving, greed) and upadana (attachment) – in English it is very clear – tanha is light desire, upadana is deeply rooted, we are attached. Greed is not attached, does not reach the state of attachment, it is just ordinary desire, wish.

Following attachment bhava, becoming, arises; the tenth factor in the circle. Tanha paccaya upadana, upadana paccaya bhava. What does it mean, becoming? Becoming means we are starting, acquiring new, fresh kammic energy for future life. Bhava

has two aspects: kamma-bhava, action of cumulative of resultant, and upapatti-bhava, resultant tending towards rebirth. In other words, because of our craving and attachment we act, now, do present actions (kamma-bhava), which means we are preparing for future birth, rebirth (upapatti-bhava).

Therefore tanha, upadana and bhava also belong to the present period but not resulting due to actions in the past, but as present actions causing, giving rise to the future.

As we have said, by way of our present actions, doings, we are preparing for the future birth, rebirth and so we come to the eleventh factor in the circle, jati. Jati means born, arises. When we have finished this life then the next birth will come: what will be born, what will arise: when the next birth comes the five factors shown in the chart here as the present resultant section will, one after another, arise, that is: viññana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa, vedana; but instead of saying these five we use only one word, jati, born, meaning the beginning of the future life. So the future results means that mind, body, bases, contact and feeling, these five will be born.

Thus jati means the beginning of this life. The twelfth factor in the circle, however, jaramarana,

means the end of one's life, jara meaning old age, gradually, and marana, death. As a natural sequence there are some other states such as soka – soka means sorrow, because we have been born we are subject to sorrow – lamentation, pain, grief and despair will arise as a result of birth.

Well, altogether we see here twelve factors. Two, avijja and sankhara, belong to the past; five, from viññana to feeling, belong to the present, causing the future; jati and jaramarana belong to the future, resulting from present causes. From jati to jaramarana, just two things mentioned here, but it means these five here on the chart, the five factors in the present resultant section, from viññana to vedana. The combination of these five factors are called man and woman, and it is these five which are born, die and are reborn in interminable continuity because of present actions.

Well, the time is up. I usually give three talks on Paticcasamuppada, for to cover all the points in one talk is impossible; what I have said gives only a brief, most brief outline. To conclude our talk, my talk, I should like to mention the real teaching of the Buddha, the advice of the Buddha to get out of this life. If we do not follow it we shall go round and round, without a limit.

To unmask the great illusion is the labour of man, so the Buddha advised us to get rid of our ignorance, to get rid of our masks of delusion, illusion. To stand in equilibrium in the midst of worldly things is the way of the Buddha. To contemplate life, but never to be enmeshed within worldly life is the law of the Buddha; not to be attached, tangled in the whirlpool of life, worldly life. To go forth out of the worldly life into higher and spiritual life is the advice of the Buddha. To be absorbed into the reality, the supreme bliss of Nibbana is the end of the Buddhist way of life.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

## NIBBĀNA

Nirvana which is the Sanskrit form of the Pali word Nibbana, is a combination of 'ni and 'vana', 'ni' being a negative participle, and 'vana' meaning lusting or craving. It is called Nibbana, for it is a departure from that craving; or it may also be defined as the extinction of greed, hatred and ignorance.

'The whole world is in flames', says the Buddha. By what fire is it kindled. It is kindled by the fire of greed, hatred and ignorance, by the fire of birth, old age, death, pain, lamentation, sorrow, grief and despair.

It should not be thought that Nibbana is a state of nothingness or annihilation just because we cannot conceive it with our worldly knowledge; a blind man cannot say that light does not exist just because he is unable to see it. There is the story, too, of the fish who argued with his friend the turtle, asserting triumphantly that there was no such thing as land.

Nibbana of the Buddhists is neither a mere nothingness nor a state of annihilation, but exactly what is no words can adequately express. It is a dhamma which is uncreated and unformed, hence it is

boundless, to be sought after, happy because it is free from all suffering, free from birth, death and so on. Nibbana is not situated in any place, nor is it a sort of heaven where a transcendental ego resides, it is a state which is dependent upon ourselves.

### *The Path to Nibbana*

How is Nibbana to be attained? It is by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of morality (*si la*), concentration (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*pañña*).

*To refrain from all evil,  
To do what is good,  
To cleanse one's mind,  
This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.*

### *Disciplines*

Sila, or morality, is the first stage on the path to Nibbana. One should not kill or cause injury to any living creature, one should be kind and compassionate towards all, even the tiniest creature that crawls at one's feet. Refraining from stealing anything, we should be honest in all our dealings. Abstaining from sexual misconduct which debases the exalted nature of man, we should be pure and chaste. Shunning false speech we should be truthful. Avoiding intoxicating drinks which promote heedlessness, we should be sober and diligent.

If the spiritual man finds these five precepts too elementary he may advance a step further and observe the eight or even ten precepts.

It will be noticed that as the spiritual man proceeds on this highway he is expected to live a life of celibacy, simplicity and self-control, lest vigour and well-being might encourage indolence, and worldly bonds might impede his progress. While the spiritual man progresses slowly and steadily it is naturally easy for him to practise the four kinds of higher sila, namely, discipline as prescribed by the Patimokkha, sense restraint, purity of conduct connected with livelihood, and conduct in connection with the necessaries of life.

Having trodden of the ground of sila, the progressing spiritual man reaches the practice of samadhi, the culture of the mind, the second stage of the path. Samadhi is concentration of the mind at will at one object.

The third stage on the path to Nibbana is insight (pañña) which enables the spiritual man to see things as they truly are. With one-pointedness of mind he looks at the world to get a correct view of life, seeing nothing but the three characteristics, anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering) and anatta (soullessness), wherever he casts his glance.

He does not find any genuine happiness in the world, for he sees that every form of pleasure is only a prelude to pain. Whatever is impermanent is painful, thus where change and sorrow prevail there cannot be permanent happiness.

The advancing spiritual man then takes one of the above three characteristics which appeals to him most, and intently keeps on developing insight in that particular direction until he realizes Nibbana for the first time in his life. Having at this ariyan stage destroyed the first three of the fetters, namely, self-illusion (*sakkayaditthi*), doubts (*vicikicca*) and indulgence in rites and rituals and ceremonies, he is called a sotapanna, one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbana; he has forever escaped the states of woes, and is assured of final enlightenment.

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

However, since he has not destroyed the will to live, he will be reborn as a human being seven times at most if he does not make quick further attainment.

Being encouraged by the result of this distant glimpse of Nibbana the spiritual man develops



deeper insight, and weakening two more fetters, sense desire (*kamaraga*) and illwill (*patigha*), he becomes a *sakadagami*, a once returner. He is called this because he will be reborn on earth only once more if he does not attain arahatship.

When he reaches the third ariyan stage the spiritual man is called an *anagami* (never returner), at which stage he completely destroys the above two fetters. Hereafter he does not return to this world, for he has no more desire for worldly pleasures, and after death he is reborn in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhavasa*), a place which is exclusively for *anagamis* and from whence they will become *arahatta*.

Now the earnest spiritual man, encouraged by the great success of his endeavours, makes his final advance, and destroying the remaining fetters, namely, desire for life in the Realm of Form (*ruparaga*), desire for life in the Formless Realm (*aruparaga*), conceit (*mana*), distraction (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijja*), he becomes a perfect saint by attaining arahatship, one whose heart becomes free from sensual passion, free from the passion for existence and free from ignorance. He realizes that rebirth is exhausted, the holy life is fulfilled, and what was to be done has been done; this is the highest, holiest peace, the eradication of greed, hatred and ignorance. The arahat stands on heights

more than celestial, realizing the unutterable bliss of Nibbana. He no more arises, no more passes away, no more trembles and no more desires; there is nothing in him to cause re-arising. Because he arises no more, he will not grow old; growing old no more he will not die again; dying no more he will not tremble, and trembling no more he will not desire. Hence the purpose of the holy life does not consist in acquiring alms, honour or fame, nor in gaining morality, concentration or wisdom. The unshakable deliverance of the heart is the object of the holy life, this is its essence and its goal.

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# PART FIVE

## TALKS DEALING WITH BUDDHISM IN GENERAL

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# CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

## WHAT DID THE BUDDHA DO FOR THE WORLD?

I am going to talk about what has been contributed to the world in mental and spiritual wealth by him we call the Buddha, a title which means the Awakened or Enlightened One. He was so called because he was awakened or enlightened as to the inner nature of man, and the destiny that lies before man as regards his inward, psychical nature.

The Buddha is a great benefactor of humanity, because he taught men that there is no need for them to look outside themselves to any being supposed to be superior to themselves for help to reach the highest condition of mind and heart possible for them. He told men that they could find within themselves, and must find within themselves, all strength required for this task. He told men that they could be strong, strong enough in themselves to achieve their own deliverance from delusion, ill-will and selfishness, selfish cravings. He pulled men to their feet with his gospel of self-help, and asked them to go forward by their own mental strength towards the goal he pointed out to them. And he told them that they could do this if they but tried.

It follows from the Buddha's proclamation of self-help as the one true way to deliverance from evil, that he condemned all sacrifices, performed in the name of religion, of any kind and particularly those that involved blood-shed, the killing of animals. You are familiar with the idea that 'sin' or evil can be atoned for, or done away with, by killing some animal in the name of God of the people who have such a religion.

In India, in the time of the Buddha, there were animal sacrifices. A great horse sacrifice is specially mentioned in one of the Buddhist Scriptures and there still are such today. If you go down the street in Calcutta where the temple of Kali stands, a feeling of nausea and repulsion and almost illness comes over you from the fumes hanging in the air of the goats there sacrificed to the goddess Kali, just as one feels when one passes near one of the big slaughter-houses.

From such horrors the Buddha did the world the service of proclaiming that they are alike useless and cruel, unnecessary and futile as a means of pleasing or placating any god. Men should purify and elevate themselves by their own good deeds till they stand higher than any gods, certainly higher than any that require death as tributes to their power, or to win their favour. And the also con-

demned the cruelty of taking life from creatures that are so entirely in our power that it is shameful to anyone of fine feeling to take advantage of them, as so many men do, in slaying them to save themselves, as they imagine, from the consequences of their own misdeeds. All shedding of blood, taking of life, as a part of religion, is the very antithesis of all that his religion means. The Buddhist religion means looking on all beings, all living creatures of every kind, high or low, as sharers of life, with equal rights to live their lives to the full, uninterfered with by any other creature.

More than that, the Buddha adjures man to practise active loving-kindness towards all beings, including animals. Societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals did not begin in the West. Long ago, in the days of the Emperor Asoka of India, as we find recorded in the durable characters on stone pillars in different spots in Northern India to this day. That great emperor ordered the establishment of hospitals for both man and beast in his great domains, and advised his subjects to practise kindly and considerate behaviour towards all living beings. Not only to abstain from hurting and killing animals, but actively to tend them when ill and guard them from hurt, was one of the edicts of the great Emperor Asoka, which he had learned to practise in his own life after he had learned the teachings of the Buddha on this point.

Another contribution to the world's welfare, was made by the Buddha when he condemned slavery in every shape and form. It was not William Wilberforce who was the pioneer of the movement for the abolition of slavery; it was very long before he did it. It was done 2,500 years ago when the Buddha began his teaching and laying down as a rule for the right manner of earning one's living, that one should not engage in any form of trafficking in human beings. Human beings might be engaged for service in the house and elsewhere, but it enjoined that they must be treated with as much consideration as the members of one's own family as regards their personal rights, and even invited to share in little treats on special occasions.

In the pacifist movement the Buddha also was the great pioneer. One of our Scriptures tells us of a case where two sets of people had come to the verge of warfare over the right to take water from a river. They were all ready to shed each other's blood and destroy their lives when the Buddha appeared on the scene and enquired what the dispute was about. They told him that it was about some water each claimed the right to take. The Buddha asked them which was the more precious fluid, blood or water? Of course, he was told 'blood!' 'So then', he said, 'you are going to spill and destroy what is more precious for that which is less precious. Is

that the conduct of sensible men? Go away together and see if you cannot compose your differences in some more reasonable way than this'. And the war was stopped through the Buddha's good advice and influence.

He had not a good word to say to 'conquerors'. 'Conquest engendereth hatred, for he who is conquered is wretched', he once said. And because the conquered is wretched he wants to get out of his wretchedness and plans and schemes to conquer in turn his conqueror; and so the whole miserable business of revenge and counter-revenge goes on and on without any end to it. Against this insanity the Buddha advised men to have sane reasonable ways and not to be like ravening beasts of prey who are guided by nothing but their unreasoning greed.

The Temperance Movement that has made such progress in the West was also a movement that had its beginning in the word of the Buddha, which enjoined on his followers to abstain from using intoxicating liquors because they cause mental distraction and dullness. The idea of hospitals is another great thing which the world owes to Buddha.

In connection with the establishment of hospitals there is a story about the Buddha. When he was wandering about teaching and preaching and visit-



ing various communities, he once found among them a monk, who was very ill, and no one caring for him and keeping him clean. The Buddha at once looked after him, and calling the Bhikkhus together told them that those who were ill must always be looked after by those who were well. 'Those who succour the sick, succour me', he said.

