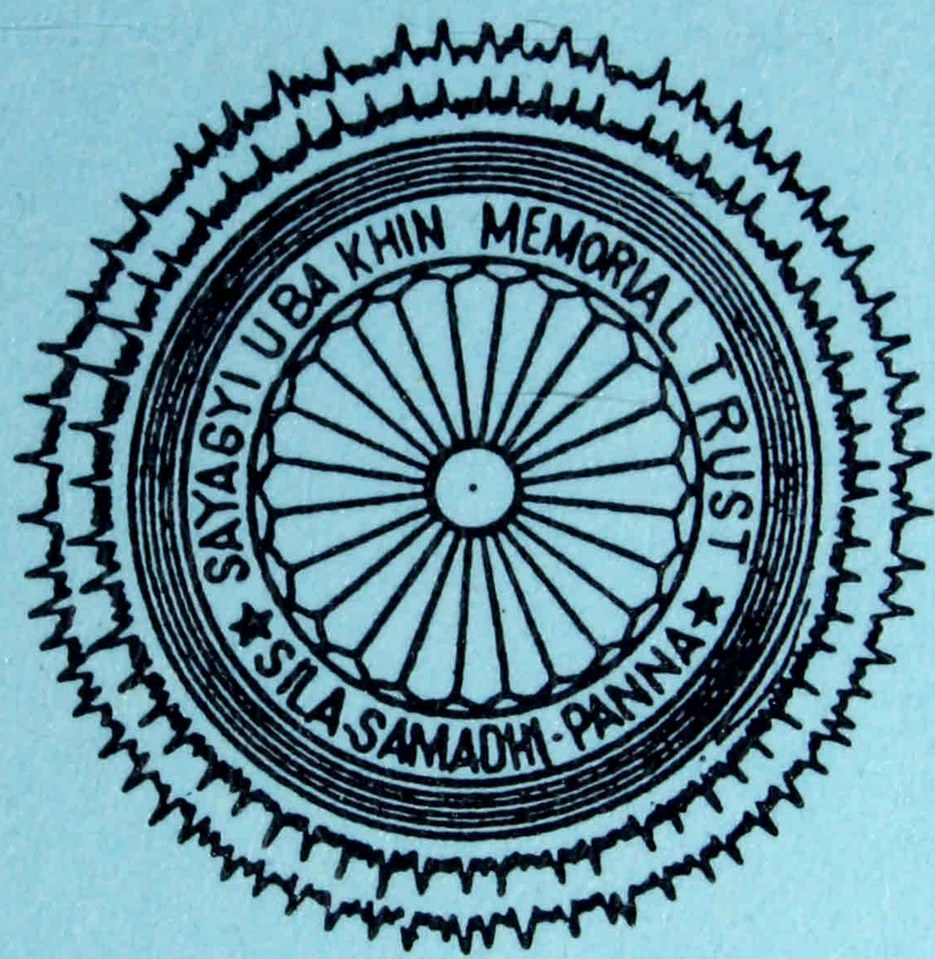
KNOWING ANICCA AND THE WAY TO NIBBĀNA

by

SAYA U CHIT TIN, WKH



edited by
William Pruitt, PhD

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Dedicated to our much revered teacher
the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Thray Sithu

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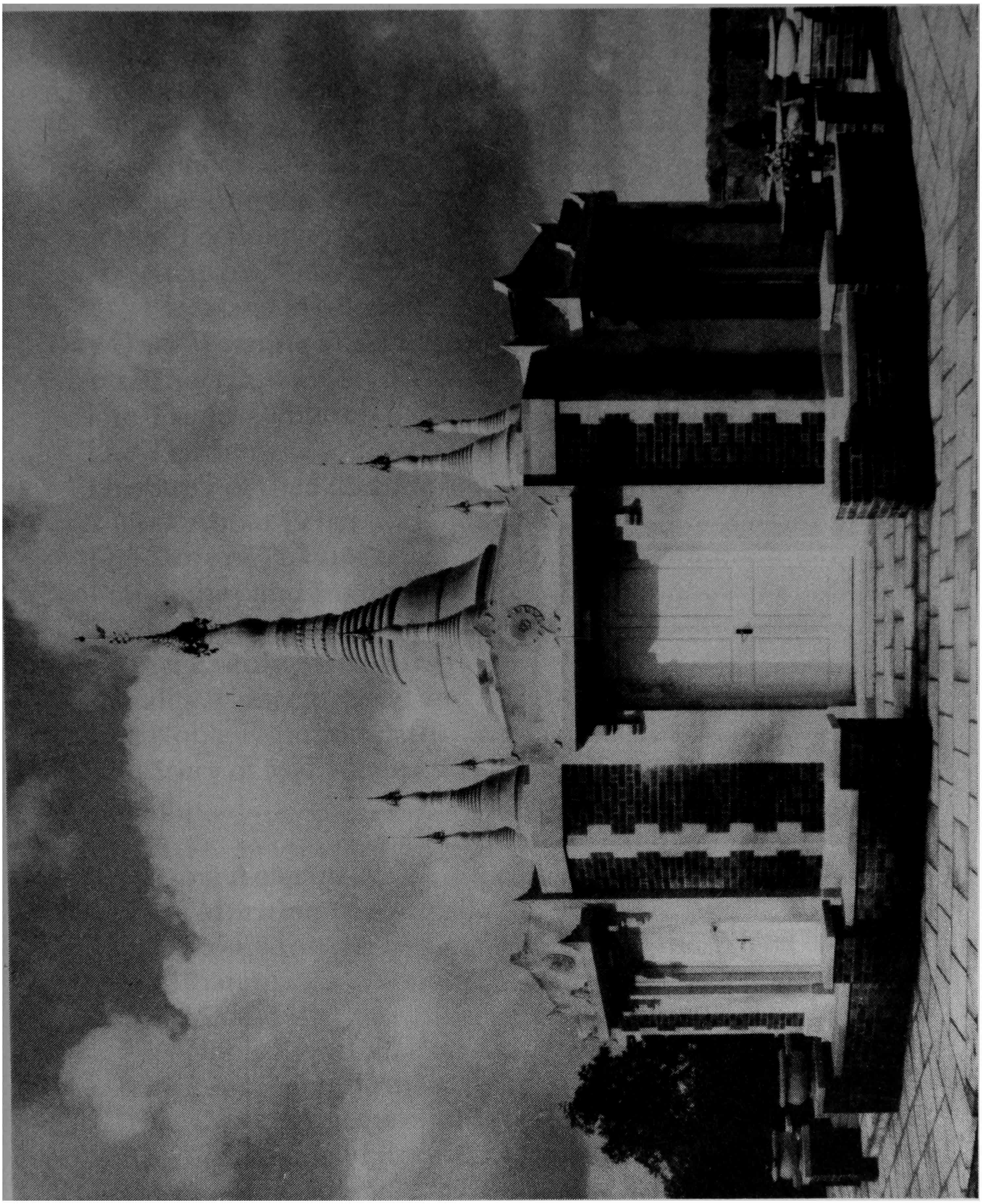

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Introduction

These discourses are for the use of people who are serious students of Vipassanā Meditation as taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. They include the morning and evening discourses for ten-day courses and were first used at the International Meditation Centre (United Kingdom).

The discourses are based on the Pāḷi texts, both the canon and the commentaries, especially the most important commentary for the meditator: *Visuddhimagga [The Path of Purification]* by Ashin Mahā-Buddhaghosa. The writings and teachings of Venerable Ledi Sayadaw, Ven. Webu Sayadaw, and, in particular, almost all the works in English of our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin were also primary sources. In addition, some texts published by *The Wheel* (Sri Lanka) and *The Light of the Dhamma* (Burma) have been useful. Every effort has been made to be consistent in the English translation of Pāḷi words, and this has meant making some changes in the translations used. We owe a great deal to the dedicated work that has gone into the translations published by the Pali Text Society, the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka and the Buddha Sāsana Council of Burma, and to the works of Mahā-Theras and lay Buddhists that have been published by these societies. Sources have been acknowledged wherever possible. We follow the Chaṭṭhasaṅgītipiṭaka edition (Burma, 1972) for the Pāḷi quotations from the Dhammapada.

These discourses, therefore, are based on the Buddha's Teachings, just as Sayagyi's teachings and life were based on the Buddha's Teachings. Experience has shown that these Teachings cannot be changed and adapted. They deal with the fundamental workings of the human mind and body. The fundamentals are the same no matter what country a person lives in or during which period he lives. Experiencing ultimate reality

may help us to understand new facets of the world around us, but nothing can be added to or taken away from ultimate reality.

The primary aim of these talks is to help a student in Vipassanā to work more effectively. They are not meant to serve only for theoretical understanding. Many students have found them to be useful in their meditation on ten-day courses and have asked for copies so that they could consult them in their daily lives to help their understanding and to inspire them to continue working. It is with this in mind that we have had them printed.

Acknowledgements. I wish to thank Dr William Pruitt for his help in preparing this edition of these talks. He has very thoroughly revised and edited the entire manuscript with great faith and devotion. I also wish to thank the late Mr Peter Moll, Mr Craig Storti, Mr Buz Hargraves, and the Study Group of the International Meditation Centre, U.K., for their help.

These Dhamma Talks are printed and published for distribution to meditation students in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin and not for commercial purposes.

It is our hope that these talks may serve for the welfare of many!

Saya U Chit Tin
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19 January 1989

Anāpāna and Vipassanā Meditation

A ten-day course in Buddhist Meditation in the Theravāda tradition as taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin begins with (1) taking the Triple Refuge, (2) taking on five or eight moral precepts, (3) surrendering to the Buddha and Teacher, and (4) making a formal request to the teacher to be taught the technique. These are explained in the talks, but we wish to give here a brief introduction together with the texts used in Pāḷi and their English translation. The basics of the technique will also be explained.

The Triple Refuge is the Buddha (the Awakened One), the Dhamma (the Teachings of the Buddha), and the Saṅgha (the Community of those who practise and preserve the Teachings). The Triple Refuge was taken by people at the time of the Buddha when they had learned enough of his teachings to be convinced of the truth of the Buddha-Dhamma. There were many other teachings (Dhammas) at that time, and by saying that they took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma discovered by him, and in the Saṅgha, people showed that they had faith in these three as their true protection. In doing this, they showed that they no longer followed other teachings (Dhamma). That is why we are careful to specify that by Dhamma we mean exclusively the Buddha-Dhamma.

Many people who heard a discourse given by the Buddha would say at the end that they wished to take refuge in the Triple Gem for the remainder of their lives. In a ten-day course, however, it is expected that the sincere student take refuge for the ten-day period as a minimum. Whether or not he continues to rely on the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha in his day-to-day life depends entirely on him. As we point out in the discourses, a certain amount of faith is necessary if one is to make a fair trial of this technique. Continued faith will depend on the results that come through personal experience during the trial period.

The Pāḷi for taking refuge in the Triple Gem (Ti-ratana) or the Triple Refuge (Ti-saraṇa) is:

Buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi.
Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi.
Saṅghaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi.

The translation into English is:

I go for refuge to the Awakened One.
I go for refuge to the Teachings.
I go for refuge to the Community.

When we take refuge in the Buddha, we take refuge in the human being who discovered the way himself, without being taught by someone else.[1] He was fully awakened or enlightened and taught others how to become awakened. The special qualities of the Buddha include the following: he is accomplished, fully awakened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of Devas and men, awakened and blessed.