Another great service the Buddha did the world was to declare the absolute wrongness of all distinctions between man and man based on birth. In his own country, India, such distinctions were and still are, the foundation on which the whole social system of the land was, and still is, built, i.e., caste. In India every Hindu has his lot in life determined and fixed for him just by the fact that his father was of this or that or the other of the four great castes of the Brahmins or teachers, the warriors or soldiers, the merchants or traders, and the hand-workers or peasants.

The Buddha made the unheard-of, the hitherto unparalleled declaration for an Indian to make, that a man's birth had nothing whatever to do with what he was fitted to be taught in religion or in anything else. He asserted the absolute equality of all men, no matter how or where they had been born, in their right to an open path to the highest truth their mind could receive. That was a terribly shocking

thing to say to the upper classes of his countrymen. But he did it, and he was himself of the highest class as the castes were then classified, since his father was a king. And he not only said it, but he acted on it to the fullest extent. Once when thirsty, he asked for some water to drink from a peasant. The peasant looking at the noble features of the Prince, and his robe of a holy man, said timidly, : ‘Sir, I cannot give anything to drink or eat, I am not of high caste’. The Buddha replied: ‘Friend, I don’t ask for your caste, I ask for your water’.

So you see, Buddhism is a religion of understanding. To acquire understanding, right understanding of what we are, and where we are and what we have to do and then do it, that is the whole of the Buddhist teaching.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

## THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS DESTINY

*Extract from talk of above title*

Everyone reacts according to his own particular nature, therefore knowing how and why we differ in thought and outlook in life, we are able to make ample allowances for all type and are thus able to live more harmoniously with others. When we are young spiritually it is mostly physical and emotional pleasure that appeals to us and while we remain young in evolution we shall not grow out of this stage. When we grow older in evolution, literature and study appeal to us, and we gain happiness through our intellectual pursuits. Finally, when we grow older still, we realize that spiritual happiness is the highest because it is real and lasting. This is our goal.

We can increase that growth at will, just as we can develop our muscles with constant exercise. With practice we can grow towards perfections; intellectually through the attainment of perfect knowledge, emotionally through the control and use of the emotions, spiritually through the attainment of perfect realization, physically through the attainment of perfect health and control of the body. The lower our na-

ture is, to the greater extent our pleasure is dependent upon outside sources; the higher our nature is, the more influence we have over our happiness.

How can we develop or change ourselves? The word alchemy is made of two Arabic words, 'al kimia', the secret art of changing or fusion. There are two kinds of alchemy, physical and spiritual and in both, men are doing the same thing, trying to find out the same great secret, how to change base, worthless, common things into pure, valuable rare gold. The physical alchemist tries to change or transmit other metals into gold, while the spiritual alchemist tries to change the low human passions of anger, jealousy, hate, etc., into the pure gold of peace, kindness, love and generosity.

Many spiritual alchemists who have succeeded in changing all that was base, common and bad in their nature, into purity, goodness and love, are now willing to teach us how to do the same. They are so pure, so strong and so beautiful that we cannot but love and reverence them; they are the masters of wisdom, and what they have done we can do if only we persevere. They tell us that the only failure is in ceasing to try.

Just as at the end of a school year or term there is an examination, which some pupils succeed in

passing while others fail, so at the end of a term or period in the life of a person there is an examination in spiritual alchemy, and only those who are of pure gold in character pass. Those who fail have to come back to school and try again.

We have all come back to school, and each one of us is now busy at two kinds of work, reaping and sowing; reaping the result of what we have sown in our past lives, and sowing seeds of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, for reaping in our lives to come. According to the Buddhist Teaching the main purpose of life should be to learn how to pass the examination in spiritual alchemy, and thereby succeed in changing all that is base, common and bad in nature into purity, goodness and love, and thus to reach our goal, the goal of perfect peace, happiness and enlightenment.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

## WHAT KAMMA IS

*Kamma* is a Pali word meaning action. It is called Karma in Sanskrit. In its general sense *Kamma* means all good and bad actions. It covers all kinds of intentional actions whether mental, verbal or physical – thoughts, words and deeds. In its ultimate sense *Kamma* means all moral and immoral volition. The Buddha says: ‘Mental volition, O Bhikkhus, is what I call action (*Kamma*). Having volition one acts by body, speech and thought’; (Anguttara Nikaya III).

*Kamma* is neither fatalism nor a doctrine of pre-determination. The past influences the present but does not dominate it, for *Kamma* is past as well as present. The past and the present influence the future; the past is the background against which life goes on from moment to moment, the future is yet to be. Only the present moment exists, and the responsibility of using the present moment for good or for ill lies with each individual.

Every action produces an effect and it is a cause first and effect afterwards, we therefore speak of *Kamma* as ‘the law of cause and effect’. Throwing a stone, for example, is an action. The stone strikes a

glass window and breaks it. The break is the effect of the action of throwing, but is not the end. The broken window is now the cause of further trouble. Some of one's money will have to go to replace it, and one is thus unable to save the money or to buy with it what one wants for some other purpose, and the effect upon one is a feeling of disappointment. This may make one irritable, and if one is not careful one may allow the irritability to become the cause of doing something else which is wrong and so on. There is no end to the result of action, no end to *Kamma*, so we should be very careful with our action, so that their effect will be good. It is therefore necessary for us to do good, helpful action which will return to us in good *Kamma* and make us strong enough to start a better *Kamma*.

Throw a stone into a pond and watch the effect. There is a splash and a number of little rings appear round the place where it strikes. See how the rings grow wider and wider till they become too wide and too tiny for our eyes to follow. The little stone disturbs the water in the pond, but its work is not finished yet. When the tiny waves reach the edge of the pond, the water moves back till it pushes the stone that has disturbed it.

The effects of our actions come back to us just as the waves do to the stone, and as long as we do our

action with evil intention the new waves of effect come back to beat upon us and disturb us. If we are kind and keep ourselves peaceful, the returning waves of trouble will grow weaker and weaker till they die down, and our good *Kamma* will back to us in blessings. If we sow a mango seed, for instance, a mango tree will come up and bear mangoes, and if we sow a chili seed, a chili plant will grow and produce chilis. The Buddha says:

*According to the seed that's sown,  
So is the fruit ye reap therefrom,  
Doer of good will gather good.  
Doer of evil, evil reaps.  
Sown is the seed, and thou shalt taste  
The fruit thereof.*

(*Samyutta Nikaya Vol. 1*)

Everything that comes to us is right. When anything pleasant comes to us and makes us happy, we may be sure that our *Kamma* has come to show us that what we have done is right. When anything unpleasant comes to us, hurts us or makes us unhappy, our *Kamma* has come to show us our mistake. We must never forget that *Kamma* is always just. It neither loves nor hates, neither rewards nor punishes. It is never angry, never pleased, it is simply the law of cause and effect.

*Kamma* knows nothing about us. Does fire know us when it burns us? No. It is the nature of fire to



burn, to give out heat. If we use it properly it gives us light, cooks our food for us or burns anything we wish to get rid of, but if we use it wrongly it burns us and our property. Its work is to burn and our affair is to use it in the right way. We are foolish if we grow angry and blame it when it burns us because we have made a mistake.

There are inequalities and manifold destinies of men in the world. One is, for example, inferior and another superior. One perishes in infancy and another at the age of eighty or a hundred. One is sick and infirm, and another strong and healthy. One is handsome another ugly. One is brought up in luxury and another in misery. One is born a millionaire another a pauper. One is a genius and another an idiot.

What is the cause of the inequalities that exist in the world? Buddhist believe that this variation is the result of blind chance. Science itself is indeed all against the theory of 'Chance', in the world of the scientist all works in accordance with the laws of cause and effect. Neither can Buddhist believe that this unevenness of the world is due to a God-Creator.

One of the three divergent views that prevailed at the time of the Buddha was 'Whatsoever happiness

or pain or neutral feeling a person experiences, all that is due to the creation of a Supreme Deity'. (*Gradual Sayings*, 1). Commenting on this fatalistic view the Buddha said: 'So, then, owing to the creation of a Supreme Deity men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive, babblers, covetous, malicious, and perverse in view. Thus for those who fall back on the creation of a God as the essential reason, there is neither the desire to do, nor necessity to do this deed or abstain from that deed'. (ibid).

Referring to the naked ascetics who practised self-mortification, the Buddha said: 'If, O Bhikkhus, beings experience pain and happiness as the result of God's creation, then certainly these naked ascetics must have been created by a wicked God, since they are at present experiencing such terrible pain', (*Devadaha Sutta*, No. 101 *Majjhima Nikaya*, 11).

According to Buddhist the inequalities that exist in the world are due, to some extent, to heredity and environmental and, to a greater extent, to a cause or causes (*Kamma*) which are not only present but proximate or remote past. Man himself is responsible for his own happiness and misery. He creates his own heaven and hell. He is master of his own destiny, child of his past and parent of his future.

## *The Laws of Cosmic Order*

Although Buddhist teaches that *Kamma* is the chief cause of the inequalities in the world yet it does not teach fatalism of the doctrine of predestination, for it does not hold the view that everything is due to past actions. The law of cause and effect (*kamma*) is only one of the twenty-four causes described in Buddhist philosophy (see *Compendium of Philosophy*, p. 191), or one of the five orders (*Niyamas*) which are laws in themselves and operate in the universe. They are:

- 1     *Utu Niyama*, physical inorganic order, e.g. seasonal phenomena of winds, and rains. The unerring order of seasons, characteristic seasonal changes and events, causes of winds and rains, nature of heat, etc., belong this group.
- 2     *Bija Niyama*, order of germs and seeds (physical organic order), e.g., rice produced by rice seed, sugary taste from sugarcane or honey, peculiar characteristics of certain fruits, etc. This scientific theory of cells and genes and physical similarity of twins may be ascribed to this order.
- 3     *Kamma Niyama*, order of act and result, e.g., desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results.

As surely as water seeks its own level so does Kamma, given opportunity, produces its inevitable result, not in the form of a reward or punishment but as an innate sequence. This sequence of deed and effect is as natural and necessary as the way of the moon and stars.

- 4 *Dhamma Niyama*, order of the norm, e.g., the natural phenomena occurring at the advent of a Bodhisatta in his last birth. Gravitation and other similar laws of nature, the reason for being good, and so forth may be included in this group.
- 5 *Citta Niyama*, order of mind, of psychic law, e.g., processes of consciousness, arising and perishing of consciousness, constituents of consciousness, power of mind, etc. Telepathy, telesthesia, retro-cognition, premonition, clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, all psychic phenomena which are inexplicable to modern science are included in this class. (*Abhidhamma-vatara*).

These five orders embrace everything in the world and every mental physical phenomenon could be explained by them. They being laws in themselves, require no lawgiver and *Kamma* as such is only one of them.

## *Classification of Kamma*

*Kamma* is classified into four kinds according to the time at which results are produced. There is *Kamma* that ripens in the same lifetime, that ripens in the next life, and that ripens in successive births. These three types of are bound to produce results as a seed is to sprout. But for a seed to sprout, certain auxiliary causes such as soil, rain, etc., are required. In the same way for a *Kamma* to produce an effect, several auxiliary causes such as circumstances, surroundings, etc., are required. It sometimes happens that for want of such auxiliary causes *Kamma* does not produce any result. Such is called 'Ahoṣi- *Kamma*' or *Kamma* that is ineffective.

*Kamma* is also classified into another four kinds according to its particular function. There is Regenerative (*Janaka*) *Kamma* which conditions the future birth: Supportive (*Upatthambaka*) *Kamma* which assists or maintains the results of already-existing, Counteractive (*Upapilaka*) *Kamma* which suppresses or modifies the result of the reproductive *Kamma* and Destructive (*Upaghataka*) *Kamma* which destroys the force of existing *Kamma* and substitutes its own resultants.

There is another classification according to the priority of results. There is Serious or Weighty (*Garuka*) *Kamma* which produces its resultants in the

present life or in the next. On the moral side of this *Kamma* the highly refined mental states called Jhanas are weighty because they produce resultants more speedily than the ordinary unrefined mental states. On the opposite side, the five kinds of *immediately* effective serious crimes are weighty. These crimes are; matricide, parricide, the murder of an Arahanta (holy-one or perfect saint), the wounding of a Buddha and the creation of a schism in the Sangha.

Death-proximate (*Asanna*) *Kamma* is the action which one does at the moment before death either physically or mentally – mentally by thinking of one's own previous good or bad actions, or having good or bad thoughts. It is this *Kamma* which, if there is no weighty *Kamma*, determines the conditions of the next birth.

Habitual (*Acinna*) *Kamma* is the action which one constantly does. This *Kamma*, in the absence of death-proximate *Kamma*, produces and determines the next birth.

Reserved (*Katatta*) *Kamma* is the last in the priority of results. This is the unexpended *Kamma* of a particular being and it conditions the next birth if there is no habitual *Kamma* to operate.

A further classification of *Kamma* is according to the place in which the results are produced, namely:

- 1 Immoral *Kamma* which produces its effects in the plane of misery.
- 2 Moral *Kamma* which produces its effect in the plane of the world of desires.
- 3 Moral *Kamma* which produces its effects in the plane of form.
- 4 Moral *Kamma* which produces its effect in the plane of the formless.

Ten immoral actions and their effects:

(I) Immoral *Kamma* is rooted in greed (*Lobha*), anger (*Dosa*) and delusion (*Moha*).

There are ten immoral actions (*Kamma*) – namely, killing, stealing, unchastity (these three are caused by deed): lying, slandering, harsh language, frivolous talk (these four are caused by word): covetous, illwill and false view (these three are caused by mind).

Of these ten, killing means the destruction of any living being including animals of all kinds. To complete this offence of killing five conditions are necessary, viz: a being, consciousness that it is a being, intention of killing, effort and consequent death.

The evil effects of killing are: short life, diseasefulness, constant grief caused by separation from the loved and constant fear.

To complete the offence of stealing five conditions are necessary, viz: property of other people, consciousness that it is so, intention of stealing, effort and consequent removal. The effects of stealing are: poverty, wretchedness, unfulfilled desires and dependent livelihood.

To complete the offence of unchastity (sexual misconduct) three conditions are necessary, viz: intention to enjoy the forbidden object, effort and possession of the object. The effects of unchastity are: having many enemies, getting undesirable wives, birth as a woman or as an eunuch.

To complete the offence of slandering four conditions are necessary, viz: division of persons, intention to separate them, effort and communication. The effect of slandering is the dissolution of friendship without any sufficient cause.

To complete the offence of harsh language three conditions are necessary, viz: someone to be abused, angry thought and using abusive language. The effects of harsh language are; being detested by others although blameless, and harsh voice.



To complete the offence of frivolous talk two conditions are necessary, viz: the inclination towards frivolous talk and its narration. The effects of frivolous talk are; disorderliness of the bodily organs and unacceptable speech.

To complete the offence of covetousness (*abijha*) two conditions are necessary, viz: another's property and strong desire for it, saying 'would this property were mine'. The effect of covetousness is unfulfillment of one's wishes.

To complete the offence of illwill (*Vyapada*) two conditions are necessary, viz: another being and the intention of doing harm. The effects of illwill are: ugliness, various diseases and detestable nature.

False view (*Micchaditthi*) means seeing things wrongly without understanding what they truly are. To complete this false view two conditions are necessary, viz: perverted manner in which an object is viewed and the misunderstanding of it according to that view. The effects of false view are: base attachment, lack of wisdom, dull wit, chronic diseases and blameworthy ideas. (Expositor Pt. 1, p. 128).

(II) Good *Kamma* which produces its effects in the plane of desires:

There are ten moral actions – namely, generosity (*Dana*), morality (*Sula*), meditation (*Bhavana*), reverence (*Apacayana*), service (*Veyyavacca*), transference of merit (*Pattidana*), rejoicing in others' merit (*Pattanumodana*), hearing the doctrine (*Dhammasavana*), expounding the doctrine (*Dhammadesana*), and forming correct views (*Ditthijukamma*).

'Generosity' yields wealth. 'Morality' causes one to be born in noble families in states of happiness. 'Meditation' gives birth in planes of form and formless planes, and helps to gain higher knowledge and emancipation.

'Reverence' is the cause of noble parentage. 'Service' is the cause of a large retinue. 'Transference of merit' causes one to be able to give in abundance in future birth. 'Rejoicing in others' merit' is productive of joy wherever one is born. Both hearing and expounding the Doctrine are conducive to wisdom.

(III) Good *Kamma* which produces its effect in the planes of form. It is of five types which are purely mental, and done in the process of meditation, viz:

- 1 The first state of *Jhana* which has five constituents: initial application, sustained application, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness of the mind.

- 2 The second state of *Jhana* which occurs together with sustained application, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness of the mind.
- 3 The third state of *Jhana* which occurs together with rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness of the mind.
- 4 The fourth state of *Jhana* which occurs together with happiness and one-pointedness of the mind.
- 5 The fifth state of *Jhana* which occurs together with equanimity, and one-pointedness of the mind.

(IV) Good *Kamma* which produces its effect in the formless planes. It is of four types which are also purely mental and done in the process of meditation, viz:

- 1 Moral consciousness, dwelling in the infinity of space.
- 2 Moral consciousness dwelling in the infinity of consciousness.
- 3 Moral consciousness dwelling on nothingness.
- 4 Moral consciousness wherein perception is so extremely subtle that it cannot be said whether it is or is not.

## *Free-Will*

*Kamma*, as has been stated above, is not fate, is not irrevocable destiny, Nor is one bound to reap all that one has sown in just proportion. The actions (*kamma*) of men are not absolutely irrevocable and only a few of them are so. If, for example, one fires off a bullet out of a rifle, one cannot call it back or turn it aside from its mark. But if, instead of a lead or iron ball through the air, it is an ivory ball on a smooth green board that one sets moving with a billiard cue, one can send after it and at it another ball in the same way, and change its course. Not only that, if one is quick enough, and one had not given it too great an impetus, one might even get round to the other side of the billiard-table, and send against it a ball which would meet it straight in the line of its course and bring it to a stop on the spot. With one's later action with the cue, one modifies, or even in favourable circumstances, entirely neutralizes one's earlier action. It is much the same way that *Kamma* operates in the broad stream of general life. There, too, one's actions (*Kamma*) of a later day modify the effects of one's action (*Kamma*) of a former day. If this were not so, what possibility would there ever be of a man's getting free from all *Kamma* forever. It would be perpetually self-continuing energy that could never come to an end.

Man has, therefore, a certain amount of free-will and there is almost every possibility to mould his life or to modify his actions. Even a most vicious person can by his own free-will and effort become the most virtuous person. One may at any moment change for the better or for the worse. But everything in the world including man himself is dependent on conditions, and without conditions nothing whatsoever can arise or enter into existence. Man therefore has only a certain amount of free-will and not absolute free-will. According to Buddhist philosophy, everything, mental or physical, arises in accordance with laws and conditions. If it were not so, there would reign chaos and blind chance. Such a thing, however, is impossible and if it would be otherwise, all laws of nature which modern science has discovered would be powerless.

The real essential nature of action (*Kamma*) of man is mental. When a given thought has arisen in one's mind a number of times, there is a definite tendency to recurrence of that thought.

When a given act has been performed a number of times, there is a definite tendency to the repetition of that act. Thus each act, mental or physical, tends to constantly produce its like and be in turn produced. If a man thinks a good thought, speaks a good word, does a good deed, the effect upon him is

to increase the tendencies to goodness present in him, is to make a better man. If on the contrary, he does a bad deed in thought, in speech or in action, he has strengthened in himself his bad tendencies, he has made himself a worse man. Having become a worse man, he will gravitate to the company of worse men in the future, and incur all the unhappiness of varying kinds that attends life in such company. On the other hand, the man of a character that is continually growing better, will naturally tend to the companionship of the good, and enjoy all the pleasantness and comforts and freedom from the ruder shocks of human life which such society connotes.

In the case of a cultured man, even the effect of a greater evil may be minimized, while the lesser evil of an uncultured may produce its effect to the maximum according to the favourable and unfavourable conditions. The Buddha says:

‘Here, O Bhikkhus, a certain person is not disciplined in body, is not disciplined in morality, is not disciplined in mind, is not disciplined in wisdom, is with little good and less virtue, and lives painfully in consequence of trifles. Even a trivial evil act committed by such a person will lead him to a state of misery.

‘Here, O Bhikkhus, a certain person is disciplined in body, is disciplined in morality, is disciplined in mind, is disciplined in wisdom, is with much good, is a great being and lives without limitation. A similar evil act committed by such a person is expiated in this life itself and not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), to say nothing of a great one.

‘It is as if, O Bhikkhus, a man were to put a lump of salt into a small cup of water. What do you think, O Bhikkhus? Would now the small amount of water in this cup become saltish and undrinkable?’ ‘Yes, Lord’. ‘And why?’ ‘Because, Lord, there was very little water in the cup and so it becomes saltish and undrinkable by this lump of salt.’

‘Suppose, O Bhikkhus, a man were to put a lump of salt into the river Ganges. What think you, O Bhikkhus? Would now the river of Ganges become saltish and undrinkable by this lump of salt?’

‘Nay, indeed, Lord’.

‘And why?’

‘Because, Lord, the mass of water in the river Ganges is great, and so it would not become saltish and undrinkable.’

‘In exactly the same way, O Bhikkhus, we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed which brings him a state misery; or again, O Bhikkhus, we may have the case of another person who does the same trivial misdeed, and expiates it in the present life. Not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), to say nothing of a great one.

‘We may have, O Bhikkhus, the case of a person who is cast into a prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence; or again, O Bhikkhus, we may have the case of a person who is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

‘Who, O Bhikkus, is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence? Whereever, O Bhikkus, anyone is poor, needy and indigent: he, O Bhikkus, is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

‘Who, O Bhikkus, is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence? Whenever, O Bhikkus, anyone is rich, wealthy and affluent: he, O Bhikkus, is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

‘In exactly the same way, O Bhikkhus, we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed



which brings him into a state of misery; or, again, O Bhikkhus, we have the case of another person who does the same trivial deed, and expiates it in the present life. Not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), to say nothing of a great one'. (*Anguttara Nikaya*, Part 1).

### *Lessons Taught by Kamma*

The more we understand the law of *Kamma*, the more we see how careful we must be of our acts, words and thoughts, and how responsible we are to our fellow beings. Living in the light of this knowledge, we learn certain lessons from the doctrine of *Kamma*.

#### 1 PATIENCE

Knowing that the Law is our great helper if we live by it, and that no harm can come to us if we work with it, knowing also that it blesses us just at the right time, we learn the grand lesson of patience, not to get excited, and that impatience is a check to progress. In suffering, we know that we are paying debts, and we learn, if we are wise, not to create more suffering for the future. In rejoicing, we are thankful for its sweetness; and learn, if we are wise, to be still better. Patience brings forth peace, success, happiness and security.

## 2 CONFIDENCE

The Law being just, perfect, it is not possible for an understanding person to be uneasy about it. If we are uneasy and have no confidence, it shows exactly that we have not grasped the reality of the law. We are really quite safe beneath its wings, and there is nothing to fear in all that wide universe except our own misdeeds. The Law makes man stand on his own feet and rouses his self-confidence. Confidence strengthens, or rather deepens, our peace and happiness and makes us comfortable, courageous; wherever we go the Law is our protector.

## 3 SELF-RELIANCE

As we in the past have caused ourselves to be what we now are, so by what we do now will our future be determined. A knowledge of this fact and that the glory of the future is limitless, gives us great self-reliance, and takes away that tendency to appeal for external help, which is really no help at all. 'Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another' says the Buddha.

## 4 RESTRAINT

Naturally if we realize that the evil we do will return to strike us, we shall be very careful lest we do or say or think something that is not good, pure and true. Knowledge of *Kamma* will restrain us from wrong-doing for others' sakes as well as for our own.

## 5 POWER

The more we make the doctrine of *Kamma* a part of our lives, the more power we gain, not only to direct our future, but to help our fellow beings more effectively. The practice of good *Kamma*, when fully developed, will enable us to overcome evil and limitations, and destroy all the fetters that keep us from our goal, Nibbana.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

## WHAT IS DEATH?

According to Buddhism death is 'the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon'. It is not the complete annihilation of the being, for although the organic life has ceased, the kammic force which hitherto actuated it is not destroyed. Our forms are only the outward manifestations of the invisible kammic force. This force carries with it all characteristics which usually lie latent but may rise to the surface at any moment. When the present form perishes another form takes its place according to a good or a bad volitional impulse (*kamma* that was the most powerful) at the moment before death.

At death the kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body, and the passing away of the present consciousness conditions the coming into being of a fresh one in another birth. The stream of consciousness flows on. It constantly flows on like a river 'receiving from the tributary streams of sense constant accretions to its flood, and ever dispensing to the world around it the thought-stuff it has gathered up by the way'. (Compendium of Philosophy, p. 12). The continuity of flux at death is unbroken in point of

time, and there is no breach in the stream of consciousness and so there is no room whatever for an intermediate stage between this life and the next or between any two lives. The only difference between the passing of one ordinary thought moment (of one unit of consciousness) to the rebirth-consciousness, is that in the former case the change is invisible and in the latter case a marked perceptible death is visible. Rebirth takes place immediately.

It may be asked: is the place always ready to receive this rebirth? The answer is: as a point in the ground is always ready to receive the falling stone, so there is always an appropriate place to receive the rebirth which is conditioned by the natural law of *kamma*.

Death being a momentary incident, rebirth is immediate. Some years ago it might have been doubtful about such rapidity in the transmission of the life-force; but in these days of scientific methods of investigation we know of such rapid transmission of energy in wireless telegraphy and telephony. Solid walls do not prevent the radio waves from reaching an appropriate receiving set within a room. The transmission of the life-force from one existence to another may be compared to a receiving set that responds to the particular wave-length sent out from a distance of thousands of miles. It is more like the

tuning-fork which vibrates in response to a particular note of particular wave-length in the musical scale. So long as a musical note sets up vibrations in the air, so long will some tuning-fork that is responsive to that particular note, vibrate in unison. When the vibrations of the musical note cease, the tuning-fork will cease to vibrate to that note. And so it is with restless kammic force, or life-force, which continues to bring about births through appropriate germ-plasmas or other life-conditions till that restless kammic force ceases to exist in the peace of *Nibbana*.