The Teachings (Dhamma) of the Buddha entail the elimination of desire—the Path Leading to Awakening. It is well proclaimed by the Buddha, visible here and now, timeless, inviting investigation, onward-leading, and can be directly experienced by the wise. The word Dhamma has many different meanings in Pāḷi. Here, the meanings included are the Teachings of the Buddha as found in the texts and which can be summed up by the Four Noble Truths. These Teachings last during the time of the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sāsana). In its largest sense, Dhamma includes the nine Supra-mundane States (Dhammā) which are the Paths and Fruition States of the four stages of Awakening and Nibbāna itself.

The Community (Saṅgha) as a refuge means the Community in the ultimate sense. It means the community of the Buddha's disciples who have entered on the good way, the straight way, the true way, the proper way. This means those who have attained the Paths and Fruition States of the four stages of awakening. This is the community of disciples that is worthy of gifts,

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1. This discussion of the three refuges is based on the commentary found in *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning* translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (pp. 4-16) and his translation of *The Path of Purification* (Ch. VII, ¶¶ 2-100). We have translated some Pāḷi terms differently, however, in order to be consistent.

hospitality, offerings, respect, and that is an incomparable field of merit for the world.

A few similies may help to give a better idea of these three gems. The Buddha is like a trainer of thoroughbred horses. The Dhamma is like the method to be used in training. The Saṅgha is like a large group of well-disciplined thoroughbreds. Or: the Buddha is like a physician who can cure the illness of defilement caused by underlying tendencies. The Dhamma is the medicine which is used correctly. The Saṅgha is like people who have been cured by applying the medicine correctly. Or: the Buddha is like a good guide. The Dhamma is like a good path to a land of safety. The Saṅgha is like those who enter the path and reach the land of safety.

The Precepts. The moral precepts are necessary if you are to be able to develop concentration. If your mind is distracted through regrets over wrong deeds, it will not be able to settle down and remain fixed on a given object. For Buddhist laymen, the five precepts are considered the minimum rules which should be respected at all times. New students of meditation are expected to keep these precepts. In day-to-day life, the third precept for laymen entails refraining from unlawful sexual relations, meaning no sexual relations outside marriage. During a ten-day course, however, this precept for students is to maintain complete chastity. The five precepts during a meditation course, therefore, are as follows:

1) Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
2) Adinn'ādānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
3) Abrahmacariyā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
4) Musāvādā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
5) Surā-meraya-majja-pamādāṭṭhānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

In English:[2]

1) I undertake the training precept of abstention from killing breathing things.
2) I undertake the training precept of abstention from taking what is not given.
3) I undertake the training precept of abstention from unchastity.

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2. This translation is based on Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's *The Minor Readings*.

4) I undertake the training precept of abstention from speaking falsehood.
5) I undertake the training precept of abstention from any opportunity for negligence due to liquor, wine, and besotting drink.

Students who have already taken a ten-day course add these additional precepts:

6) Vikāla-bhojanā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādhiyāmi.
7) Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassanā mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanaṭṭhānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyami.
8) Uccā-sayana-mahā-sayanā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

In English:

6) I undertake the training precept of abstention from untimely eating (i.e., after noon).
7) I undertake the training precept of abstention from dancing, singing, music, contortionist shows, from any opportunity for wearing garlands, smartening with scents, and embellishment with unguents.
8) I undertake the training precept of abstention from (the use of) high couches and large couches.

Surrender. After taking the Triple Refuge and the precepts, the student surrenders to the Buddha and the teacher. Ashin Buddhaghosa explains how this should be done in *The Path of Purification.*[3] The Pāḷi text is:

Imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ jīvitaṃ Bhagavato paricca-jami.
Imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ jīvitaṃ acariyasa paricca-jami.

In English:

Reverend sir, I relinquish this my person to the Blessed One (the Buddha).
Reverend sir, I relinquish this my person to the teacher.

Ashin Buddhaghosa says that in surrendering to the Buddha, the meditator will be free from fear which might cause him to

3. Ch. III, ¶¶ 123-130.

return to the world, take up the wrong kind of search and come to ruin. Through surrender, even if a frightening object appears to the meditator, he will not be afraid. In fact, joy will arise in him as he reflects, "Have you not wisely dedicated yourself already to the Buddha?" He is like a man with a valuable piece of cloth. If the cloth were eaten by rats or moths, he would grieve. But if he gave the cloth to a bhikkhu who needed robes, he would feel only joy if he saw the bhikkhu rip the cloth up to make his robe.

If a meditator does not dedicate himself to the teacher, he will become unresponsive to correction, hard to speak to, and unamenable to advice, or he will go where he likes without asking the teacher. The teacher will not be able to help him with material things or with the Dhamma and will be unable to train him in his meditation. Without such help, the meditator will not gain a firm footing in the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sāsana). If he dedicates himself to the teacher, he will not be unresponsive to correction and will not go about as he likes, will be easy to speak to, and will live in dependence on the teacher. The teacher will be able to help him and he will attain growth, increase, and fulfilment in the Dispensation.

Requesting the Teachings. Finally, the student requests the teacher to instruct him in a meditation subject. Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the student should ask for a meditation subject with a sincere inclination of heart and with sincere resolution. A sincere inclination of heart means being inclined to non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion, renunciation, seclusion, and relinquishment. Those who have attained one of the four stages of awakening, Pacceka Buddhas and Teaching Buddhas, past, present, and future, all attain their states through these six inclinations.

Being whole-heartedly resolved means being resolved upon, respecting, and being inclined to concentration and Nibbāna. Ashin Buddhaghosa's explanation makes clear the importance of making Nibbāna our goal. Sayagyi U Ba Khin insisted on this also. That is why we take Nibbāna as our goal right from the beginning and do not work for the unstable peace associated with deep concentration (Jhāna).

For Ānāpāna Meditation the request is as follows:

> Nibbānassa sacchi-karaṇatthāya me bhante: ānāpāna kammaṭṭhānaṃ dehi.

In English:

> Reverend sir, please teach me Ānāpāna Meditation so that I may experience the Nibbānic Peace within.

For Vipassanā Meditation the request is as follows:

> Nibbānassa sacchi-karaṇatthāya me bhante: vipassanā kammaṭṭhānaṃ dehi.

In English:

> Reverend sir, please teach me Vipassanā Meditation so that I may experience the Nibbānic Peace within.

The Technique: Ānāpāna Meditation. This is mindfulness of in-breaths and out-breaths, which develops concentration. You should be comfortably seated, keeping the back and head straight. Students generally sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor, but a chair may be used if this proves to be too difficult. You should avoid leaning against the wall or against the back of the chair, as this is conducive to sleepiness. After meditating for some time, however, it can be helpful occasionally to lean against something for a short time and stretch the legs.

You should keep the eyes closed in order to avoid being distracted by visual objects. The attention should be placed below the nose and above the upper lip, in the general area where the breath touches as you breathe in and breathe out. There are three elements to be noted: (1) the fact that you are breathing in as you breathe in, (2) the fact that you are breathing out as you breathe out, (3) the spot where the air touches (and, if possible, the sensation resulting from the touch of the breath).

Feeling the touch of the breath will vary in locality and in intensity from time to time and from person to person. The important thing is to be aware of the touch and the direction of the breath. If no sensation is apparent, then the attention should simply be maintained in the general area directly below the nose. One should not try to imagine a sensation if there is no feeling apparent. If it is not possible to breathe through the nose due to a cold, etc., the attention should still be placed below the nose, above the upper lip.

Although it is not mentioned in the texts, you can help establish mindfulness by a few intentional breaths, breathing a little harder than normal—but not so much so that others will be distracted. Once the mind is well established on the spot, you should return to

normal breathing. Another aid when the mind wanders is to note "In" as you breathe in and "Out" as you breathe out. These words should only be noted mentally, however.

Generally speaking, you should constantly come back to the object of concentration as soon as you are aware that your mind has wandered off, avoiding self-criticism and struggle. The Buddha said that nothing is as difficult to tame as the mind, so you should not be surprised if your mind wanders.

Vipassanā Meditation. After developing concentration to a certain extent, the student is ready to move on to developing insight (Vipassanā) into the ultimate reality of his mind and body. The technique used in this tradition is to concentrate on each part of the body in a systematic fashion, to note whatever sensation, if any, is occurring in that part of the body, and to be aware that the sensation is impermanent (Anicca).

We go through the body being aware of the sensations from head to foot. At times, more attention may be placed at the three extremities: the top of the head, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. When one has difficulty maintaining the attention in the body, it is necessary to move the attention quickly. At other times, one can dwell more on each part, probing more deeply into the sensations. Care should be taken not to allow strong sensations to pull the attention away from where you are concentrating. And equal time should be given as one goes through the body to each part (with the exception of the extremities). This holds true even if no sensation is obvious. One does not create or imagine sensations or get involved in physical anatomy. The technique is to be aware of whatever sensation manifests itself, or, if nothing is noticed, to maintain the attention in that particular part of the body for the necessary length of time.

It is particularly important that you remain unperturbed. The mind should observe the sensations equanimously. You should not be elated or dejected by any sensation. At times, repeating mentally "Anicca" may help to keep the attention in the body and to observe the changing nature of each sensation with equanimity. When concentration is poor, it is necessary to return to Ānāpāna for a time. Once the mind is able to remain where it is placed, you can go back to Vipassanā.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa
Praise to that One, the Blessed One, the Noble One, the Perfectly Self-Awakened One

DAY ONE: MORNING DISCOURSE

Act in such a way that you increase your wisdom

Yogā ve jāyatī bhūri;
ayogā bhūrisaṅkhayo;
Etaṃ dvedhā pathaṃ ñatvā
bhavāya vibhavāya ca
Tathā 'ttānaṃ niveseyya
yathā bhūri pavaḍḍhati.

Verily, from meditation arises wisdom. Without meditation wisdom wanes. Knowing this twofold path of gain and loss, let one so conduct himself that wisdom may increase.

Dhammapada v 282

We are gathered here to do a course of meditation. You have resolved to undergo a full ten-day course. You left your home, your work, your busy activities and your beloved family, if you have a family, for a retreat with the hope of attaining awakening, just like the Noble Ones of olden days.

The Triple Refuge

In our "Introduction to Vipassanā Meditation" we have said: A most essential part of the programme is the preliminary formalities of attuning the students to the energies and forces of Full Awakening (the Buddha) by taking refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha or the Awakened One, the Dhamma or the Truth taught by the Buddha, and the Saṅgha or the Community of those who keep the teachings alive). The continuity of this attunement is sustained through the surrendering to the Buddha and the

Teacher for protection and guidance during the period of training.

So we begin our course by taking refuge in the Buddha, the Awakened One; the Dhamma, the Doctrine taught by the Buddha; and the Saṅgha, the Community of those who practise the Buddha's teaching and who have perpetuated the Dhamma for more than twenty-five centuries. We entrust ourselves to the Buddha and teachers for protection and guidance. We take the moral precepts. Finally, we request the teachers to teach us Ānāpāna meditation.

Now what is the meaning of the Triple Refuge? A refuge means a safe place, a place where we will not be harmed. We approach the three qualities embodied in the Triple Gem because we will find safety through them.

The first Gem is the Buddha. The word Buddha means Awakened One and this includes the sense of being self-awakened. And the Buddha is the personification of the state of being Awakened. Gotama was able to work until he dispelled all his ignorance, until he understood the ultimate reality of the world.

This ultimate reality is the second Gem: the Dhamma, the Doctrine, i.e., the Truth—the Truth that is summed up in the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha.