*Is the new being the same as the previous one?*

In the words of the late *Bhikkhu Silacara*

This new being which is the present manifestation of the stream of *kamma*-energy is not the same as, and has no identity with the previous one in its line; the aggregate that makes up its composition being different from, and having no identity with, those that make up the being of its predecessor. And yet it is not an entirely different being, since it has the same stream of *kamma*-energy, though modified perchance just by having shown itself in that last manifestation, which is now making its presence known in the sense perceptible world as the new being'.

If we were to obtain a quick motion picture of any particular individual's life from his birth to his death, the most striking fact that would attract our attention would be the changefulness that we should find running right through the series of picture. The infant changes to the child, the child to the adult, and the adult to the decrepit old person who collapses to death. This change goes on in every part of the individual's body; and not only in the body but in the mind also. So that any adult individual who surveys his own existence will realize that the child that was, is now no more. That child had a different body, in size as well as in form, different likes and dislikes, and different aspirations. That child is almost a stranger to the present adult individual. And yet the adult individual is responsible for whatever he has done in his childhood because there is continuity (or identity) in the process of life-force from childhood to manhood, as a child becomes a man.

In exactly the same way the new being has the same stream of kammic energy, or life-force, as its predecessor, so it is responsible for whatever its predecessor has done. This new being has as much identity with the previous one as the adult individual of today has with the child that was; nothing less and nothing more.

This is well expressed in the *Milinda Panha*. King Milinda asked Arahant Nagasena whether he who

is reborn remains the same or becomes another. 'Neither the same nor another', was the answer he received.

'Suppose, O King, that a man were to light a lamp, would it burn the night through?'

'Yes, it might do so, Venerable Sir'.

'Now, is it the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, Sir, and in the second?'

'No, Venerable Sir'.

'Or the same that burns in the second watch and in the third?'

No, Venerable Sir'.

'Then is there one lamp in the first watch, and another in the second, and another in the third?'

'No, the light comes from the same lamp all the night through'.

'Just so, O King, is the continuity of a person or a thing maintained. One passes away, another comes into being; and the rebirth is, as it were, simultaneous. Thus, neither as the same nor as another does a man go on to the last phase of his self-consciousness'.



Asked for another illustration, Arahanta Nagasena gives that of milk which, once it is taken from the cow, after a lapse of time, turns first to curds, and then from curds to butter, and then from butter to ghee. Just as it would not be correct to say that the milk was the same thing as the curds, or the butter, or the ghee, but that they are produced out of it, so he points out the continuity of a person or a thing as being maintained in the same way.

There is also the illustration of a wave of water in a lake or the ocean. A certain mass of water is raised up as a wave. As the wave passes on, or seems to pass, a moment or so later it is not the same mass of water that forms the wave, but a different mass altogether. And yet we speak of the wave 'passing on'.

The present being, present existence, is conditioned by how one faced circumstances in the last, and in all past existences. One's present position in character and circumstances is the result of all that one has been up to the present; but what one will be in the future depends on what one does not in the present. The true Buddhist regards death as a momentary incident between one life and its successor, and views its approach with calmness. His only concern is that his future should be such that the conditions of that life may provide him with better opportunities for perfecting himself. Holding, as he

does, the great doctrine of *kamma*, he perceives that it is within his power to alter or modify the quality of the life force that continues in the next birth, and that his future environment will depend entirely on what he does, upon how he behaves, in this and in his previous lives.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

## HOW REBIRTH TAKES PLACE

Every birth is conditioned by a past good or bad kamma (action) which predominates at the moment of death. Our forms are only the outward manifestations of the invisible kammic force, and this force carries with it all our characteristics which usually lie latent, but may rise to the surface at unexpected moments. The death of a person is merely the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon, the present form perishing and another taking its place in accordance with the thought that was most powerful at the death moment.

One unit of consciousness perishes only to give birth to another, persistently flowing on like a river. When a person is about to die, no renewed physical function recurs as from the seventeenth thought moment reckoned backwards from the point of death. The material qualities of the body which are produced by kamma, temperature, mind and nutriment from food, arise no more, this critical stage being comparable to the flickering of a lamp just before it becomes extinguished. Now to this dying man one of three things appear very vividly before his mind's eye, namely, kamma, kamma nimitta or gati nimitta.

## *Kamma*

By kamma is meant some action of his, whether good or bad; and if it is his **WEIGHTY KAMMA**, which is one of the four kinds of kamma, or action, that condition the future birth, such weighty kamma will certainly produce results in this life or the next. Weighty kamma can be good or bad; such a thing as jhanic practice, for example, being good, and killing, which is bad, especially so in the case of the most serious crimes involving matricide, patricide, the murder of an arahant or the mere wounding even of a Buddha. As said above, weighty kamma such as that just mentioned, will for certain produce results in this life or the next.

If a dying man has no such weighty kamma as the object of his dying thought he may take an action, kamma, done immediately prior to the death moment; this is known as **asanna**, **DEATH PROXIMATE KAMMA**. Owing to the great part it plays in determining the future birth, much importance is attached to the type of object of the final dying thought moment; and the custom of reminding the dying man of his good deeds, and making him do good deeds on his death-bed, still prevails in Burma, Ceylon and other Buddhist countries.

Sometimes a bad person may die happily and receive a good birth, if fortunately he remembers or

does a good act at the last moment, but although he enjoys a good rebirth this does not mean he will be exempt from the effects of the evil deeds he performed during his previous lifetime. On occasions, a good person may die unhappily but suddenly remembering an evil act of his, or by harbouring some unpleasant thought perchance compelled by unfavourable circumstances. These, however, are exception cases, for as a rule the last thought moment is conditioned by the general conduct of a person. In any event it is always advisable to remind the dying person of his good deeds, and to turn his attention away from all worldly bonds and worries.

HABITUAL KAMMA is next in priority of effect. It is the type of action that one habitually performs and remembers, and these habits, whether good or bad, become second nature as it were, tending to form the character of a person. In one's leisure moments one frequently reverts to a characteristic type of thought; a miser, for instance, will constantly be thinking of his money and may not be able to detach his mind from his cherished possessions; a social worker will be interested in his social activities; a spiritual adviser will always be intent on his social work. Thus each one of us may be dominated by our habitual doings, especially at our death moment.

In the absence of these as objects of the dying thought moment, some casual act is present from the accumulated reserves of the endless past. Each being has his reserve fund, so to speak, of CUMULATIVE KAMMA which may at any time become the object of the dying thought moment.

So one these four actions, kammas, naturally appears very vividly before the mind's eyes of the dying man, i.e., weighty kamma, death proximate kamma, habitual kamma, cumulative kamma.

### *Kamma Nimitta*

In the case of kamma nimitta the object of the dying thought moment is that thing appearing in the form of a sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or idea which has been dominantly associated with the performance of a particular kamma, such as knives in the case of a butcher, patients in the case of a doctor, an object of worship in the case of a devotee, etc.

### *Gati Nimitta*

This means that the object of the dying thought moment takes the form of some sign of the place where the dying man will take rebirth, a thing which frequently happens to dying persons. Symbols of one's destiny may be forests, mountainous regions, mother's womb, celestial mansions, etc.

When these indications of the future birth occur, and they are bad, they can be turned into good. This is done by influencing the thoughts of the dying man so that his good thoughts may now act as good proximate kamma, and counteract the influence of the bad kamma which would otherwise affect his subsequent birth.

Taking kamma, kamma nimitta or gati nimitta for its object, the dying man's thought process reaches the actual death consciousness, the final conscious state in his life. With the cessation of this final conscious state, death actually occurs. Death is merely the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon, it is not the complete annihilation of the being. Although the organic life has ceased, the force which hitherto actuated it is not destroyed; just as electric light is only the outward visible manifestation of invisible electric energy, even so are we only the outward manifestation of invisible kammic energy. When the electric bulb breaks, the light is extinguished but the current remains and light again becomes manifest upon concurrence with another suitable bulb. In the same way the kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical vehicle.

The final conscious state in a life that is ceasing, conditions the immediately succeeding conscious

state will be occurring in and as the very first state of consciousness in the new life, and so the process continues. The succeeding consciousness inherits all the previous one. However, to the extent that it inherits the same past casual conditions, neither can it be said to be entirely different.

The stream of consciousness flows on, the transition of the flux being so instantaneous that there is no room whatsoever for an intermediate state. According to Tibetan Buddhist works, there is an intermediate state where beings remain for some days or for some weeks, or until the forty-ninth day; and according to Theosophical teachings, between every two lives we have a beautiful holiday in heaven, called Devachan, in which we think over all that happened to us in our previous life and digest all our experiences gained in our past lives.

According to Buddhism the continuity of flux at death is unbroken in point of time, and there is no breach in the stream of consciousness. The only difference between the passing of one thought moment to another, and of the dying thought moment to the rebirth consciousness, is that in the former case the change is invisible and in the latter case a marked perceptible death is visible. Rebirth is instantaneous.



You may ask, 'Is the place always ready to receive this rebirth?' The answer is that in the same way as a point in the ground is always ready to receive the falling stone, so is there always an appropriate place to receive the rebirth which is conditioned by kamma.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

## WOMEN'S POSITION IN BUDDHISM

In pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was, on the whole, low and without honour. A daughter was nothing but a source of anxiety to her parents, for it was a disgrace to them, and inauspicious as well if they could not marry her; yet, if they could, they were often nearly ruined by their lavish expenditure on the wedding festivities.

The size of the dowries expected of the parents of a daughter, in order to procure her settlement in marriage was of great significance and probably the chief factor in such arranged marriages, any prospective husband really marrying for this end. Following marriage the life of the wife was spent in complete subservience to her husband and his parents, and she was allowed little authority in the home and no part in public activities. If widowed, she became the possession of her father again, or of her son.

During the Buddhist epoch there was a change and women came to enjoy more equality, greater respect and authority than ever accorded them hitherto. The exclusive supremacy of man began to give way

before the increasing emancipation of women. This was accelerated by the innate intelligence of women themselves, until it was acknowledged that they were silently claiming to be responsible, rational creatures with intelligence and will. It became possible for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddha's Teaching, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of the women's powers of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance. Thus they ceased to regard women as inferiors approximating in degree more nearly to the animals than to themselves, and on the contrary, became more acutely aware of the resemblances between men and women.

The Buddha gave his Teaching to both men and women, and he gave talks to householders and their wives. The women set fine examples in conduct and intelligence, while the men, for their part, appreciated the Buddha's Teaching in the widening of the field of women's activities. Thus the tide turned, with the position of women becoming not only bearable but honourable; they were acknowledged at last to be capable of working as a constructive force in the society of the day.

The birth of a girl child was therefore no longer met with despair, for girls had ceased to be despised and looked upon as encumbrances. They were al-

lowed a good deal of liberty, and matrimony was not held before them as the end and aim of their existence. They were no longer regarded as shameful if they did not marry, and if they did they were neither hastened off to an early child-marriage, nor bound to accept the man of their parent's selection.

As a wife a woman was no more a mere household drudge, but had considerable authority in the home and ranked as her husband's helpmate, companion and guardian in matters both temporal and spiritual; she became regarded as his equal, and worthy of respect. As a mother she was definitely honoured and revered, and her position was unassailable. As a widow she could go on her way unabused, free from any suspicion of ill-omen, no longer excluded from domestic activities, considered capable of inheriting property and certainly of managing it. Under Buddhism, more than ever before she was an individual in command of her life. As a spinster, wife, or widow, she had rights and duties not limited to childbearing and became an integral part of society.

### *Philosophical Aspect*

Being primarily a spiritually creative being, man's course is to grow towards a state of human perfection. This he does through the process of rebirth, returning to earth for many lives, sometimes as a

man and sometimes as a woman; experience in bodies of both sexes being necessary to evoke his powers to the full. The circumstance of sex, as with other circumstances is governed by the Law of Cause and Effect, and gradually, as the individual comes to understand the working of this law, he is able, with its help, to direct his own life.

Thus in their spiritual essence, man and woman are the same. Their differences are the result of their different evolution as individuals, emphasized or lessened by the sex of the body used in any particular life. As man and woman, different but complementary, neither being inferior to the other, they are co-operators. In the community man and woman each contribute characteristic qualities to the integral whole, and the well-being of society depends the recognition of this and of their different needs, nature and contributions.

Thus consciousness is sexless. Spiritually man evolves through the bodies of either sex, being both masculine and feminine, and retaining within himself the essence of experience both as man and as woman. The perfected and spiritual man is a true androgyne, neither one sex nor the other in essence, although the body may be male or female. So when the individual has experienced many lives the male and female sides of his nature tend to come

together. Some more highly developed human beings are already beginning to foreshadow in their mental make-up that higher and balanced hermaphroditism of perfect humanity.

We can see, therefore, that although the wearing of a female body enjoins certain definite functions on the physical plane, and although the nature of the physical body modifies to some extent the emotions and mind, yet the spiritual individual may be deeply concerned with activities in which the characteristics of the opposite sex are dominant. Therefore it is unjust to limit either man or woman to a certain set of activities merely on account of the sex of the body.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

## BUDDHIST BURMA

Burma is a long tadpoled-shaped land, hedged in by long mountain ranges, lying between India in the west and China and Siam in the east, with its head in the central Asian plateau. The Irrawaddy flowing through the length of the country, is Burma's main river system, and it is to Burma what the Nile is to Egypt. The economic importance of the Irrawaddy lies in the fact that it enables the development of an exchange between the fertile plains of lower Burma and the regions of upper Burma, from which oils, tea, tobacco, and pulses are sent via river boats. The size of Burma equals that of France, and it is a country of great potential wealth, being rich in mineral oils, rubies and reserves of valuable timbers like teak. The prosperity of the country, however depends chiefly on agriculture, rice being the main crop, and 67 per cent of the population of twenty million was engaged in agriculture according the census returns of 1931.

For four months of the year there is smiling sunshine, which is followed by the rainy season when the rain is incessant for about four months, and if you live in small towns and villages in lower Burma you could be annoyed by the croaking of frogs.

Then comes the winter, or cool season, with delightful weather for another four months. In the Shan states and Northern Burma we have a temperate climate that is both healthy and invigorating, and the scenery of that of Burma has all the beauty of the Highlands and glens of Scotland in the spring and summer months. Of the inhabitants, I have heard of many Europeans who have visited Burma speak about the friendliness, kindness and hospitality of the Burmese people.

### *Married Life*

In Burma there are no castes and all the people are on the same level, although some of course may be richer than the others and some may be poor, but there is none so poor that he cannot get plenty to eat and drink. Burmese women are as free as European women, and the laws regarding marriage, inheritance and divorce are very much the same for both men and women. Marriage in Burma is a religious ceremony and it is conducted by a professional layman, not by a monk, although the monk advises the bride and bridegroom how to be a good wife and a good husband in accordance with Buddhist teachings. This is what he generally says to the bride. The purpose of marriage is to have someone as a fitting partner, not only for sexual love but also for mutual help. To accomplish this purpose and so live happily together, a good wife studies her



husband's nature and acts in accordance with it so that she may be congenial to him. She neither argues with him over trivial things, nor annoys him by interfering in matters in which he may be interested but in which she is not concerned. Being fully aware of her husband's desires she will get him what he needs before his desires are expressed, and she is never happy unless she makes him happy as well, if need be sacrificing her own personal comfort to make him as comfortable as possible she takes the responsibility of the household work, and keeps everything in order and ready for him so that he may be able to relax and refresh his mind and body in the intervals of leisure, without having to bother about domestic affairs after his day's work for their daily bread. She does not waste the money he earns but uses it wisely. She is a nurse to her husband in times of sickness, a companion in health and wealth, a counsellor in difficulties, and she is faithful to him in whatever position he may be.

The monk's advice to the bridegroom is more or less the same as that to the bride.

A girl does not change her name when she marries, her name remains the same, and her property remains her own. Marriage confers no power upon the husband over his wife's property, whether it be property she brings to the marriage or is inherited by her subsequently, although usually property ac-

quired after marriage is held jointly. Both names are frequently used in business and legal proceedings, and it is in fact usual for both husband and wife to sign all deeds they may have occasion to execute, but by law the wife is absolute mistress of her own property and person. The Burmese wife has a keen sense of what things she can do best herself and what things she should leave to her husband: long experiences has taught her that there are certain matters she should not interfere with, and she is aware of the fact that this has been proved by experience and is not just based on a mere command.

### *Women*

Weaving is usually done by the women. Within nearly every house there is a loom on which the wife or daughter of the house weaves for home use or for sale, although many men do also weave. Women also work in the fields, doing light work such as planting and weeding, the heavy work such as ploughing being done by men. The Westerner may perhaps think it curious to see women carrying burdens on their heads, whereas men carry them on their shoulders.

The great occupation of women is trading, and nearly all the retail trade is in the hands of women. This trade is carried on almost exclusively in ba-

zaars, every town running a bazaar from six until ten o'clock each morning. In outlying districts without a nearby town, the bazaar is held in one village on one day and in another the next day, and is usually held in a public building specially erected for the purpose. The great bazaar in Mandalay is one of the most interesting places of the city, consisting of a series of enormous sheds with iron roofs, each trade having one or more sheds to itself, and the cloth and silk sellers there are nearly all girls and women. In the provisional bazaars it is much the same: just as the men farm their own land, the women own their own businesses and are not saleswomen for others, but traders on their own account.

With the exception of the silk and cloth branches of the trade their occupation does not interfere with the home life, because the bazaar lasts only four hours, so a woman has ample time for her home duties when her daily visit to the bazaar is over, she is never kept away all day in shops and factories. Her home life is always the centre of her life, she could not neglect it for any other. This custom that nearly every woman has a little business of her own has a far reaching effect on the mentality of the Burmese woman., it broadens her views, it teaches her how to know her own strengths and weaknesses, and how to make the best of either. All the same, with all their freedom, girls are carefully

looked after by their mothers, and wives by their husbands, and they delight in observing the limits which experience has indicated to them. There is a funny story which will illustrate what I mean.

After living in Burma for some years an English officer returned to England where he married, subsequently coming out again to Burma with his wife. They settled down in upper Burma, but his business very frequently obliged him to go on tour a long distance from his home, and he would be absent for ten days at a time or longer. The first time he was thus obliged to go and leave his wife behind alone in the house, he gave careful instructions to his servant who was a Burman, and who had been with him for some years. The officer said to him, 'The mistress has only just come to Burma and does not know the ways of the country, nor what to do, so you must see to it that no harm of any kind comes to her while I am away'. The officer was absent for about a fortnight, and he returned he was very pleased to find that all was well. However, his wife complained, she said, 'It has been very dull while you were away, no one came to see me; of all the officers here, not one ever called, and I only saw two or three ladies, but not a single man'. Surprised, the officer asked his servant what could be the reason, 'Didn't anyone come to call?' 'Oh yes', the man replied, 'many gentlemen came to call, most of them were officers of the regiment, but I

told them that the master was out and the mistress couldn't see them. I sent them all away' At the club that evening the officer was asked by his friends why no man was allowed to see his wife during his absence. All his friends were laughing at him, but he and his wife laughed most of all at the careful observance of Burmese etiquette by the servant, for the Burmese people do not think it nice for a wife to receive men friends during her husband's absence.

### *Noblesse Oblige*

One of the most noticeable things throughout the bazaars of Burma is the fact that all the beef butchers are outcast natives of India. No Burman will kill a cow or bullock, and no Burman will sell its meat. During the Burmese kings' time any man found even in possession of beef was liable to severe punishment; non, not even a foreigner, was allowed to kill for beef, and this law was very strictly observed. Ten years after the British occupation of Burma, there ceased to be a law against the actual sale of beef, yet even now no respectable Burman will kill or sell beef. The taking of life is against Buddhist principles, and neither for sport nor for revenge, nor for food, may any animal or any living being be killed. In the main this precept is exceptionally well kept, but there are of course a few exceptions, although they are known and regarded as breaches of the law, for the law itself knows no exceptions.

Some people eat fish, but the fisherman is not an outcast from decent society. In the villages fowls are kept, but they are certainly not for food.

There is a story told about a Burmese woman who married an Englishman. He kept ducks, and he bought a number of ducklings which he had fattened for the table. One day in his absence his wife went up the river to visit some friends and took the ducks with her. She said she could not bear them being killed, so she distributed them amongst her friends, one here, one there, where she was sure they would be well treated and not killed. When she returned she was quite pleased with her success.

Instead of clubs and public houses, there are rest houses erected by generous rich people for public accomodation where anyone can stay for a certain number of days, and where any meeting, whether social, political or religious, can be had free of charge with the permission of the owners. The number of pagodas in Burma is so great that it is known to foreigners as a 'pagoda land'. Pagodas are places of Buddhist public veneration where religious ceremonies take place, and where there is a pagoda there are a number of rest houses around it for the special use of pilgrims and travellers; though nowadays they are used as social meeting places where people spend their leisure hours play-

ing games or listening to public speakers who discourse on all kinds of subjects.

A few clubs have been established by some modern people for social purposes, but they are not so popular as the rest houses because of the admission fees for the rent and other expenditure. 'Not to take any intoxicating liquor' is one of the five precepts which every Buddhist should observe, anyone breaking this precept is regarded as a person of bad character; so the Burmese, being Buddhist, are for that reason against public houses where intoxicating drinks or drugs are sold, and where drinking is encouraged.

In their leisure hours, therefore, people go to the rest houses, where, as already mentioned, parties and amusements are arranged and social meetings are held. On holidays falling on festival days they go to famous pagodas by way of pilgrimage, and the trustees of the pagodas arrange free accommodation for them in the rest houses, giving them food where necessary and also provide them with entertainment. As there is no class or caste system in Burma, during such festival days people from different places mix freely with one another, and apart from social meetings and speeches they arrange dancing, music or variety entertainment by persons chosen from amongst the visitors. Notwithstanding

the existence of the rest houses, most people delight in inviting their friends and relatives to their homes for long periods if they live far apart, or for a few hours if they live in the same village.

### *Religious Life*

Buddhists hold that Buddhism is not a religion in the generally accepted sense of the word, for it is not a system of faith and worship. In Buddhism mere belief is replaced by confidence based on knowledge, known in Pali as *saddha*; and the confidence in the Buddha, of a follower, is like that of a sick man in his physician, or that of a student in his teacher. A Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha, because it was he who discovered the path of deliverance; and in the same way that the sick man should use the remedy prescribed for his cure, so the pupil should study what his teacher tell him in order to become a learned man, and a Buddhist who possess confidence should follow the Buddha's instructions to gain deliverance. A Buddhist does not seek refuge in the Buddha in the hope that he might be save by the Enlightened One's personal salvation, for it is not within the power of a Buddha to wash away the impurities of others. One can neither purify nor defile another, one may be instrumental, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our own progress or decline.



Every religious ceremony and almost all social ceremonies are conducted by a monk, and at every religious ceremony the Metta Sutta (the discourse on loving-kindness) is recited. The monk emphasizes the importance of metta, the word metta meaning a great deal more than goodwill, loving-kindness, harmlessness and sympathy. It is not a mere feeling, but implies the doing of charitable deeds; neither is it a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but essential work for the hand to execute. In the Metta Sutta the Buddha said, 'As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, loves and protect her child, her only child, so let a man cultivate love without measure'. This is the model of what man should be to man, it is an appeal to every mind and every heart, a call to service which may not be denied. Consider a mother's love, is it mere loving-kindness, does a mother merely radiate goodwill in the upbringing of her child? Is it not a love that sanctifies even the most worthless, whether deformed, blind or diseased? Even so must metta go hand in hand with helpfulness and a willingness to forego self-interest in order to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. Almost all the virtues comprise metta; unselfishness, charity and active loving care for others, the charity which no ingratitude can turn away. Metta is not simply brotherly feeling, but active benevolence, a love which expresses and fulfils itself in lively solicitude and active ministry to the welfare of fellow beings.

Every religious ceremony or social ceremony is started with the formula called the 'Threefold Guide', i.e., 'I follow the Buddha as my guide; I follow the Dhamma as my guide; I follow the Sangha as my guide'. By the Buddha is meant the teacher who discovered the law of deliverance, and realized and proclaimed it to the world. The Dhamma means the law or doctrine containing the essential and immutable principles of justice and truth, and the path that leads to the realization of perfect peace, the complete cessation of all sorrow. The Sangha means the order of adepts who have realized, or are still striving to realize the law of deliverance.

Thereupon the formula of the five precepts is repeated, namely, 'I observe the precept to refrain from destroying the life of beings; I observe the precept to refrain from stealing; I observe the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct; I observe the precept to refrain from false speech; I observe the precept to refrain from the use of intoxicants'. After the monk has concluded his address, the ceremony ends with meditation.

Religion is taught in the monasteries and religious training is also given there. It is an almost universal custom among the Burmese to send every boy who has attained the age of puberty to a monastery where he remains a novice, wearing the yellow robe,

for at least three months and learns religion. If the novice wishes to become a monk, a special religious training is given to him, and after passing certain religious examinations he is ordained a monk at the age of twenty or over.

A festival is held on the occasion of a youth becoming a novice or probationer for the order of monks. He makes his first entrance into monastery, either riding on a richly caparisoned pony or sitting in a fine palanquin. He is allowed the use of one or several golden umbrellas which are held open over his head. During the triumphal march he is preceded by a long line of men and women attired in their richest clothes, and carrying a large quantity of presents for the use of the monks of the monastery where the young postulant is to reside. The procession in this stately order, attended by a band playing various musical instruments, moves slowly through the principal streets of the town towards the monastery that has been selected. This display of ostentatious pomp is, on the part of the parents and relatives, an honour paid to the young postulant who generously consecrates himself to so exalted a calling; and on the part of the youth himself, a last farewell to worldly vanities. No sooner has he descended from his splendid conveyance and crossed the threshold of the monastery than he is delivered by his parents into the hands of the superior and placed under his care.