The Buddha discovered that all conditioned states are unsatisfactory, that there is a cause for this, that there is an alternative in the unconditioned state, and that there is a Path leading to this state of liberation.

The third Gem is the Saṅgha, the Order of Bhikkhus (or monks). By this is meant the Ariya-Saṅgha, the Community of the Noble Ones, those who have won the Four Paths and the Four Fruition States of liberation. The Sammuti-Saṅgha is also included. This is the Community of Bhikkhus who practise the Doctrine, who keep it alive and available for those seeking a way out of their suffering.

We want to approach our work like a scientist searching for the truth. He will begin with a working hypothesis and he will set up experiments to test his hypothesis. The experiments will give results which will confirm his hypothesis or prove it to be wrong. The students are not expected to believe anything they are told here. They are only asked to do their experiments properly so that the results will be helpful to them. If a scientist is not careful

in his work and does not do his experiments properly, he will never know if his hypothesis is right or wrong.

The Buddha said in the Kālāma Sutta:

> "Do not believe what you have heard. Do not believe traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe anything because it is rumoured and spoken by many; do not believe merely because a written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe in that as Truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely the authority of your teachers or elders. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and gain of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."
>
> *The Gradual Sayings,* I 170-175

Similarly, Sayagyi U Ba Khin said in his talks *What Buddhism Is:*

> Pray do not therefore believe me when I come to the philosophical issues until and unless you are convinced of what I say either as a sequel to proper reasoning or by means of a practical approach.

We therefore say, do not believe us until and unless you have convinced yourselves by a practical approach and by actually experiencing the benefits of the teaching. However, we begin with a certain amount of faith (Saddhā) or confidence in the Teacher, the Buddha. We take as a working hypothesis that it is possible to be Awakened, that the Truth can be known, and that there are those who keep the knowledge of the Truth alive so that others can benefit from it. But our faith must be balanced with knowledge. As we work we will gain the right amount of knowledge to enable us to make progress on the Path to the Awakened State. Only after attaining the goal will our faith be perfect.

So when we take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, we take refuge in their respective qualities: the quality of being Awakened, which is perfect peace and happiness: the quality of the Four Noble Truths, which enable us to attain liberation: and the quality of the good conduct, the wise conduct, the upright conduct of the Community of those who have walked the Path shown by the Awakened One and who have realized ultimate reality.

The Teacher

In addition to taking refuge in the Triple Gem, we put ourselves under the protection of the Buddha and the teacher during the period of training. If we use the comparison of the scientist, we are like a scientist who is in training. We need a teacher to show us how to formulate a working hypothesis and how to set up an experiment and how to judge the results. If we are to learn we must work properly, and to work properly we need someone who can advise us and answer our questions. This does not mean that you are asked to have blind devotion. You will not be asked to do anything unreasonable. At times we may feel like a schoolboy who would rather be out playing ball instead of learning his lessons. But if we remember that the teacher is passing on a teaching that has been practised by countless numbers of people who have found it to lead to the end of suffering, and that the teacher is not asking us to do anything that has not been tried and tested, then we will appreciate that we need a teacher.

Then we took the moral precepts, the Five Precepts or the Eight Precepts. We also made a formal request to be taught Ānāpāna meditation. Soon after his Awakening, the Buddha looked around at the world and saw that it would not be an easy matter to teach what he had learned. As an Awakened Being he was beyond desires, and although he had great pity and compassion for all those he saw suffering, he did not have that missionary spirit that implies a certain amount of egotism. And so the Buddha hesistated as to whether or not to teach. Fortunately for us, just at that moment he was approached by the Brahmā Sahampati, who requested that he teach the Dhamma. From that moment there was never again any hesitation. The Buddha taught all who made a sincere request. And that is why you were asked to do likewise.

You notice we say a "sincere request". Sayagyi U Ba Khin was a very important person in Burma. When Burma gained independence on January 4, 1948, U Ba Khin was named the Accountant General. He taught meditation to the people who worked in his office if they asked to be taught. But he knew that some people would not ask because they wanted to learn to meditate but in the hope that they might gain favours from him. So he devised a way to test them to find out if they were genuinely interested. He mentioned that he would test such students. He told his disciples to tell prospective students that they would be required to run

around the block where the Accountant General's office was. It was a distance of about one kilometer or six-tenths of a mile. Some would have to run around the block once, some twice, and some three times. This was a test of their sincerity. If they were willing to do that it was an indication they were not too full of pride and that they were flexible enough to work as they should. But Sayagyi never had to make anyone run around the block. The word got around and the people who were tempted to come out of ulterior motives decided not to come.

The Story of the Elder Poṭhila

Sayagyi used to tell the story of the Elder Poṭhila who lived during the time of the Buddha and who suffered from too much pride.[1] Poṭhila was a very learned bhikkhu. He had lived as a scholarly bhikkhu under seven Buddhas and had taught the scriptures to five hundred bhikkhus during the time of Buddha Gotama. The Buddha saw that he was ready to work for final liberation. But he realized that Poṭhila had never considered working to escape from suffering. He would need to be stirred up. From then on the Buddha referred to him as Empty-headed Poṭhila (Tucca-Poṭhila). "Come, Empty-headed Poṭhila," the Buddha would say. "Pay respects, Empty-headed Poṭhila; sit, Empty-headed Poṭhila; go, Empty-headed Poṭhila."

Poṭhila thought to himself, "I am versed in all the Teachings of the Buddha (the three Piṭakas) and the commentaries on the Teachings; I instruct five hundred bhikkhus; and yet the Teacher calls me Empty-headed Poṭhila. "So he decided it was time for him to enter the forest and devote himself to meditation. For that he needed a meditation subject; he had to ask someone to teach him the technique. He went to a forest monastery where thirty bhikkhus were residing. He paid his respects to the oldest bhikkhu, as was proper, and said, "Venerable sir, be my refuge."

But the Elder said to him, "Brother, you are a preacher of the Doctrine; it is I who should learn from you." Poṭhila then said, "Venerable sir, please do not treat me in this manner. Please be my refuge."

Now all thirty monks in that monastery were fully Awakened, Arahats, and they too were able to realize Poṭhila's problem. So the senior Elder thought to himself, "This monk has too much pride because of his learning." Therefore he told Poṭhila to go to

1. For the story see *Buddhist Legends*, III 157-159.

the monk who was second in seniority. The second bhikkhu sent Poṭhila to the bhikkhu beneath him, and so on down the line, until finally he was sent to a seven-year-old novice who was sitting in his day quarters doing some sewing. Each refusal was a blow to Poṭhila's pride. Even the seven-year-old novice, who was also an Arahat, refused his request at first, but finally said, "Venerable sir, I will be your refuge provided you patiently endure admonition."

Poṭhila answered, "Good sir, I will do so. If you tell me to enter a fire I will enter it."

The novice looked at Poṭhila, who was wearing very valuable robes, and he said to him, "Sir, plunge into this pool of water, robes and all." Poṭhila plunged into the water. As soon as the novice saw the Elder's robes were dripping, he told him to approach. Poṭhila had passed the test and shown that his mind was now pliable enough to understand and follow instructions.

"Venerable sir," the novice said, "if there is an anthill with six holes and a man wished to catch a lizard that had entered one of the holes, he would block up five holes, leaving the sixth open. And thus he could catch the lizard. You should do that, dealing similarly with the six doors of the senses. Close five of the six doors and devote your attention to the door of the mind."

"That will suffice, good sir," Poṭhila said. Because he was so learned, the words of the novice were like someone lighting a lamp. He began to meditate, concentrating on his body. The Buddha observed Poṭhila meditating and thought to himself, "This bhikkhu must establish himself so that he becomes a man of great wisdom." The Teacher sent forth a luminous image of himself and spoke the verse we gave at the beginning of this talk, and this verse gave Poṭhila the added boost he needed. At the conclusion of the stanza, Poṭhila was fully Awakened, an Arahat.

So from this story we can see how important it is for the student to have humility. And we can see how important it is to approach a competent teacher. In this case the teacher was a seven-year-old novice, but he was fully Awakened, and because he was Awakened, he had more understanding than a very educated bhikkhu. Ashin Buddhaghosa, who wrote the most important commentary concerning meditation, *The Path of Purification,* tells us how to choose a teacher. He tells us that while he is available, only a meditation subject taken from the Buddha is well taken. After his final Nibbāna it is proper to take it from any one of the two Chief Disciples or the eighty great disciples still living. When they are

no longer available, if someone who is fully Awakened is available, an Arahat, we should approach such a person. Now there are four stages from the first taste of being Awakened to the final stage, and so if an Arahat cannot be found, we should go to someone who has reached one of the other stages: a Non-returner, a Once-returner, or a Stream-winner. If none of these are to be found we should go to an ordinary man who has obtained the absorption states, Jhāna, then to one who knows the canon (the Piṭakas)—either all three collections, or two, or one. Next, if there is no one like these, we should approach someone who knows one section of the canon with the commentary explaining it. "For a teacher such as this," Buddhaghosa says, "who knows the texts, guards the heritage and protects the tradition, will follow the teacher's opinion rather than his own."[2]

A Note About Belief

I would like to add a note here concerning these discourses. I will be telling you many stories concerning events during the life of the Buddha, and there may be events that are difficult for you to believe. As Sayagyi pointed out to an American student when explaining the thirty-one planes of existence, from the highest Brahmic plane to the lowest hell, "When I talk about these planes of existence I don't mean that you should believe in that. You might believe in the existence of heaven and hell. But these details you will believe when you can develop your power of mind to a state when you open the gate and see all the living beings of the thirty-one planes of existence. I have trained a number of people to see that. You understand? Then only will you believe."

Sayagyi also said, "I don't request anybody to believe anything unless they see it, unless they experience it. So you are not here to believe me. The Buddha said, 'Don't believe even me.' You experience for yourself. And you find out whether what you experience is good and whether it is for your well-being. If it is for your well-being you can accept it. If it is not for your well-being then you will not accept it. So the training here will be through experience." This was the way Sayagyi taught and the way we teach here. But it is important that the teachings be done correctly and that we be faithful to what the Buddha taught. So in illustrating the talks with stories from the canon, we will remain as faithful as possible to the original. If we begin leaving out parts of

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2. See *The Path of Purification*, Ch. III,. ¶¶ 61-65.

the stories simply because we are afraid the students will not believe everything, we will end up distorting the teachings. When we give brief versions of stories it will be because we have used only the part that illustrates what we are discussing.

The Story of Pukkusāti

Here is another story that illustrates the proper attitude towards the teaching and the teacher. Ashin Buddhaghosa, in his comments on the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta, gives the account of Pukkusāti, who was king of Takkasīla and a contemporary of King Bimbisāra.[3] A friendly alliance was established between these two kings and at one time Pukkusāti sent, as gifts, eight priceless garments in lacquered caskets. As there was no other material which Bimbisāra considered precious enough to send in return, he conceived the idea of acquainting Pukkusāti with the appearance in the world of the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. He had inscribed on a golden plate, four cubits long and a span in breadth, descriptions of the Triple Gem and the other tenets of the Buddha's Teachings, such as the Discourse on Mindfulness, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. When King Pukkusāti read the inscriptions on the plate he was filled with boundless joy and decided to renounce the world. He cut off his hair, donned the yellow robes of an ascetic, and left the palace. Then he travelled a long distance to Sāvatthi, passing the gates of Jetavana, for he understood from his friend's letter that the Buddha was at Rājagaha. He therefore travelled on to Rājagaha without inquiring at Jetavana.