On the festival day the boy's parents and relatives spend as much money as they can in feeding the poor and giving parties to their friends. Girls enter nunneries in somewhat similar manner.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion I will give you a brief outline of the way in which we teach children in our monasteries to live a good, peaceful life.

Dear children, rejoice! You can all be Buddhas in the making. A Buddha in the making is a Bodhisatta, therefore you can all be Bodhisattas, Buddhahood is latent in you all and it is within your power to grow. Think daily, 'I will be a Buddha'. Mere thinking, however, is not enough, to be a Buddha you must do things that become a Buddha. Thinking is the first step, then thought must be translated into action; so act, therefore, like a Bodhisatta. Start from now on, begin in your own home. Do not think that you are living just for your own sake, your life should be for the good of others as well. A tree bears fruit, a cow gives milk, a stream runs its course, as a result of which others benefit. These are functions which happen naturally; but why should not you with the intention of doing good, give your mite to the needy world in your humble way? Strive to be perfect, be good and do good, serve others well.

Seek opportunities to serve your loving mother and dear father, be a blessing and not be a burden to them. Help your beloved brothers and sisters to the best of your ability, and, above all, do not give trouble to other less fortunate fellow children. Harm not your poor dumb brothers and sisters, put yourselves in the position of others and try to identify yourselves with all. Do a good turn every day, expecting nothing in return; and talk less, do more work. You should not hunt after fame, for if you are worthy of fame it will come to you, you should forget your 'I' in the service of all. Whatever deed you do, may it be for the good and happiness pleasing to self and others; whatever thought you think, may it be for the well-being of self and others. Every morning let your wish be, 'May all beings be well and happy'.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

## A BUDDHIST IN WAR-TIME

In the event of war being thrust upon his country you may ask whether a Buddhist ought to volunteer for military service. From a Buddhist point of view the answer is, 'No'. On no account, and for no reason whatsoever should a Buddhist volunteer to go and kill.

You may say that a Buddhist should never become escapists from reality, but what is this reality you speak of? Presumably you mean by it the world in which you live, the life about you in which you and all of us take a greater or lesser part; but of what does it consist, what is this samsara in which we have our being? If you examine it closely you will find that it is a gigantic compound result, arisen from causes inextricably intermingled. It is subject to constant change, even as the cause underlying it are changing incessantly; indeed, you yourself, all of us, are changing continuously from year to year, from day to day, from moment to moment. You are not the man you were last week, nor even the man you were a few minutes ago. Such is samsara, an everchanging compound. Can this rightly be called reality?

Now the counterpart of samsara is Nibbana, which, when literally translated, means 'no craving', that indescribable state where craving, hatred and delusion – has come to an end, whence there is no more suffering. The Buddha was able to describe Nibbana, and we find his description in Udana VIII.

A study of that passage will show that Nibbana is the real, in contradistinction to the unreal world of everyday life which man has created for himself. A Buddhist, that is, a follower of the Buddha aims to seek Nibbana, the real. In doing so he will follow that path pointed out by his Master who realized Nibbana so long before him. The Buddhist layman will follow, therefore, at least the five precepts laid down by the Buddha, the first of which enjoins him not to kill any living creature. If this precept is carried into practice logically and consistently it is clear what the Buddhist's conduct should be in the event of war, even if the war is forced upon his country by an aggressor nation.

In the Majjhima Nikaya (Vol.1) we find the following passage, 'Yea, disciples, even if highway robbers with a two-handed saw should take and dismember you limb by limb, whoso grew darkened in mind thereby would not be fulfilling my injunctions. Even then, disciples, thus must ye school yourselves, 'unsullied shall our minds remain, neither shall evil

word escape our lips. Kind and compassionate ever, we will abide loving of heart nor harbour secret hate. And those robbers will we permeate with a stream of loving thought unflinching; and forth from them proceeding, enfold and permeate the whole wide world with constant thoughts of loving-kindness, ample, expanding, measureless, free from enmity, free from ill-will. Thus my disciples, thus must ye school yourselves’.

Not to escape from reality, therefore, but in order to find the real, will the Buddhist layman obey the first precept, and he will do so even if it should bring him into conflict with mass opinion. Escapists from reality are those who, rather than think for themselves, allow themselves to be swept along by mass hysteria and slogans, who dare not be different from their fellows.



# CHAPTER FORTY

## THE THREE REFUGES – TISARANA

We begin our Buddhist meetings by reciting the formula of the three refuges (*tisarana*):

*Buddham saranam gacchami:*

I go to the Buddha for refuge

*Dhammam saranam gacchami:*

I go to the Dhamma for refuge

*Sangham saranam gacchami:*

I go to the Sangha for refuge

These three are also called the triple gem, or the threefold jewels (*tiratana*). *Ratana* means that which gives delight, pleasure, that which pleases. There are seven kinds of jewels, i.e., gold, silver and the other five precious stones. These are called worldly, material nature and therefore we take them as ornaments and not as refuges; whereas the other threefold jewel, the Buddha, Dhamma and sangha, give us real spiritual pleasure and happiness, and therefore we take them not as ornaments but as our guides and refuges against the evil power of ignorance, greed, hatred and illwill.

We go to the Buddha for refuge because he had boundless compassion for man's weakness, sorrow, disappointment and suffering, and because he found for us the path of deliverance by his own ceaseless effort through countless lives. He has given us great encouragement and inspiration to fight against evil until we overcome it. He is our supreme teacher.

We go to the Dhamma for refuge because it enables one who follows it to attain the end of all dissatisfaction and suffering through the attainment of enlightenment, perfect wisdom and perfect equanimity. The best way to follow the Buddha and pay homage to him is to follow the Dhamma in our lives. In following the Dhamma there are three stages: study, practice and realization. First we should study the pure Dhamma preached by the Buddha, followed by the arahats and thereas; and which is now known in the West as Theravada, the author of which is the Buddha himself. Dhamma means truth; thus the teaching of the Buddha is called Dhamma since it enables one to see the truth. Because it consists of three divisions it is also called Tipitaka. The divisions are entitled Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma, and they are so called because of their differences in treatment and analysis. Until recently there has never been any doubt, dispute or argument about the divisions, but one has heard some peoples say now that Abhidhamma is not the teaching of the Buddha himself, but a later develop-

ment. Well, the answer to that is not far to seek, and one of the simplest answers is that if the Abhidhamma is not the Buddha's teachings, and therefore not the third division, what then would be the third division in its place? If there is no third division why do we have the original old, well recognized word Tipitaka, which means threefold division?

We should study not only the Pali canon but also the commentaries, especially by Buddhaghosa who re-wrote the old vast commentaries which existed before his time and to which he often referred in his commentaries. His explanations are not based on his own opinion, but are based on the Buddha's teachings themselves. We cannot do without his commentaries, which the *theras* of that time and their unbroken descendants down to the present day have regarded as correct and the most helpful. When one translates from the Pali into one's own language a verse by the Buddha, one will of course use one's own knowledge of the term and subject, and one's own common sense, but it is wiser to consult the commentaries and sub-commentaries for the orthodox meaning. There are commentaries on all the teachings of the Buddha, but unfortunately very few of them have been translated in English; we need more Pali scholars like Miss Horner, there is a lot to be done yet in this respect. We should study pure Dhamma, and spread pure Dhamma.

The second stage in following the Dhamma is to practise it in daily life. Since we are subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, and we suffer from dissatisfaction and unhappiness, we are sick people. The Buddha is compared to an experienced and skilful physician, and the Dhamma is compared with the proper medicine; but however efficient the physician may be and however wonderful the medicine may be, we cannot be cured unless and until we ourselves actually take the medicine. I think many of us are in need of some medicine to cure us of our misunderstanding of one another, our impatience, irritability, lack of sympathy and metta (loving-kindness). Right understanding, patience, tolerance, goodwill and loving-kindness are the primary and elementary principles of Buddhism. For the average person this may prove to be difficult to practise, but we should be trying to rise above the average. Buddhists should be good examples to others by practising what they preach; examples are better than any preaching. Only by practice can realization, the understanding of things as they really are, devoid of concept, be achieved. The only way in which we can truly express our gratitude and veneration for the Buddha, our Master, who with infinite compassion showed us the road to the end of suffering, is by practising the Dhamma.

Lastly we go to the Sangha for refuge, because the Sangha is the living stream through which the Dhamma flows to us.

Sangha literally means group, but here it means a group of saints who have reached the aryan noble stage. There are eight stages, from the first initiation to the eighth of arahatta, perfect saint. A bhikkhu who has not attained to any of the states, but sincerely follows the Dhamma, belongs to the Sangha.

The Sangha is the point at which the Buddha-Dhamma makes direct contact with humanity, it is the bridge between the living men and absolute truth. The Buddha greatly emphasized its importance as a necessary institution for the well-being of mankind; for, if there had not been the Sangha, the Buddha-Dhamma would have become a mere legend and tradition after the passing of the Buddha. Not only has the Sangha preserved the word of the Master, but also the unique spirit of the Noble Teaching. It cannot exist, however, without the support of the lay Buddhist, upasakas and upasikas. Those who help to maintain the Sangha, benefit both themselves and others, for in so doing they not only acquire merit but they are helping to keep alive and spread the Noble Teaching.

The task of each and every Buddhist is first to make the Buddha-Dhamma a living reality, by studying it and practising it in everyday life. When we live in accordance with the Dhamma we can speak about it with authority. Secondly, a Buddhist's task is to spread the pure Buddha-Dhamma, or to help the Sangha who devote their whole lives to the study, practice and spreading of the pure Dhamma – which is excellent in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. Thereby we become helpers of humanity and messengers of peace and happiness

# CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

## WHAT BURMA IS DOING FOR BUDDHISM

The Parliament of the Union of Burma passed unanimously the following resolution, moved by the Religious Affairs Minister, on the 1st October 1951:

‘That not being satisfied with measures usually undertaken hitherto by the peoples and governments of the world for the solution of the problems confronting mankind by promoting the material well-being of man in his present existence in the form of ameliorating his living conditions and standard of life, and also being fully aware of the fact that such measures would result only in a partial solution of the problems, this Parliament declares its firm belief that it is necessary to decide and undertake such measures for the spiritual and moral well-being of man as would remove these problems and help man to overcome Greed, Hatred and Delusion which are at the root of all the violence, destruction and conflagration consuming the world.’

In pursuance of the above resolution and furtherance of its general plan for the spiritual and moral uplift of man, the Government of the Union of Bur-

ma have provided one million pounds to form the central fund for the purpose of making necessary preparations for holding the Sixth Great Buddhist Council in Rangoon. This project involves two principal programmes of work:

- (a) Preparation of the Buddhist texts.
- (b) Erections of necessary buildings for the Great Council.

The holding of the Sixth Great Council will be the most momentous event not only in the history of Burma but also of Asia and the Buddhist world. Throughout the history of nearly 2500 years since the demise of the Buddha, there have been five Great Buddhist Councils held for the purpose of re-examination and recension of the teaching the Buddha with a view to preserving the same in its pristine purity. The First Great Council was held soon after the demise of the Buddha with the support of King Ajatasattu, a most devoted follower of the Buddha and a powerful king of North India, when all the principal disciples assembled together at the city of Rajagaha and proceeded to recite, classify and arrange all the teachings of Buddha.

In that Great Council in 546 B.C., soon after the Buddha's death, it was considered necessary to entrust different portions of the teachings of the Buddha to different groups of disciples who came to



be known as the Reciters of the Texts. The groups of monks to whom these portions the Texts were entrusted, and their pupils after them, preserved the Texts by learning and reciting them, and thus the original teachings of the Buddha were handed down by word of mouth from teacher to pupil for over four centuries, until the Texts were committed to writing for the first time in Ceylon in 29 B.C. To these groups of monks we owe the preservation of the original teachings of the Buddha in the form of Pali Texts.

The Second Great Council was held at Vesali in 443 B.C. with the support of King Kalasoka, and the Third Great Council at Pataliputta in 308 B.C. with the support of Emperor Asoka, through whose good offices and religious zeal Buddhism spread to almost all the then known countries of the world. The Fourth Great Council was held in Ceylon in about 29 B.C. where the Texts were committed to writing for the first time, as it was then felt it would no longer be safe under modern conditions to leave such vital teachings to human memory. The Fifth Great Council was held when the Texts were recorded in 729 marble slabs at Mandalay, Burma in 1871 with the support of King Mindon.