Pukkusāti, who had not received full ordination as a bhikkhu, spent one night in a potter's shed. The Buddha was on a tour and asked for permission to stay in the same shed. Permission was given. The Buddha saw that the young man was of pleasing deportment and asked him why he had gone forth and who his teacher was. Pukkusāti said he had given up lay life because of the Buddha Gotama. The Buddha asked Pukkusāti if he had ever met the Buddha Gotama and Pukkusāti said no. Then the Buddha asked him if he would recognize the Buddha if he saw him.

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3. For the introductory story see the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya (Papañcasūdanī, II, 979f.). Details are given in the *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* under "Pukkusāti." For the encounter with the Buddha see *The Middle Length Sayings*, III, 285-294.

Pukkusāti answered no. The Buddha thought to himself, "This young man of respectable family has gone forth on account of me. Suppose I were to teach him the Dhamma?" So he said to him, "I will teach you the Dhamma, bhikkhu. Listen carefully, pay attention and I will speak." And Pukkusāti answered, "Yes, friend."

The Buddha gave Pukkusāti a detailed sermon and at the end of the sermon Pukkusāti realized that he was listening to the Buddha in person. He paid respects and asked that the Buddha acknowledge his mistake in addressing the Buddha by the term "friend" which implied they were on equal footing. Pukkusāti would refrain from repeating his error. The Buddha acknowledged the mistake.

Pukkusāti then asked to receive ordination in the Buddha's presence. If he had perfected himself in the past, the Buddha could have ordained him into the order merely by saying, "Come, bhikkhu." But Pukkusāti did not have a complete set of robes and a bowl, so the Buddha told him to find these first. While he was looking for these Pukkusāti was killed by a cow. Several bhikkhus asked the Buddha what had been his fate after his death, and the Buddha said that since he had reached the third stage of Awakening (Anāgāmī), Pukkusāti was in one of the higher realms and would attain complete Awakening without ever returning from that world.

You will notice that Pukkusāti did not need to know who was speaking to him. He listened to the Truth, the Dhamma, with an open mind, with the proper attention, and he was able to see the Truth for himself. So this should be the attitude of our students. There is no room in our work for blind faith. When we speak of having faith, it is in the sense of having confidence, and our confidence will be based on our own experiences. At the beginning we need enough confidence to give the technique a fair trial. And very soon we will know for ourselves whether the teachings are true, beneficial, and for good and gain or not.

We are used to putting labels on things, which makes it difficult to consider them properly. This is especially so when it comes to religions. But all religions acknowledge the need for morality, and even those who live according to a personal philosophy rather than a religious training see the need for morality. Religions also see the need for the development of concentration, for a mind

brought to a state of One-pointedness and Equanimity. As Sayagyi said in *What Buddhism Is:*

> It is here that the mind becomes freed from hindrances, pure and tranquil, illumined from without and within. The mind, in such a state, becomes powerful and bright. . . . This light which is reflected before the mind's eye in complete darkness is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity, and serenity of the mind. The Hindus work for it. To go from light into the void and to come back to it is truly Brahmanic. The New Testament, in the Book of Matthew, speaks of the "body full of light". We hear also of Roman Catholic priests meditating regularly for this very miraculous light. The Koran too gives prominence to the "Manifestation of Divine Light". This mental reflex of light denotes the purity of mind within, and the purity of mind forms the essence of religious life, whether one is a Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Muslim. Indeed, "Purity of mind" is the greatest common denominator of all religions. Love, which alone is a means for the unity of mankind, must be supreme, and it cannot be so unless the mind is transcendentally pure.

Tranquillity and Insight

So once we have taken the first step through making the resolve to practise morality, our work has two aspects: meditation on tranquillity and meditation on insight or wisdom. These are the two branches of mental development. The benefit we can gain from these two meditations is great. Through concentration and tranquillity we develop our minds, and once our minds are developed we abandon all craving. Through insight meditation, we develop wisdom and with wisdom developed, we abandon all ignorance.

Tranquillity (Samatha) is an unperturbed, peaceful, and lucid state of mind attained by strong mental concentration. That is what we are working for these first three or four days. A high degree of tranquil concentration is indispensable for developing insight. It is possible to use it to reach the Jhāna states, or states of Absorption, but this is not necessary. We can develop insight once we have a reasonably tranquil, well-concentrated mind. This tranquillity frees the mind from impurities and inner obstacles and gives the mind greater penetrative strength. Tranquillity has the power of making our mind reach one-pointedness

and achieve non-distraction as we are free from desire and ill-will. It leads us to the perception of light, to the defining of phenomena, to knowledge and gladness, and it prepares us for higher levels of meditation.

Insight (Vipassanā) is the penetrative understanding by direct meditative experience of the impermanence (Anicca), unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha), and impersonality (Anattā) of all material and mental phenomena of existence. It is insight that leads to the entrance into the supramundane states of Awakening and to final liberation. But we will go into more detail concerning insight (Vipassanā) later on in our Dhamma talks. For the moment, our main task is to develop our concentration.

To illustrate the proper attitude towards the teachings and the teacher, I gave you a brief account of Pukkusāti, and we saw that after listening to a detailed sermon given by the Buddha, he was established in the third stage of fruition. It will not be easy for everyone to get the fruition states unless they have made all the necessary preparations in the past to be ready for Awakening.

The Seven Bhikkhus' Supreme Effort

Our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin was fond of telling us stories of meditators who could not reach the desired goal on account of their eagerness and desperate efforts, thereby missing the essence of the true Dhamma. Another story about Pukkusāti in a previous life illustrates this point.[4] During the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, when the Buddha's Teachings were on the decline, Pukkusāti was one of seven bhikkhus who made a vow to meditate until they attained Arahatship, or die in the attempt. Accordingly, they climbed a very high mountain that was so steep they had to use ladders near the top. When they reached the top, they threw the ladders down so that there could be no retreat. Their leader became an Arahat, and the second an Anāgāmī—passing into the Suddhāvasa Brahmā world. The others were reborn during this Buddha era as Pukkusāti, Bāhiya-Dārucīriya, Kumāra-Kassapa, Dabba-Mallaputta, and Sabhiya. In his former life, Pukkusāti died of hunger on the seventh day and thus the Buddha taught him the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta,[5] which deals with

4. See *Buddhist Legends,* II 222f.
5. *Majjhima Nikāya,* Sutta 140. This sutta is the counterpart in the discourses (Sutta Piṭaka) of the Vibhaṅga in the Abhidhamma which shows how general statements of truth can be analysed in terms of ultimate truth.

the six elements of earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. The Teacher knew where Pukkusāti was stuck and so just the right kind of medicine was prescribed for the particular illness. The same was true for Bāhiya-Dārucīriya. In both cases their technique of meditation was correct, but there was something missing and they could not untangle themselves. The Buddha knew this when he met Pukkusāti and Dārucīriya and gave the teaching best suited to them. You see, Buddhas have the ability to know every past existence of a person. They also know every thought occurring in a person and the causes underlying the effects in a person.

In my later talks, I shall be dealing in more detail with Dārucīriya, Kumāra-Kassapa, Dabba-Mallaputta, and Sabhiya. Out of these five, only Pukkusāti and Dārucīriya could not become bhikkhus because they had not worked in their past lives to become bhikkhus in the Saṅgha. If one has given robes and other requisites to the bhikkhus and is well-perfected, the Buddha will admit him into the Community of Bhikkhus by merely uttering "Ehi, Bhikkhu" ("Come, bhikkhu") and that will constitute one's admission. With this in mind, in Buddhist countries, such as Burma and Thailand, the lay disciples are ordained themselves and also help those near and dear to them to be ordained—once as a novice when they are a teenager and a second time when they have reached the age of twenty as fully ordained bhikkhus. In addition, people offer robes and the other items of the eight requisites to the bhikkhus.

DAY ONE: EVENING DISCOURSE

Sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ
kusalassa upasampadā
Sacitta-pariyodapanaṃ
etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

To abstain from evil,
To do good,
To purify the mind.
These are the Teachings of all the Buddhas.

Dhammapada v 183

Morality, Concentration, and Insight

This verse from the *Dhammapada* gives the essence of the Teachings of the Buddha very concisely. We can expand this brief statement to include the Path to Awakening, the Noble Eightfold Path. The noble Eightfold Path is divided into three parts: Morality (Sīla), Concentration or One-pointedness of Mind (Samādhi), and Wisdom or Insight (Paññā).

"To abstain from evil" is to refrain from doing evil deeds. This is morality, observing the precepts, Sīla.

"To do good" means to bring about what is good, to cultivate good, and to keep oneself filled with good. To do that we must keep our minds free from evil. The mind is free of evil when it is concentrated, when one-pointedness of mind (Samādhi) is achieved. When the mind is fully concentrated it is in a state of purity and at such times we are beyond the sensual planes (the Kāma planes) and we are free from unwholesome or negative forces (Akusala forces). This is a Jhānic state of mind, a state of absorption.

"To purify the mind" is to practise so that one gains Right Knowledge, Right Understanding or Right View. This is Wisdom or Insight (Paññā). We have come here to undergo the training based on moral living (Sīla) leading to concentration (Samādhi) leading to wisdom (Paññā). We will undergo this training for ten days, long enough for us to see results. This training is also known as the Training in Higher Morality, the Training in Higher Mental (Development), and the Training in Higher Wisdom (Adhisīla-sikkhā, Adhicitta-sikkhā, Adhipaññā-sikkhā).

In other words, we are going to practise the Noble Eightfold Path, the Path that was laid down by the Buddha Gotama over 2500 years ago in his First Sermon, named in Pāḷi the Dhamma-cakka-pavattana-sutta: The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Doctrine. He taught this to the five ascetics who had accompanied him during the six years he struggled to attain Awakening. This Eightfold Path is the means to the end, the end of suffering. The essence of the Eightfold Path is summed up in the three steps of Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom. This is the path the student should follow strictly and diligently.

At one time, the Buddha came back from a journey through the country accompanied by five hundred bhikkhus.[1] These bhikkhus were seated in the hall at Sāvatthi discussing the paths they had walked along. "The path to such and such a village is smooth," they said. "The path to such and such a village is rough." They talked of paths covered with pebbles or without pebbles. The Buddha, realizing the bhikkhus were ready to attain full Awakening, that is to say Arahatship, went to the hall and took his seat. He asked the bhikkhus what they had been talking about and they told him. "Bhikkhus," he said, "this is a path foreign to our interests. A bhikkhu should walk on the Noble Path, for that is the only way for him to obtain release from all suffering." And he spoke the following stanzas which are found in the *Dhammapada* (verses 273 - 276):

> The Eightfold Path is the best of Paths. The Four Noble Truths are the best of truths. Freedom from desire is the best of states. He that has eyes to see is the best of men.

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1. For the story see *Buddhist Legends*, III 149.

This is the only Path. No other Path leads to Purity of Vision. Walk on this Path. In this way you will confound Māra, the hindrance to Liberation.

Enter this Path and you will make an end of suffering. This is the Path I preached as soon as I had learned how to remove the arrow of craving.

You yourself must put forth effort. The Perfect Ones (the Tathāgatas) are only guides. By meditation those who walk this Path win release from the bondage of Māra.

At the end of the stanzas, the five hundred bhikkhus attained Arahatship. This is not because it is easy to attain Awakening, but because they had worked sufficiently before and only needed a little extra encouragement to reach the goal.