The forthcoming Great Council will have the collaboration and participation of the learned monks of Ceylon, Siam, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Nepal

etc., and thus have a much wider significance than any of the previous Great Councils. Five hundred Buddhist monks in Burma who are well versed in the study and practice of the teachings of the Buddha take the responsibility of the re-examining the Texts; for the purpose they are organized into ten groups so that each group would be responsible for a particular portion of the Texts. A large group of lay scholars edits the first draft of the Texts in Pali and also makes original draft Burmese translations of submission to the respective groups of monks. In each of the Buddhist countries as far as possible, national groups of monks have been organized on similar lines. The preparation may take about three years and the first meeting of the Great Council will take place on the Vesakha, the full moon day of May 1954. The Council will go on till the completion of its task on the Vesakha, the full moon of May 1956 which will coincide with the completion of the 2500th year of the Buddhist era, i.e. 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's passing away.

The buildings which have been newly erected for holding the Sixth Great Council, include one large assembly hall, one ordination hall, one library, a few blocks of hostels and dormitories, small meditation huts and such other buildings as may be required for use as a sanatorium, lecture theatres, staff residential flats and quarters, offices, press etc. When

The Sixth Great Council is over, these buildings will be used for the new Buddhist University which is expected to become not only the seat of Buddhist learning, culture and civilization but also the spiritual centre of South East Asia, radiating such irresistible and over-powering rays of Wisdom, Truth and Righteousness as will dispel from the earth those dark and evil forces rooted in Greed, Hatred, and Delusion which are now threatening to swamp and swallow the whole of Asia and of the world.

All these achievements of the past, and plans and preparations for the future, are the outcome of the unprecedented and happy unity of purpose and harmony of action between the community of monks and the Government and the people of Burma, in spite of all the troubles and tribulations following in the wake of her newly won independence. They have passed through dark days and there is still a long and difficult road ahead of them; but they are confident that it is the strength of Buddhism that has borne them through countless tribulations, and they look to it with supreme confidence to enable them to help the troubled and benighted world in achieving peace, prosperity and happiness.

May all beings throughout the universe share the merits of our work and may peace be established in the world.

# CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

## THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF ASIAN CULTURE

While Western cultures stem from a dozen different sources: from the old magics of the dawn of time, persisting longer in the cold western climes; from the Greek tradition; from the Norse tradition; from the blending and play on those of the impacts of the Hebrews, the Huns and the Arabs, with Christianity as a moulding force, the culture of Asia is firmly rooted in the religions of Asia.

The genuine culture of Asia is based entirely on the spiritual principles of its religions. The cultural life of the Asian countries would not exist without spiritual basis.

So much so that this highlights the difference in our culture as compared with Western culture, and has given rise to the myth of 'the unchanging East'. Asia changes and is changing gradually, developing slowly and consistently to more and more beautiful forms like the opening of a thousand-petalled lotus which appears so often in our imagery.

Take away our religion and what of culture is left? Just what would be left if you took away from the

lotus the life-giving waters nothing but the odour of decay.

This applies not only to Buddhism but to the two great faiths of Hinduism and Islam as well.

What is Buddhism? The answer is in the Dhammapada.

*‘Sabbapapassa akaranam.  
kusalassa upasampada,  
sacitta-parriyodapanam.  
etam Buddhana sasanam.*

Not to do any evil,  
to cultivate good,  
to purify one’s thoughts.  
– this is the Teaching of the Buddha.’

In as much as the Hindus and the Moslems teach these as eternal truths and verities, we honour these great faiths therefore. Where the Buddhist bases his actions, his culture, his whole life on the law of cause and effect working through Kamma, the Hindu postulates a Supreme Being as the author of Kamma and the Moslem regards ‘the tremendous laws of day and night, of life and death, of growth and decay’ as manifesting the power of Allah and attesting his sovereignty’.

Though difference there is, there is not so much difference here as may first appear, for the great laws of decay and death and the greater law of love is recognized by all.

This is the thread that joins and harmonizes all Asian culture. This is the thread that the materialists have sought to snap in vain. That is true but the danger is not over and indeed is intensifying. Why is this? Why is there to be seen everywhere a decline in spiritual values? It is simply because the spiritual has for some time now been neglected for the purely material values. Spiritual and moral concepts of some Asians as well as of some Westerners have been deteriorating rapidly. There has been an over-emphasis on purely material value.

Nobody would deny that material values are values. On one occasion the Buddha knew that a certain man was ripe for salvation and would understand the Doctrine. But he demanded that the man who was hungry, first be fed. Only then would he be able to pay the requisite attention to the Teaching.

It is useless preaching spiritual things to hungry people, to the sore oppressed. On the other hand it is just as useless to preach materialism to people who are spiritually starved. For this materialism, in the absence of any spiritual force, will turn and

rend itself, will inspire the leaders of a country or a movement to make plays for power, through greed, that will destroy the people and destroy that which would make for the very material prosperity they seek. We have seen instances of this in history right up to the present day.

Only by maintaining the spiritual force in its full power can we get the best out of the material advances which modern science is everywhere making.

In the world as a whole there is enough material and no lack of intellect. What then is lacking? The spiritual basis of culture is lacking, the world is disturbed and peace eludes us. Men distrust each other. Conflicts, greed-based conflicts, racial, political, religious, economic, bring war due to the lack of a spiritual basis of culture.

The word 'culture' is here used in the sense of refinement of thought and activity in human life. This term 'culture' is very wide in its significance. It includes religion, philosophy, ethics, politics, economics, every human activity. The basic inspiring principle, of a man's life or that of a race or that of a country, along with the way of life adopted, constitute the basis of their culture. It is therefore impossible to expect oneness of uniformity or identity of culture. In a profound harmony, it is the variety that gives depth and feeling.

But if culture is to amount to anything worth having and really worthy of the name, it must be spiritually based. With Asians it has been, and still is, spiritually based and a part of and not apart from their religions.

A so-called material culture leads, as we have seen, to conflict, to war, to greed and to desolation.

Taking all nations as one whole, there is in the world today sufficient wealth and ability to abolish unemployment, poverty, much of disease and hardship, and certainly all of cruelty and oppression. The world possesses all that it needs, and the discovery of new sources of power can, if scientists will but unite in a commonwealth of humanity, give all mankind the leisure to work for good and for happiness, instead of for mere subsistence.

This is the disease and the remedy. But how are we to persuade this sick world patient to take the remedy?

We must show him that the material way of looking for gold on the earth all the time, averting his gaze from the stars and the sun and the moon, will but lead him into a bog, just as he will fall into a bog if he keeps his gaze forever on the stars and never looks about him.



We must give him a remedy, persuade him to take it, and persuade him to walk on the way of Truth and Enlightenment, to a better and more prosperous living here, that will give leisure to walk the way of salvation. Here is the safe way and safe remedy.

The only way to impart this remedy is by making it practical, by education, true education; by imparting it with vigour. If we can propagate the Truth with half as much vigour as the materialists propagate untruth, we shall save the world.

To establish lasting peace and happiness, a genuine religious, spiritual awakening is absolutely necessary. That awakening is here, but energy is required to keep it awakening. What is of importance is not mere faith, rituals and ceremonies in religion but lives of compassion and love and reason and justice based on the moral, spiritual principles of religion. True religion is an education of the heart, and exercise of the heart and of the mind. True education is the free development of personality and character and conduct within a framework of morality, of love for one's neighbour. It is not mere acquisition of information, but information of such a character that it inspires and embodies in itself the capacity for its use in the expression of personality. No doctrine merely held in the mind has any driving force; no doctrine is of any value unless it is ap-

plied. One must study and apply the Teaching: applying it first to oneself, only then can wisdom come. The Buddha said: 'A beautiful thought or word which is not followed by a corresponding action is like a bright-hued flower that bears no fruit'.

Man has been described as 'a thinking animal', and between man and animal there is no great gulf. But man, along with animal instincts and sensual feeling, has memory and reason to guard and to guide him. As a moral being, guided by moral conscience, man rather than living lower than animals by neglecting and spurning reason and human feeling, can use his ability to rise to supreme heights if he will make up his mind to endure the hard climb.

And there is something in man that welcomes a challenge, especially if the challenge is shown to be a challenge to himself, calling on him to rise and act and to act and rise, to rise indeed above the world.

This indeed is the very essence of religion, of true religion: the very essence of spirituality. Not the preaching of 'Be good and you will be happy'. Not the teaching of mere rite and ritual, but the positive action, the striving, the improving, the loving, the comradeship of men of goodwill.

This is what must be propagated to keep the present awakening of spiritual values a real progressive awakening: to oppose with it the negativistic materialism which deny spiritual values and make vague promises of heaven on earth, evolution after evolution.

There has been too much defeatism on the part of religions. We are an army with banners. The Buddha pointed out that: 'For lofty virtue, for high endeavour, for sublime wisdom – for these things do we wage war; therefore are we called warriors'.

The sun of reasoned spirituality is rising and the dark clouds of materialism cannot stand before it.

We shall win if you march with us.

# CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

## PALI AND BUDDHISM

Pali is the original language in which the Buddha spoke and all the Buddhist scriptures were written. The serious student of Buddhism is undoubtedly to derive more advantage from a knowledge of Pali than from the knowledge of any other language. In the first place he thereby gains access to the vast stores of a noble literature. The advantage of being able to read the original Buddhist scriptures called *Ti Pitakas* or three baskets of the canon, which have been estimated by some English translators of them to be eleven times the size of the Christian Bible, and the commentaries on them is incalculable.

It is true that most of the Buddhist scriptures and some of their commentaries have been translated into many Asian languages and also some European languages, and that those translations were honest attempts to get at the truth. Unfortunately, however, some of them are totally incorrect and misleading, or, at the very least, ambiguous. The English rendering, for example, of the Pali words, *sati* (mindfulness) by insight, understanding or reason; *nama-rupa* (mind and matter) by image and ideal; *sankhara* (kamma-formations, 50 mental

properties or conditioned things) by tendencies or conceptions and Nibbana (extinction of greed) by annihilation or nothingness, are some of the worst interpretations by Western scholars. The Italian proverb that translators are traitors, is worth remembering in this regard.

The readers who rely on such mistaken terms have often misunderstood the true meaning and the true nature of such fundamental principles of Buddhism as the Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths, the Paticcasamuppada, the Five Groups of Existence and the doctrine of Anatta, which is the essence of the whole Teaching of the Buddha. The Dhamma, therefore, should only be described by those who have not only confidence in it but also a proper knowledge of Pali, otherwise the writer is likely to miss the true nature of it which alone makes the Teaching a living thing capable of swaying the lives of men. Without this vital point his effort is bound to be not only futile but harmful to the Teaching.

Probably no religion has suffered so much in this respect as Buddhism. In the first place, Buddhism is an oriental religion which was quite unknown to Europe a hundred years ago, and its discovery was so gradual that the whole of its scriptures have not been properly translated. Of the commentaries on

the scriptures, scarcely any prominent part except the Dhammapada and Dhammasangani has been translated into any European languages. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that some Western writers misrepresented Buddhism in the most grotesque manner.

Among the Western writers on Buddhism there were some who had no intention of doing justice to Buddhism but were only concerned with showing that it was a heathern religion and inferior to the existing faith of the West. There were also others who were not only friendly but had a good intention and yet often took a distorted, one sided view, for the simple reason that their knowledge of Pali and Buddhism was inadequate. As a result there have been some extraordinary mixtures of misconceptions and queer ideas, or, in some cases, of Theosophy and Hinduism that have passed for Buddhism in the West.

The English language in the world of ideas is so impregnated with the Christian view of life that it has, in many cases, no equivalent ideas to the Buddhist ones. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to convey Buddhist ideas through the medium of the English language which has no perfect equivalents for the words required by them. The word 'bhikkhu' for instance, although its Pali meaning is a very

simple one, has no English equivalent that exactly conveys the meaning of it. It is often mistranslated as a beggar or priest or monk. As he does not beg in the true sense of the word he (bhikkhu) is not a beggar. Neither is he a priest, because he does not act as a mediator between God and man. Nor is he strictly a monk, since he is not bound by any vows. As a result, in the books on Buddhism in English the Western reader will come across a great number of Pali words retained for that reason.

This being the case, the serious student who genuinely wishes to gain an understanding of the profound teaching of the Buddha should be prepared to take a little trouble to acquaint himself with its essential keywords, or to acquire such working knowledge of Pali as will enable him to understand the sublime Dhamma in its true light.

# A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

The Venerable Sayadaw U Thittila, Aggamahapan-dita, author of the following talks on the Buddhist Teaching, was born in 1896 in the town of Pyawbe, central Burma, the centre of a rice growing district.

His father died when he was only three years old. When he was nine his elder and only brother died, and when he was fourteen his elder and only sister also died. His mother married again, a physician, but his stepfather, too, died later. However, at the young age of seven or eight years he was even then regularly frequenting the local monastery, the Padigon Vihara, almost daily, where he and a friend were taught certain scriptures by the much respected and learned incumbent there, Sayadaw U Kavinda. By the age of ten he was learning to recite certain suttas, and by the age of fifteen when he was ordained a samanera he already knew by heart the primer to Abhidhamma studies, the Abhidhammat-tahasangaha, also the Mahasatipatthana Sutta and Kaccayaan's Pali Grammar. It was, though, at the age of twelve when his teacher, the Ven. U Kavinda, took him to Mandalay to hear a sermon on Abhidhamma that he made the decision to become a bhikkhu. His full ordination at the age of twenty eventually took place much further south in lower



Burma, at Moulmein in 1916, on which occasion Sayadaw U Okkantha was his preceptor. Prior to that, when he was still fifteen, he and three other young samaneras went with their same first teacher to live in the forest for the practice of meditation. They spent eight months there, and lived amongst wild creatures of many kinds including large snakes.

It was not long after that he entered the Masoyein Monastery College at Mandalay. There, after intensive studies under the tuition of his second teacher and hard task master, Sayadaw U Adiccacamsa, he was selected from among an entry of five thousand candidates as the Pathamakyaw Scholar of all Burma in 1918. This success merely roused in him the resolve to train and study for a further exceedingly strenuous long period in order to enter for the highest of all monastic examinations, the Pariyattisanahita (Mandalay). In 1923, of the one hundred and fifty entrants for that examination only four passed, of which he was one. Over the years since then the questions set for that examination have gradually been modified so that the possibility of attaining a pass is slightly greater than in those earlier days, and there are fewer and fewer now who know of the extremely high qualifications required in order to have been successful in those previous times. As a result of his studies for that achievement he could memorize stanzas by hearing them read once., and he had of necessity to memorize a

total of fifteen volumes from the Tipitaka to enable entry for the oral section alone. His success accorded him the right to appointment as the head of a monastery of three hundred bhikkhus, even at that relatively young age, as the result of which he became head of the education department and school at a monastery specially founded in Rangoon for his teacher, the Ven. Adiccavamsa, and himself.

Some few years later, in 1933, he went to India where spent a year at Santiniketan studying English and Sanskrit, following which period he journeyed to Ceylon with the aim of studying English. Unfortunately, however, due to ill health because of wrong feeding, coupled with the failure of his plans to come to fruit, he had to reconsider this original idea and in due course returned to India to stay at Adyar. It was at Adyar that he eventually had the opportunity to learn English from English people, and at the same time acquire a basic knowledge of some of the manners and customs with which he was not acquainted.

During his time in India he was elected president of the South India Buddhist Associations, and he also undertook the management of the Buddhist Free Elementary School at Perambur. In an appreciation by members of the South India Buddhist Associations, dated 7th May 1938 at Madras, it records

that since the founding of the Society in South India in 1903 many bhikkhus and missionaries had visited them, ‘...but no one has evinced such selfless and untiring interest in the cause of the revival of Buddhism in South India as you have done in your short stay of four years.’ The appreciation continues by saying that he was well known to Buddhists of Bangalore, Kolar, Wallajah, Wanniveda, Chakkramallar, Konjeevaram, etc.

To further improve his knowledge of English, and in particular to study English educational methods and family upbringing and training of English children, he left Adyar for England in the summer of 1938. Having all his life lived under British colonial rule he was interested to learn at first-hand how the English lived and behaved in their own land, and to observe whether any of the educational methods and training of children might be of benefit to Burmese children at home. His knowledge of English by the time of his arrival was fairly good, if limited, but sufficient for him to accept an invitation by the then secretary of the Buddhist Society in London to give a general talk on the Dhamma. This very first talk in England and was also the very first time he had ever addressed an English audience. His second talk, however, entitled ‘World Fellowship Through Buddhism’, was given in France at the invitation of Sir Francis Younghusband, president and founder of the World Congress of

Faiths, and took place at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Following those two talks he decided that before accepting any further invitation to speak in public he should improve his English, and so he took steps to attend a course at the London Polytechnic until March 1939.

The conditions for any bhikkhu in the west in those days were exceptionally hard, bhikkhu-life being unheard of and unknown to the inhabitants of that part of the world. With the outbreak of war in that year, apart from two most generous friends with whom he first became acquainted in Adyar, Ven. U Thittila was left unsupported in any way and quite penniless; he was in almost unheard of circumstances for any member of the Sangha. Still undeterred, however, he did everything he possibly could for the individuals suffering under wartime conditions, eventually finding support for himself in various ways which included broadcasting on the Burma Service of the B.B.C. and joining the Burmese English Dictionary committee of which Dr. Stewart was the founder. During those war years, when the giving of public talks was impossible and his quest for information regarding educational methods and family training of children was at a standstill, he was friend and helper to very many, but few indeed ever knew of the sometimes acute privations he had on occasions to endure.

As the war drew to a close he was gradually able to resume giving talks again under various different auspices, including two separate series of seventeen talks each to members of the Workers' Educational Association. He visited people in hospital, inmates in prison, and through some helpful contacts he was able to have at last the opportunity to visit certain schools, at some of which he was invited to give talks. His wish to observe how English children were brought up and trained by their parents was then also made possible by the readiness of a few different families, who upon introduction invited him to stay in their homes for that purpose. Of the children with whom he was associated he was able to study in depth their school life and home influence, and as he stayed with the families of differing religious backgrounds he was able to augment his knowledge of not only the Western way of life but the conditions to which many young people were subjected from a very early age.

So far as the Dhamma is concerned, perhaps the most outstanding feature was his introduction of the Abhidhamma Pitaka ( the psycho-ethical analysis of things in their ultimate sense as against their conceptual form) to the West by way of commencing to teach the small manual, Abhidhammatthasanga-ha, to a class of students interested in the Buddhist Teaching and who had specifically requested him to deal with that section. For the very first time in the

west the primer to the third Pitaka was systematically taught for a consecutive period of over four years, and this instruction became the bedrock and yardstick for those who sought to learn something of the fundamental teaching of the Buddha. His patience and skill, also his great care of his students in helping them to overcome their difficulties between the Western way of considering religious and philosophical matters in comparison with the Buddhist presentation of things, was evidence of the difference between a real teacher and an academic instructor. He helped them, too, in any facet of their lives, being frequently requested to give his advice which he never failed in offering.

In March 1949 the Sasana Kari Vihara in London was founded by a group of nine Burmese kappiyas for the purpose of supporting the work of Ven. U Thittila in England; thus for the first time since his arrival in the West he experienced something nearer to the Eastern traditional support of the Sangha, and became no longer dependent merely upon his own efforts for survival. His personal achievement in teaching continued unabated, and in the two years from March 1949 to March 1951 records show that he carried out in excess of two hundred and fifty teaching engagements, quite apart from fulfilling all the other types of duties which normally fall to a bhikkhu in the ordinary course of events. Being then the only resident bhikkhu in England,

those other duties absorbed a very considerable proportion of his time.

Unfortunately, because of the unavoidable floating nature of the Burmese community in England, constant support for the Sasana Kari Vihara was never certain, and in 1952 when Ven. U Thittila was invited to lecture on Abhidhamma at Rangoon University to M.A. and B.A. students he decided to accept at a time when funds for the vihara had become virtually insufficient to maintain even one bhikkhu. Thus his departure for Rangoon, after fourteen years in what must almost at times have seemed like wilderness conditions, left an irreplaceable gap in the lives of many of his English students. However, they continued his Abhidhamma classes, studying on a revisionary basis all that he had taught them since the commencement.

Although originally he accepted the university appointment for one year only, his work there continued in the end for eight successive years. His very great learning and undoubted skills in teaching were acknowledged during this period when, in 1956, he received the highest government award in that field by the conferring upon him of the title *Aggamahapan-dita*. It was an honour which originally carried with some small annual material benefits for the receiver.

In 1959 he accepted an invitation from the Association for Asian Studies at the University of Michigan,

U.S.A., to lecture in America. Travelling all over the U.S.A., unattended by any dayaka or helper, encountering climates ranging from extreme cold with deep snow to blazing sun with extreme heat, he spent nearly six months delivering well over a total of one hundred and sixty lectures at various universities and arranged meetings. This was the planned programme, but as a result of his talks he found himself constantly the guest of many of the hospitable American people who heard him speak, and the additional inquiries and personal questions arising from this extra dimension greatly extended what was already a very demanding schedule. His itinerary included a flight from Los Angeles to Hawaii, where at Honolulu University he was requested particularly to give twelve talks, ten of them on Abhidhamma. And it was while still in the American continent that he visited Toronto in Canada.

Over the years he has accepted three invitations at different times to go to Australia, during which visits the practice of meditation and study of the text of Dhammapada ranked high in interest. He has journeyed to Japan where he had the opportunity to observe and discuss with Japanese Zen masters their methods and training of Zen meditation students, and has also visited both Singapore and Hongkong. On other occasions he has travelled for specific purposes to Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal and more than once to Thailand, quite apart from



passing through that country many times in the course of other longer travels.

In Europe, prior to 1960, he had also upon invitation given talks in Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Holland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and yet again in France many years after his original first pre-war talk in 1938.

In 1964, at the instigation of two of his English Abhidhamma students, he accepted an invitation to visit England again to continue teaching Abhidhamma. The form of teaching on that occasion, however, took on a dual purpose, and the the two years that followed, as well as teaching the subject he translated into English from the Pali, for the very first time that it had ever been done, the second of the seven books of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, Vibhanga. It was published by the Pali Text Society in 1969 under the title of *The Book of Analysis*.

Upon his return to Burma in 1966 he did not again leave for abroad until his two recent visits to England, one in 1982 and again in 1983. At the very considerable age of eighty-seven years, he yet again upon invitation conducted a course of weekly classes during the summer months of 1983, dealing with the application of Abhidhamma knowledge of ordinary everyday life.

During the years from 1966-1982 in Burma due to his knowledge, evident practice, practical experience and inevitable seniority in age, he became invited and accepted the position of Ovadacariya (spiritual adviser or instructor) to the central council of the Sangha Mahanayaka of the whole country, Burma, to the trustees of the Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda, Kaba Aye Pagoda and to most other well known pagodas in Burma. He is also examiner for the well known Abhidhamma Propagation Society in Rangoon.

The sparse information given in this extremely brief sketch of some of the main events in the Sayadaw's life, confirms a remark made one day by an astrologer in Mandalay who once happened to see the Sayadaw there when he was a young samanera. The astrologer commented that only one tenth of anything that that particular young bhikkhu did would ever become known.

The difficulty in collecting information is compounded by the fact that the Sayadaw very seldom speaks of himself, or mention his endless achievements in the vast field of his experiences. Beneath his quiet and retiring bearing lies a profound depth of knowledge of the Buddhist Teaching, and to spread this knowledge has been his great endeavour throughout his life. He has striven, often in the

face of surprising opposition, to carry out his aim. Even his original idea to learn English and go to the West, met with an opposition that made his initial departure a very difficult thing.

Over the years since the war he has taught and helped countless Western-born people, although of his English pupils from the actual war years and just after, so many are now no more. However, by those who still remember him during his fourteen years' presence in England, from 1938-1952, and who on subsequent visits have continued to receive teaching and guidance from him, he is deeply regarded and with much gratitude.

As a skilled teacher, in accordance with the order of pariyatti, patipatti and pativedha (learning, practice and realization), he has always been at pains to deal with first things first. He has always realized that strangers, newcomers to the world of Buddhism, having been brought up and educated from childhood in a totally different religious environment, would have absolutely no concept at all of the Buddhist Teaching. His method, therefore, has been first to explain very simply and gradually exactly what and who a Buddha is. Once such people have become acquainted with some knowledge and a correct idea of the nature of a Buddha, he later, still in very simple terms, gains the further interest of his

listener by the very reasonableness and logic of what he has to say in connection with right living in ordinary everyday life, and what in accordance with Buddhist teaching is required if one is to improve oneself morally, intellectually and spiritually. He always speaks to people at their level of appreciation and interest, feeding them slowly with information that will build their confidence. Like a wise farmer, he tills the soil before sowing the seed. He prepares the ground; then selecting suitable seed for the varying soils he plants carefully at the proper season, realizing that to use the same seed in all the differing soils would be unsuitable and unproductive.

On recognizing some people's almost total ignorance of the Dhamma, the Sayadaw has never been dismayed; he has never ever considered abandoning any mission on encountering such utter lack of comprehension, but actually striven all the harder to offer to those individuals something which could act as a next step for them, something which could serve as an aid to movement in the right direction. Knowing that morality is the soil in which development and understanding grow, he has sought, always to introduce, maintain and increase the basic five precepts in their ordinary life.

And so, dealing with first things first, he will speak to the uninformed of right thought, right speech

and right action in their ordinary everyday life. As he says, 'How we think, speak, behave and react when we have come away from meditation centres and returned to everyday life is the clue as to how far, if at all, we have actually improved or advanced morally and mentally. Is our annoyance at things, our anger, less; are we more kindly, better behaved, more considerate towards others? Is our greed for the things we like and try to get hold of in everyday existence, is that greed really less?'

Approaching his nintieth year the Sayadaw is still active and teaching, at the same time making available to others his great knowledge and vast experience of practice under conditions which none but the most highly disciplined and principled could ever emerged unscathed morally or mentally. The inflexibility of his determination as a a very young person to learn every aspect of the Buddhist Teaching absolutely thoroughly, and his inflexibility to live always appealing to the highest within himself, has enabled the spreading of the true Dhamma to reach large numbers in the world who otherwise may never have heard of it, nor had the chance to meet one of its most genuinely humble, compassionate and dedicated exemplars, one of its most profoundly learned exponents.

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