The Noble Eightfold Path[2]

Now what is the Noble Eightfold Path? The first three steps are Moral Actions (Sīla):

1. Sammā-vācā: Right Speech
2. Sammā-kammanta: Right Action
3. Sammā-ājiva: Right Livelihood.

Then comes Concentration, Equanimity of Mind (Samādhi), the next three steps:

4. Sammā-vāyāma: Right Exertion or Right Effort
5. Sammā-sati: Right Attentiveness or Right Mindfulness
6. Sammā-samādhi: Right Concentration or Right Collectedness.

The last two steps comprise Wisdom or Insight (Paññā):

7. Sammā-saṅkappa: Right Contemplation or Right Thought
8. Sammā-diṭṭhi: Right Understanding or Right View.

Now let us examine the steps of the Path in more detail. With morality we have Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood.

Right Speech means speech which is truthful, beneficial, and neither foul nor malicious. It can be divided into four parts:

1. Refraining from telling lies.
2. Refraining from back-biting and slander or false accusation.

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2. For more details see Ledi Sayadaw, *The Noble Eightfold Path (The Wheel)*, nos. 245-247.

3. Refraining from using abusive language, harsh words, speech which is harmful to others.
4. Refraining from frivolous talk, such as telling legends, and fables, talk which is useless.

During our ten days of meditation, Noble Silence will assure us of Right Speech. You will notice that in defining Right Speech, we have given the types of speech to be avoided. If we avoid wrong speech, what is left is Right Speech. If we keep Noble Silence, we do not have to worry about whether our speech is right or not.

For Right Action, we also have a definition which gives us the types of action to avoid: we refrain from killing, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct.

Let us look at refraining from killing in a little more detail to help us understand better what is involved.[3] What constitutes killing a sentient being? First of all it must *be* a sentient being. You must *know* it is a sentient being and you must *intend* to kill it. Then you must *make an effort* to kill it. That includes taking action yourself or encouraging someone else to do so. And finally the being *must be killed.* So we can see how important the mental factor is. If we accidentally step on an insect in the garden, we need not feel guilty about that. But any conscious killing, ranging from killing the eggs of lice or bugs or causing abortion to the slaughter of any living creature, including human beings—that is wrong action.

Refraining from taking what is not given means abstaining from taking, with the intention to steal, animate or inanimate property which belongs to someone—removing or appropriating such property without the owner's consent, either by our own physical effort or by inciting someone else to do so.

Refraining from sexual misconduct means any sexual act which would cause pain and suffering to others. Adultery, for example, causes the disruption of marriages. Also included are rape, improper sexual relations of a man with a girl under the guardianship of her father, mother, or someone else taking responsibility for her. It is also wrong to have improper relations with a minor or with any other person unless you are legally

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3. See Saya U Tint Yee, "What Have You Gained by Your Meditation?" *(The Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin*, p. 48) and Ledi Sayadaw "The Manual of the Constituents of the Noble Path (Maggaṅga Dīpanī)," *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 244 ("Five conditions of Pāṇātipāta").

married to that person. This restraint also includes other sensual pleasures and means we should abstain from intoxicants, gambling with cards, dice and so forth.

The third part of moral action is Right Livelihood. Right Livelihood means living by trades that do not increase the suffering of other beings. This means we avoid trading in slaves, manufacturing weapons and trading in intoxicants or drugs. There are four types of wrong livelihood: (1) one that is based on wrong conduct, (2) one that is based on improper means or methods, (3) one based on the deception of others, and (4) one based on a low, unworthy art or practice.

Wrong conduct includes the types of wrong actions and wrong speech we have already mentioned. We should refrain from killing sentient beings, etc. We should refrain from making our living through lying and the other forms of wrong speech. There are five kinds of merchandise which should not be sold: weapons, living beings, meat, intoxicants, and poisons. If we refrain from these kinds of wrong livelihood, then Right Livelihood is practised.

The wrong livelihood described as "improper means" refers to the sort of wrong livelihood which should not be practised by Buddhist bhikkhus or by lay hermits, such as Isis or Rishis, who are a class of lay disciples in Burma and India. They should not make their living by acquiring gifts and offerings improperly. For example, they should not give fruits or flowers, etc. to families in hopes of receiving something better in return. And they should not give medical preparations or flatter people or act as their messenger.

Five improper practices are mentioned: (1) trickery and deception by working wonders, giving people the impression that one possesses extraordinary qualities such as great virtue when in actual fact one does not. (2) Then there is improper talk designed to please donors so they will give a gift. (3). One should not make gestures or give hints inviting offerings. (4) One should not make threats in order to oblige people to make offerings. (5) And one should not give a small gift in order to get a bigger gift in return.

Low, unworthy arts or practices apply especially to bhikkhus, but can be applied to householders as well. This includes such worldly arts as prophesying by palmistry and interpreting other marks on the body, astrology, and other such low arts which are contrary to the bhikkhu's practice of the Dhamma.

The Buddha gave rules for the bhikkhus and lay people to guide them in keeping Sīla. For the bhikkhus there are 227 rules. But we are not bhikkhus here and do not need to know them for our work. As laymen, we should keep either the five precepts or the eight rules of conduct. For new students the five precepts will be enough. Old students should keep the additional three precepts.

Let us look at the Five Precepts (Pañca-sīla):

1. Pāṇātipātā: Abstaining from killing sentient beings. This we have already explained. Life is the most precious possession of any living being. This serves to develop compassion.
2. Adinnādānā: Abstaining from taking what is not given. This serves as a check against improper desires for possessions.
3. Kāmesu micchācārā: abstaining from sexual mis-conduct. Sexual desire is dormant in everyone. It is irresistible to almost everyone. Improper sexual expression is therefore prohibited.
4. Musāvādā: Abstaining from telling lies. This precept is included to fulfil by way of speech the essence of truth.
5. Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā: Abstaining from intoxicants. If we are intoxicated, we lose our ability to keep our minds steady, our ability to reason. These are essential if we are to realize the truth.

These are the Precepts we have all undertaken to keep. We are not likely to kill each other. But we must also remember not to swat a mosquito if it bothers us. Our needs are not very great. Our food is provided. So it should be easy to refrain from taking what is not ours. For these ten days, we will refrain from any sexual expression whatever, so we do not need to worry about that. With Noble Silence we know that our speech is not wrong. And we should refrain from taking any drugs or drinks that could cloud the mind. On the other hand, there may be medicines which are necessary for our life and safety.

For the old students there are three more precepts to be followed:

6. Vikāla-bhojanā: Abstaining from taking food at an unseasonable time.
7. Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūkadassana mālāgandhavile-panadhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanaṭṭhānā: Abstaining from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows, from the

use of garlands, perfumes, unguents, and from things that tend to beautify and adorn us.

8. Uccāsayana-mahāsayanā: Abstaining from using high and luxurious seats. These might be conducive to laziness and to making us feel proud.

Abstaining from taking food at an unseasonable time means not eating after noon. These eight precepts are those kept by Buddhists four times during the lunar month, days corresponding to the four phases of the moon. These are called Uposatha days, or Fasting Days, in the sense that no solid food is taken after noon.

During the time of the Buddha there were five hundred lay disciples who did not keep even the first five precepts.[4] They thought it was enough to make an effort to keep only one precept. So some abstained from killing, others from telling lies, and so forth. One day they started arguing about which precept was the most difficult. "It is very difficult. The precept I am keeping is very hard to respect." Finally they went to the Buddha to have him tell them which was the most difficult precept. But the Buddha did not single out any one of the precepts. "All the precepts are hard to keep," he told the laymen. And he gave them the stanzas which we find in the *Dhammapada* (verses 246 - 248):

Yo pāṇam atipāteti
musāvādañ ca bhāsati
Loke adinnam ādiyati
paradārañ ca gacchati
Surāmerayapānañ ca
yo naro anuyuñjati
Idh'evam eso lokasmiṃ
mūlaṃ khaṇati attano.
Evaṃ bho purisa jānāhi
pāpadhammā asaññatā
Mā taṃ lobho adhammo ca
ciraṃ dukkhāya randhayuṃ.

Whoever in this world destroys life, tells lies, takes what is not given, goes to other men's wives, and is addicted to intoxicating drinks, he digs up his roots in this world. Know this, good man: It is not easy to restrain yourself

4. For the story, see *Buddhist Legends*, III 125

from evil. Do not let greed and unrighteousness oppress you with protracted suffering.

So we must strive to keep all the precepts. If we break any of them, that will cause us suffering later on.

The Story of Mahādhana

It is difficult for us to appreciate how fortunate we are to be human beings with an opportunity to practise meditation and through it to bring an end to all the suffering we experience. In *The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation,* Sayagyi U Ba Khin explains how long we must work to reach Awakening. To become an Arahat, we must work approximately one hundred to one thousand world cycles. We can work for that long, but if we miss the chance to work for liberation when the opportunity comes, all that work can go to waste. This was the case of Mahādhana, the son of a treasurer during the time of the Buddha.[5] Mahādhana was born in a very rich family in Benares. His parents decided that since they were wealthy, their son could enjoy himself as he wished, and the only studies he did consisted in learning to play musical instruments. He married a girl from a family equally wealthy. His wife had learned to sing and dance, but no more.

A group of young men in the city decided to corrupt Mahādhana. They seated themselves in a spot where he was sure to see them on his way to the palace and started drinking strong drink and having a feast. Mahādhana asked his servant what they were drinking. Was it good? "Master," his servant answered, "there is no drink in this world that compares to this drink." So he had a little brought in order to try it. And then he asked for more, and soon it became a habit with him. The young men flocked around him and helped him spend all his wealth on food, drink, flowers and perfumes. When his money was gone he spent all his wife's money. He sold all his property and wound up a pauper. Finally he and his wife were reduced to eating food left over from other people's kitchens.

One day, the Buddha saw them and smiled. Now when a Buddha smiles, there is always a reason, and his attendant Ānanda asked him why he had smiled. "Just look at Mahādhana," he replied. "He has squandered two fortunes and now he and his wife are begging alms. If he had not squandered his wealth, but had applied himself to business while he was in the prime of life, he

5. See *Buddhist Legends,* II 346-348.

would have become the chief treasurer. If he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained full Awakening, Arahatship, and his wife would have reached the third stage of Awakening. If he had applied himself in business when he was middle-aged, he would have become second treasurer, or if he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained the fruit of the third stage of Awakening—he would have become an Anāgāmī—and his wife would have become established in the second stage of Awakening, she would have become a Sakadāgāmī. If he had applied himself in business late in life, he would have become third treasurer, or, if he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained the fruit of the second path and his wife would have been established in the first stage of Awakening, she would have become a Sotāpanna." And the Buddha pronounced the following stanzas which are to be found in the *Dhammapada* (verses 155 - 156):

Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ
aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ
Jiṇṇakoñcā va jhāyanti
khīṇamacche va pallale.
Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ
aladdhā yobbane dhanaṃ
Senti cāpātikhīṇā va
purāṇāni anutthunaṃ.

Those who do not lead the Holy Life, those who do not obtain wealth in their youth, perish like decrepit herons in a pond where the fish have died out.

Those who do not lead the Holy Life, those who do not obtain wealth in their youth, lie about like worn-out bows and they bewail by-gone days.

We can see from the comments the Buddha made concerning Mahādhana that he and his wife had done all that was necessary to reach Awakening. But they missed their opportunity because of their immoral conduct. In the case of the wife we can deduce that because of some past deed she was bound with such a careless husband. So we should not miss our chance and we should not lose any time in working. The sooner we begin, the better we work, the better the results will be.

The Buddha told the disciples of Pāṭaligāma that there are five dangers awaiting those who break the precepts and five blessings

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that come to those who keep the precepts.[6] The five perils that await the man who is unvirtuous are: loss of wealth through his heedlessness, bad reputation, feeling timid and troubled when he enters an assembly of people—whether they be nobles, priests, householders or ascetics—and he dies with his mind bewildered; when the body breaks up after death, he is reborn in a realm of misery, an unhappy state, in a lower world, in hell.

The five blessings that come to a virtuous man are great increase of wealth through his diligence, a good reputation, he feels confident when he enters an assembly of people, he has a serene death and after death, when the body breaks up, he is reborn in a happy realm, in a heavenly world.

Most important for us here is that virtuous living makes it possible for us to develop Right Concentration. If we are free from worrying about bad actions, if we have not been indulging in distracting activities, then our minds can calm down, we can achieve a tranquil mind.

Samādhi

The Buddha pointed out that those who are fully Awakened, the Arahats, observe the eight precepts throughout their entire life. We who aspire to Awakening should follow the example of the Arahats.[7]

So we come to the second part of the Noble Eightfold Path: Samādhi. This includes Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

We must make the right kind of effort, the right kind of exertion, if we are to attain Right Attentiveness. Unless we make a determined effort to narrow down the range of thoughts of our wavering, unsteady minds, we cannot expect to acquire the attentiveness of mind which helps us to bring the mind, by means of Right Concentration, to a state of One-pointedness and Equanimity. When the mind is in a state of One-pointedness, it will be freed from the hindrances: it will be pure and tranquil, illumined within and without. The mind in such a state becomes powerful and bright. Outside it is represented by a light which is just a mental reflection, with the light varying in degrees from that of a star to that of a sun. This light, which is reflected before the

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6. See *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I 89-91. Also translated in *The Life of the Buddha* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978).
7. See the Buddha's discourse to the laywoman Visākhā on observing special days (Uposatha), *The Gradual Sayings*, I 190-192.

mind's eye in complete darkness, is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity and serenity of the mind.

The students in these courses are helped to develop the power of concentration to one-pointedness by encouraging them to focus their attention on a spot on the upper lip at the base of the nose, synchronizing the inward and outward motion of respiration with the silent awareness of the in-breath and out-breath. Whether we believe that life is the result of past actions, the result of mental forces (Saṅkhāras), or whether we believe life to be a gift from some god, the symbol of life is the same: it is the rhythm, pulsation or vibration latent in man. The respiration is, in fact, a reflection of this symbol of life. In Ānāpāna meditation, which we are practising now, the great advantage of the technique is that breathing is not only a natural function of the body, it is also available at all times. Through the observation of our breathing, we can anchor our attention at any time on the breath, to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

With determined effort, we narrow down the range of our thoughts. At first, we fix our mind on the area around the nose, mindful of each breath. Gradually the breaths become shorter and shorter, and our attention is limited to a spot on the upper lip. We feel the warm air as we breathe out and the cool air as we breathe in. There is no reason why a student of meditation should not be able to secure one-pointedness of mind with a few days' training.

Paññā

The last division of the Noble Eightfold Path is Wisdom (Paññā). Knowledge can be acquired in three ways:

(1) By listening to others or through reading,
(2) By thinking and analysing,
(3) By personal experience.

It is only when our knowledge comes through personal experience that we can truly, permanently abide in the Teachings. But we will go into more detail concerning wisdom when we come to the second stage of our meditation practice.

Practising Ānāpāna

Our task these first few days is to practise Ānāpāna. There are three things to know as continuously as possible: (1) the breath entering the nostrils, (2) the breath going out of the nostrils, (3) and the spot at the base of the nose on the upper lip. This spot is

the focusing point, the point of reference. You must be aware that you are breathing in as you breathe in. You must be aware that you are breathing out as you breathe out. At times, in order to steady your mind, you may need to note mentally "in" as you breath in, "out" as you breathe out.

At times you may confuse them, and you will not note them correctly. When that happens you should start over. Breathe intentionally, consciously. Make a continuous, steadfast effort. It is not necessary to read about this or talk about it or think about it. The only thing to do is to do it. Reading or talking or thinking will just be time spent with your attention diverted, and that will be a hindrance to your Samādhi. If you talk too much or think too much, you will find your conversations and thoughts coming back again when you try to meditate.

So if you wish to make progress, just concentrate on the Development of the Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpāna Bhāvanā). The course is only ten days, so during this period you should refrain from talking and thinking. Just keep on knowing the in-breath and the out-breath at the focal point at all times. The Buddha said, "It will be to your benefit if you could keep on knowing your respiration even when you are answering the call of nature." You may find it impossible to keep continuous awareness. Even so you must try your utmost.

Venerable Webu Sayadaw was gracious enough to visit the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon, Burma, many years ago when Sayagyi U Ba Khin was teaching there. Venerable Webu Sayadaw is believed to have reached the highest level of perfect peace and happiness. He asked us what we gained by sleeping. "Nothing," was our reply. "Then why do you sleep?" he asked. What he meant was that the time spent on sleep could be more profitably utilized if used for meditation. Webu Sayadaw told us that we have slept for too long and should minimize the time spent on it. There are many meditation centres in Burma where the bhikkhus teach people to meditate until midnight and to get up again at four o'clock the next morning. Our schedule here is much more relaxed, like the schedule at IMC-Rangoon. You should be sure to follow the schedule.

About thirty years ago, two American ladies came to IMC-Rangoon. When they arrived, Sayagyi told them about the meditation program and that they were to wake up at 4 a.m. each morning. One woman replied that she could not wake up before 8 a.m. Sayagyi told her to try to follow the schedule. She replied

that she could not get up that early, and that she was not used to obeying orders, particularly from men.

Sayagyi told her that he was there to offer to all who came the fruits of the Dhamma and that she had come to the centre to receive what was being offered there. So it was up to her to take it or leave it. He explained also that the schedule was set up in order to give the students maximum benefits. By not following it, she would be the loser.

Then Sayagyi cited another example. There was an elderly American woman who, on the night of her arrival, had already spent twenty hours on an airplane. She was feeling pretty tired. In spite of that, she woke up at 4 a.m. the next morning and began her meditation. You may be in the same circumstances as this American woman, coming from far away countries.

You will notice that the person who had the right amount of Pāramīs, or good deeds done in the past, needed no persuasion. The result of her following the timetable was that she made good progress in her meditation; by that I mean that she acquired peace and tranquillity to a fair extent.

The Dhamma eliminates suffering and offers peace and tranquillity. We have seen many cases where students have attained this to some extent by following the schedule and the rules and regulations of the meditation camp. Of all the rules and regulations, the most important is to observe Noble Silence throughout the entire ten days. There should be no talking among the students. But if you need something, you can approach the manager or the teachers. If you have an urgent need for anything, you should approach the managers. But running after the managers to have them solve every little problem is not good. Only go to them when it is absolutely necessary.

There are times when the students would like to see the teachers concerning the practice or the technique. They are welcome. Each day, there will be a time set aside for this purpose. As there may be several students waiting for an interview, each student should be to the point and brief, so as to give time for others also.

DAY TWO: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Discourse on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Dhamma[1]

At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasi, in the deer park at Isipatana. There, the Blessed One addressed the group of five bhikkhus [Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji, who had been with him when he had tried to attain Awakening through the austere practices]:

The Middle Way. "Bhikkhus, one who has gone forth should not resort to these two extremes. What are the two? There is this [extreme] which is connected with sensual desire: being attached to the sensual pleasures of a life of luxury which is inferior, vulgar, associated with the ordinary man, ignoble, and associated with what is unprofitable. And there is this [other extreme] of being attached to exhausting oneself which is misery (Dukkha), ignoble, and associated with what is unprofitable.

"Now, bhikkhus, having given up both of these extremes, the Perfected One (Tathāgata) has become fully Awakened to a middle way that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna.

The Noble Eightfold Path. "And what is the middle way, bhikkhus, to which the Perfected One has become fully Awakened, [the way] that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna? It is just this, the Noble Eightfold Path; that is to say: (1) Right Thought, (2) Right View, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Action, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration.

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1. Vinaya Piṭaka (Mahavagga Khandhaka) and Saṃyutta Nikāya, V 420ff. In preparing this translation, we have consulted *The Book of the Discipline,* IV 15-19; and *The Life of the Buddha*, 42-44.

"It is this, bhikkhus, this middle way, that the Perfected One has been fully Awakened to, [the way] that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna.

The Four Noble Truths. "Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering (Dukkha): birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, separation from the pleasant is suffering, this longing for what one does not receive is suffering—to summarize: [material form, sensations, perceptions, conditioned mental states and consciousness,] the five aggregates which sustain renewed existence are suffering.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering: It is this craving (Taṇhā) which leads to rebirth, which is highly delighted in various sorts (of desire) that are accompanied by being delighted and by passion; that is to say, craving for sensual desire, craving for (an eternal) existence, craving for non-existence.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: it is cessation, the total absence of craving, giving up, letting go, release, detachment.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path itself. That is to say, Right Thought, Right View, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

The Twelve Aspects of the Four Noble Truths. " 'This is the Noble Truth of Suffering,'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of Suffering must be completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of Suffering has been completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'This is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering must be completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering has been completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'This is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering must be completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering has been completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'This is the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering must be completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

" 'And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been completely known'—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before

concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

"Bhikkhus, as long as I had not become thoroughly purified in these twelve aspects of knowledge and seeing through correctly developing these three stages of the Four Noble Truths, I did not declare that I had become fully Awakened to that thorough (Self-) Awakening unsurpassed in the world of Devas including the Māras and Brahmās, in this generation of recluses and Brahmans, and in (this world) of Devas and men.

"But when, bhikkhus, I had become thoroughly purified in these twelve aspects of knowledge and seeing through correctly developing these three stages of the Four Noble Truths, I then declared that I had become fully Awakened to that thorough (Self-) Awakening, unsurpassed in the world of Devas, including the Māras and Brahmās, in this generation of recluses and Brahmans, and in (this world) of Devas and men.

"Then, there arose in me knowledge and sight. Release is unshakable for me. This is the last birth. Now there will be no rebirth."

This is what the Blessed One said. Delighted, the group of five bhikkhus rejoiced at what the Blessed One said.

The Awakening of Koṇḍañña and the Rejoicing of the Devas and Brahmās. Furthermore, as this explanation was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Koṇḍañña the stainless, spotless Vision of the Truth: "Whatever phenomena arise, all such phenomena cease."

And when the Blessed One set rolling the Wheel of the Dhamma, the earth Devas proclaimed the news: "The unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma set rolling by the Blessed One at Bārāṇasi in the deer park at Isipatana cannot be rolled back by a recluse, Brahman, Deva, Māra, Brahmā, or by anyone in the world."

Having heard the news of the earth Devas, the Devas of the Four Great Kings [who guard the four quarters] . . . the Tāvatimsa Devas . . . the Yāma Devas . . . the Tusita Devas . . . the Nimmanarati Devas . . . the Paranimmita-vasavatti Devas . . . and the Brahma-kāyika Devas proclaimed the news: "The unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma set rolling by the Blessed One at Bārāṇasi in the deer park at Isipatana cannot be rolled back by a recluse, Brahman, Deva, Māra, Brahmā, or by anyone in the world."

Thus, in that moment, in that second, in that instant, the news reached as far as the Brahmā world, and the ten thousand-fold world systems trembled, quaked, shook violently and a radiance, splendid, measureless, surpassing the glory of the devas appeared in the world.

Then the Blessed One spoke this solemn utterance, "Indeed, Koṇḍañña has understood. Indeed, Koṇḍañña has understood." Thus it was that Aññāta-Koṇḍañña [Koṇḍañña who has understood] became the name of the Venerable Koṇḍañña.

Aññata-Koṇḍañña's Ordination. Then the Venerable Annāta-Koṇḍañña, having seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, having crossed over doubt, having put away uncertainty, having attained without another's help to full confidence in the Teacher's instruction, spoke thus to the Blessed One, "Sir, may I receive the going forth from the Blessed One, may I receive (full) ordination?"

"Come, bhikkhu," the Blessed One said, "the Dhamma has been well taught. Practise the holy life rightly in order to make an end to suffering." And this was this venerable one's ordination.

[Then the Buddha taught the other four bhikkhus, and Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji attained Awakening and received the going forth and full ordination from the Buddha.]

The Background to the Teaching of the First Sermon[2]

Yesterday we mentioned that after becoming Awakened, the Buddha hesitated to teach. He knew that the Dhamma is profound, hard to see, hard to realize. It is the most peaceful goal, superior to all other goals. It cannot be attained by mere reason. And the Buddha saw that the people in the world were bound by attachments. It would be difficult for them to see the truth and reach Nibbāna. "And if I taught the Dhamma," he thought, "others would not understand me, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me."

At that time the Brahmā Sahaṃpati read the thoughts of the Buddha. He had been associated with him in his past lives. He realized that if the Buddha decided not to teach, the world would be lost. So he went to the Buddha and after paying respects, he said, "Lord, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma. . . . There are creatures with only a little dust on their eyes who are wasting

2. See *The Life of the Buddha*, pp. 37-39.

away through not hearing the Doctrine. Some of them will gain full Awakening."

The Buddha listened to Brahmā Sahaṃpati's plea. Out of compassion for creatures, he surveyed the world with the eye of One who is Awakened. Just as in a pond of blue, red or white lotuses, some lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without coming up out of it some other lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water rest on the water's surface, and some other lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water come right up out of the water and stand clear, unwetted by it, so too, he saw creatures with little dust on their eyes and with much dust on their eyes, with keen faculties and with dull faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. When he had seen all this, he spoke to the Brahmā Sahaṃpati:

> "Wide open are the portals of the Deathless. Let those who hear show faith. If I was inclined not to teach the sublime Doctrine that I know, it was because I saw it would be vexing to teach it."

Next the Buddha considered whom he should teach first. The two teachers, Āḷāra and Uddaka, with whom he had worked before, had both died and could not be taught. Then it occurred to him, "The five ascetics who attended me while I was engaged in my struggle were very helpful. Suppose I taught the Doctrine to them first?"

So the Buddha went to the five ascetics and taught them the First Sermon with which we began. As we saw, this sermon describes the Middle Way which leads to Nibbāna. This Middle Way avoids extremes. So we see that we must work in a balanced way. If we are too caught up in seeking sensual pleasures, we will never be able to concentrate properly. Nor should we be too severe. If we force too much, that too will become a distraction.

The Buddha went on to describe the Noble Eightfold Path which we discussed yesterday. But the Eightfold Path is incomplete in itself, so the Buddha next gave the Four Noble Truths. And he emphasized how thoroughly he had to understand the Four Noble Truths before he reached full Awakening without anyone to teach him.

Koṇḍañña was the first to understand for himself the Teachings of the Buddha. He was the first to become ordained as a bhikkhu

with the words "Ehi bhikkhu"—"Come, bhikkhu." For the other four ascetics, more instruction was needed, so the Buddha taught them during the next four days. They too attained Awakening and were ordained.

On the fifth day, the Buddha gave the second discourse, the Discourse on the Characteristic of No Self (Anattā-lakkhaṇa Sutta). At the end of this discourse, all five bhikkhus attained full Awakening, Arahatship.

The Story of Sātāgira, Hemavata, and Kaḷī[3]

When the Buddha preached the first sermon, many beings in other planes were listening too, including five hundred earth-bound yakkhas, with their leader Sātāgira. Yakkhas are a kind of ogre. Now Sātāgira could not give his full attention to the discourse because he was thinking of his friend, another yakkha named Hemavata. They had agreed that if anything unusual should happen they would tell each other. As Sātāgira listened, he thought to himself that Gotama must be a true Buddha. His teaching was good and it was effective. He wanted to invite his friend to hear the sermon of the Buddha giving the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths.

Now when the Buddha gave the first sermon, thirty-two marvels were manifested, even in the Himalayas where Sātāgira's friend Hemavata resided with five hundred followers. Fruit trees bore fruit out of season. Flowers appeared on the trees out of season, and so forth. Hemavata wanted to invite his friend to see these marvels.

As yakkhas, Sātāgira and Hemavata could go through the air. So, coming towards each other from opposite directions, they met above Rājagaha. Just as they met, a woman named Kāḷī came up to the veranda on top of her palace. The weather was warm and the house was stuffy. She was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and having difficulty, so she went up to enjoy the cool, fresh air. And she heard the two yakkhas discussing the Buddha's teaching. Hemavata was asking his friend, "What are the qualities of the Buddha? Is Gotama a real Buddha? Does he practise what he preaches?" And he asked many similar questions regarding the Dhamma and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Sayagyi told this story in a radio talk he gave in 1950, and at this point he said, "On hearing this discussion Kāḷī was 'short-

3. See *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, II 1091ff.

circuited,' and she was established in the first stage of Awakening."

Sayagyi pointed out that if we read between the lines in this story, we will see that even though Kāḷī lived far from Bārāṇasi, she was established in the first fruition state by merely hearing the Dhamma through a conversation between two yakkhas. She was foremost among all the disciples to get the fruition state through the hearing of the Dhamma from someone else rather than directly from the Buddha.

The story of the two yakkhas is also instructive. In a former life, they had been bhikkhus who were very proficient in the rules for bhikkhus, and they gave decisions concerning the meaning of the rules when there was a disagreement. One day, two bhikkhus had a disagreement. One of them left their monastery and went to stay with two learned bhikkhus during the rainy season. Even though his offense was minor and he was in the wrong, he wanted to win the two learned elders over to his side.

He stayed with them and was a very obedient servant during the rainy season. When it was over he went to take leave of the two elders. He paid his respects and made a request, "If a bhikkhu comes and asks for a judgement concerning such and such a rule, please keep silent and say nothing." They showed their consent by remaining silent. The bhikkhu went back to his own monastery and quarrelled with the other bhikkhu concerning his offense. Then the other bhikkhu went to the two elders for a judgement. The elders were silent and he was defeated. The bhikkhu returned saying, "The Buddha's Dispensation (Sāsana) has been ruined by these two elders." Now this was a grave offense on the part of the two elders, so after they died, because of this, they became yakkhas.

Here, Sayagyi gave a word of caution, "Not only did these two elders become yakkhas, but also their followers became yakkhas—five hundred for each elder. Be careful," Sayagyi warned, "for if your teacher goes wrong, you will also go wrong. The pupil follows in the teacher's footsteps."

In our work here, we are following the Teachings of the Buddha given in the First Sermon. We are working to realize the Four Noble Truths by following the Noble Eightfold Path. We develop in morality through keeping the precepts. With Ānāpāna meditation, we are developing concentration during

these first few days. And soon we will work for insight through Vipassanā meditation.

Controlling the Mind

You have probably found that it is very difficult to control the mind. Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in one of his discourses, gave these instructions:

"You've probably seen cowboys in the movies trying to tame wild horses. The horses are always kicking and jumping and struggling, never staying still for very long. Well, the mind is like those wild horses, never staying still for very long on any particular object. In addition it never dwells within the body for long. This is because ever since birth our minds have always dwelled on external objects perceived through the senses, such as sights, sounds, scents, tastes, touch sensations and thoughts.

"In Ānāpāna meditation we work to note, to know, to be aware of, to observe each and every in-coming and out-going breath. The purpose of this is to provide a means whereby the restless flittering mind can be drawn back to a particular object or base, thus bringing the mind under control. Just as an untamed calf must be tied to a stake to prevent it from wandering away, so too must the mind be tied down to the 'stake' (the base of the nose) by the 'rope' (the knowing of each in-coming and out-going breath) to make it calm and steady. When such a state has been attained to a certain extent, then one has achieved Samādhi. Only when Samādhi has been achieved can Vipassanā meditation be practised.

"Even the Buddha, when he made the vow to sit and meditate until he attained Awakening, had much difficulty in achieving Samādhi during the early part of the night. He was distracted by the forces of Māra and his mind wandered here and there. It was only when Samādhi was attained that Right Knowledge came to him, enabling him to attain full Awakening. So you must understand that Samādhi is very important.

"This is a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice," Sayagyi said. "We must advance step by step. We have three important basic factors: Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā. Sīla is the base. It is the means by which physical and verbal immorality is kept under control. Samādhi, achieved through Ānāpāna meditation, is the means through which immoral thoughts are held in abeyance. Paññā, achieved through Vipassanā meditation, totally eliminates, by stages, all impurities.

"Only when a person has Sīla can he acquire Samādhi. And only with Samādhi can he acquire Paññā. Paññā cannot be acquired without Samādhi and without Sīla there can be no Samādhi."

The Seven Stages of Purification

Then Sayagyi explained the seven steps of purification which are found in a discussion between the Buddha's chief disciple Sāriputta and a bhikkhu named Puṇṇa,[4] the son of Mantāṇi. These same seven stages of purification are used to structure *The Path of Purification* by Ashin Mahā-Buddhaghosa. When Venerable Sāriputta questioned the Venerable Puṇṇa concerning the reason a person should follow the Buddha's Teachings, Puṇṇa said it was for the ultimate goal reached through the seven stages of purification. He compared these stages to seven different chariots that King Pasenadi of Kosala might use in relay if he had to go from Sāvatthī to Sāketa on urgent business. The seven chariots are like the seven stages of purification. These are: (1) purification of morality, (2) purification of the mind, or consciousness, (3) purification of view, (4) purification by overcoming doubt, (5) purification of knowledge and vision of what is the Path and of what is not the Path, (6) purification by knowledge and vision of progress along the Path, and finally, (7) purification of knowledge and vision.

"The base is purification of morality," Sayagyi explained. "This means purity of physical and verbal conduct. Only after achieving this can one achieve purification of the mind, the result of Samādhi. This means purity of thoughts. All the other steps of purification, from purification of views on up come under the heading of Right Knowledge. They are achieved through Vipassanā meditation, through insight. So here again you can see the importance of Samādhi, because without it you cannot practise Vipassanā successfully.

Mindfulness of Breathing

"Now then, you'll be meditating in the hall all day, trying your best with a lot of energy and sweat to keep the mind steady, trying to prevent it from wandering. But when evening comes you'll come out and take a stroll. And as you do, what happens? You have to open your eyes and you can't help but gaze up to the far

4. *The Middle Length Sayings*, I 189-194.

horizon. And as you do, immediately your thoughts begin to dwell on the objects you see and whatever Samādhi you attained vanishes. That is why, in the old days, bhikkhus sought the seclusion of caves and forests, and there, in the darkness, without even the sound of a falling leaf to disturb them, they meditated. Yet some of them were not able to achieve the degree of Samādhi required. Why is this?"

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, when teaching students at the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon, gave this answer: "The Buddha said that the seeker of Right Knowledge must seek a proper teacher. The Buddha, of course, is our greatest teacher. And then there are those who have become his true followers. Here in our centre, due to our Pāramīs, we have been able to help and guide many to reach that level of Samādhi. It's very important, however, that what we do here be in strict accordance with the Buddha's Teachings as laid down in the Pāḷi texts."

And then Sayagyi would quote from *The Path of Purification.*[5]

> The sign, the in-breath, the out-breath: these three are not the object of a single mind moment. He that does not know these three things cannot obtain development.
>
> The sign, the in-breath, the out-breath: these three are not the object of a single mind moment. He who knows these three things can obtain development.

In explaining mindfulness of breathing, Venerable Buddhaghosa gives several similes in *The Path of Purification.*[6] One comparison is the simile of the gate-keeper. "Just as a gate-keeper does not examine people inside and outside the town, asking 'Who are you? Where have you come from? Where are you going? What have you got in your hand?'—for these are not his duty—but he does examine each (person) as he arrives at the gate, so too, the incoming breaths that have gone inside and the outgoing breaths that have gone outside are not the (meditator's) duty, but they are part of his duty each time they arrive at the gate (of the nostril) itself."

And there is the simile of the saw. "Suppose there is a tree trunk on a level piece of ground, and a man cuts it with a saw. The man's mindfulness is established by the saw's teeth where they

5. Chapter VIII, ¶ 201.
6. Chapter VIII, ¶¶ 200-203.

touch the tree trunk. He does not give attention to the teeth as they approach and recede, though they are not unknown to him as they do so. And he manifests effort, carries out a task and achieves an effect. The tree trunk is like the spot for fixing attention. The in-breaths and out-breaths are like the saw's teeth. Just as the man's mindfulness is established by the saw's teeth where they touch the tree trunk, so too the meditator—having established mindfulness at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip, without paying attention to the in-breaths and out-breaths as they approach and recede, though they are not unknown to him as they do so—puts forth effort, carries out his task and achieves a result."

With effort, the body and mind of an energetic person become wieldy. Imperfections come to be abandoned in the energetic person and his applied thoughts are stilled. Fetters are abandoned in the energetic person and his inherent tendencies come to be done away with.

So these three things are not the object of a single mind moment. Nevertheless, they are not unknown. The meditator's mind does not become distracted. He makes the effort, carries out the task, and achieves an effect.

Yo ca pubbe pamajjitvā
pacchā so nappamajjati
So'maṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti
abbhā mutto va candimā.

He whose mindfulness of in-breath and out-breath is perfect, well-developed, and gradually brought to growth according to the Buddha's Teachings, he illumines the world like the full moon freed from a cloud.

Dhammapada v 172

Anāpāna is the meditation practised by all the Buddhas and their major disciples. The Buddha has said that it is very refined, subtle and powerful. It requires good concentration and good intelligence and as such is not suitable for those with feeble concentration and low intelligence. Just as a very fine, high quality cloth requires a very fine needle, and a still finer awl is required to bore a hole in the needle, so also in Ānāpana, which is like a fine, high quality cloth, a fine concentration and a fine intelligence commensurate with that concentration are required.

So you see, when you meditate, you should not breathe too rigorously or roughly. Although it is not stated in the texts, sometimes it is not easy for beginners to feel the passage of the breath at the start. So they may have to breathe a little stronger than usual in order to feel the breath. When one has practised in this manner for some time he will come to know the feeling of the breath at the base of the nose. One must try to retain that feeling and when you have practised for some time it will be easy to do this, drawing your attention to the feeling, thereby keeping your mind steady.

Here you will find old students coming to the centre on Sundays and they will sit for one or two hours without changing their posture. You will find that when your mind becomes calm and steady, you too will be able to sit like them without much discomfort. And also a calm and steady mind will be of great assistance in your day-to-day life. If you are a student you will find that it is a great help to you in your studies. As the Venerable Webu Sayadaw, the reputed Arahat of Burma, said when he visited IMC-Rangoon during the time Sayagyi was teaching there, "It is work which will yield much benefit, right now in this life, and in the future too."

So try your best to achieve Samādhi.

DAY TWO: EVENING DISCOURSE

Taming the Mind

The Buddha said:

> Bhikkhus, I do not know of any single thing that is as difficult to control as the untamed mind. Indeed, the untamed mind cannot be controlled.
>
> Bhikkhus, I do not know of any single thing that is as easy to control as the tamed mind. Indeed, the tamed mind is easily controlled.
>
> Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that is as conducive to great loss as the untamed mind. The untamed mind indeed leads to great loss.
>
> Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that is as conducive to great profit as the tamed mind. Indeed, the tamed mind leads to great profit.
>
> Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that brings such woe as the mind that is untamed, uncontrolled, unguarded and unrestrained. Such a mind indeed brings great woe.
>
> Bhikkhus, I know of no other single thing that brings such bliss as the mind that is tamed, controlled, guarded and restrained. Such a mind does indeed bring great bliss.
>
> *The Gradual Sayings,* I 4-5

The Gradual Training

One time a Brahman layman named Gaṇaka-Moggallāna went to the Buddha when he was staying near Sāvatthi in the monastery built by Mother Visākhā.[1] Gaṇaka-Moggallāna had a question to

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1. *The Middle Length Sayings,* III 52-57.

ask. He pointed out first that in this life many things were done gradually, step by step. Mother Visākhā's palace was built step by step up to the last flight of stairs. Brahmans trained gradually when they learned their sacred scriptures, the three Vedas. Someone learning archery had to practise and learn his skill gradually. Men dealing in business affairs learned to calculate by degrees. "Is it not possible, O Gotama," he asked the Buddha, "to lay down a similar gradual training, gradual activities, a gradual practice with regard to your Doctrine and discipline?"

"It is possible," the Buddha answered him. "Just as a skilled horse trainer when he has a beautiful thoroughbred first of all gets it used to wearing the bit and then gives it further training, in similar fashion the Perfect One (the Tathāgata), when he accepts a man who is to be trained, first of all disciplines him."

And the Buddha explained to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna the various steps to be taken when training in the Dhamma. "First," the Buddha said, "he who is to be trained must acquire moral habits." Once morality has been developed the Buddha taught control over the senses. "Having seen a material shape with the eye," he said, "do not be entranced by the general appearance or by the details. For if your sight is uncontrolled, desire and dejection may flow in; evil, unskilful states of mind may flow in." The same control must be maintained over the other senses: hearing, smell, taste, touch-feeling, and mental states.

Next, the Buddha taught moderation in eating. One should eat after carefully considering that food is not taken for fun, out of indulgence, or for personal charm and beauty. Food is taken in quantities just sufficient to maintain the body and keep it going, so that it will be unharmed and so one can practise the higher way of life. With moderation in eating acquired, next comes vigilance. One should cleanse the mind of obstructing mental states at all times: when walking and sitting during the day, and when lying down at night. When one goes to bed one should be intent on the thought of getting up after resting.

After developing vigilance, one should work on being mindful and clearly conscious of everything one is doing. For us, during these first few days, this would mean striving to be mindful and clearly conscious of the spot, of the in-breath, and of the out-breath. Once mindfulness is accomplished, one should overcome the five hindrances. Through mindfulness, we can cleanse the mind of covetousness and ill-will. Free of ill-will, we will be

compassionate and merciful to all. And we eliminate sloth and torpor. Perceiving the light, we are free of sloth and torpor. We eliminate restlessness and worry so that we remain calm, with a tranquil mind. And getting rid of doubt we are unperplexed concerning profitable states.

With the five hindrances eliminated, it is possible to develop the absorption states—the Jhānas. This is especially the case for bhikkhus whose lives are very pure. Because of their great purity they are able to attain these high states of concentration. For us, as laymen, it is sufficient to acquire just a good level of concentration.

The Buddha concluded his talk by saying that those who had not yet reached full Awakening, who were still learners, worked in hope of attaining liberation, and that those who had reached full Awakening lived abiding in ease, here and now.

The Necessity to Walk Along the Path

At the conclusion of the talk, Gaṇaka-Moggallāna had another question. He asked whether, after being given this gradual training, everyone attained the supreme goal of Nibbāna. The Buddha answered that some attained the goal, some did not. So Gaṇaka-Moggallāna asked why, since Nibbāna exists, the path leading to it exists, and the Buddha is there to show the way, why then, did some people reach the goal but others did not?

The Buddha asked him if he knew the way to Rājagaha. Yes, was the reply. So the Buddha pointed out that if a man asked the way to Rājagaha, and after being given directions by Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, did not go as told, he would go the wrong way. A different person, who followed the directions, would reach Rājagaha. So, Rājagaha exists, the way to it exists, and there is someone to give directions. Why would one man go the wrong way and another man go the right way? "What can I do?" Gaṇaka-Moggallāna said. "I only show the way."

"Similarly," said the Buddha, "Nibbāna exists, the way leading to Nibbāna exists, and I exist as the advisor. But some of my disciples, after being instructed by me, attain the supreme goal, while others do not attain it. What can I do? I only show the way."

And this Gaṇaka-Moggallāna understood. He said to the Buddha, "Those who have no way of making a living; who become bhikkhus without having faith; who are crafty, fraudulent, deceitful; who are unbalanced and puffed up; who are shifty, scurrilous and of loose talk; who do not guard their senses; who

are not moderate in eating; who are not intent on vigilance but are indifferent to reclusesship, not of keen respect for the training; who like abundance; who are lax, taking the lead in backsliding, shirking the burden of seclusion; who are indolent, of feeble energy, of confused mindfulness, not clearly conscious, not concentrated but of wandering minds; who are weak in wisdom, drivellers—they have nothing in common with the Buddha. It is those who have the opposite good qualities who are in communion with the Buddha." And he praised the teachings of the Buddha as the highest of teachings and requested to take the Triple Refuge.

Now we can see from this talk that the Buddha emphasized the importance of working step by step and doing the work ourselves. No one can concentrate our mind for us, no one can purify our mind for us. A teacher can only tell us what to do. We must do the work ourselves.

In his talk to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, the Buddha said he taught his disciples to be mindful, but he did not give full instructions concerning mindfulness at that time. These instructions are to be found in other discourses by the Buddha—in the Ānāpānasati-sutta, for example, the discourse on the mindfulness of breathing.[2]

Mindfulness of Breathing

When the Buddha began to teach, many people were attracted to him, and soon there were many bhikkhus to be taught. Those who had worked and attained the goal taught the newly-ordained bhikkhus. They established the new bhikkhus in the moral training and then taught them how to attain tranquillity and insight. On one occasion, many bhikkhus assembled together with the Buddha. He looked around the Order of Bhikkhus and said, "This assembly, bhikkhus, is without idle words, this assembly has no idle words. It is established on the pure path. An Order of Bhikkhus such as this company is a company worthy of veneration, of honour, of gifts, of salutation with joined palms by those who bear in mind, 'It is an incomparable field of merit for the world.' Bhikkhus, an order of bhikkhus such as this company is a company to which if little is given it becomes much; if much is given it becomes more." He declared that there were bhikkhus in the Order who were established in all four stages of Awakening

2. *The Middle Length Sayings,* III 121-129.

and others who were practising correctly in order to reach the goal. And he gives a detailed description of the work to be done.

Here are the details which apply to our work here concerning mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath. For preparation we can develop good mental attitudes. The Buddha mentioned four attitudes to develop: loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), altruistic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā). People living in Buddhist countries try to work on these in their everyday lives, and we can do the same. Working or playing, whenever we can feel disinterested love towards others, compassion for others, sympathetic joy when others succeed, and a balanced, calm mind—an equanimous mind—then we will be better disposed to live moral lives, and it will be easier to concentrate our minds.

The instructions given next by the Buddha are most important for us here as we practise mindfulness of breathing. "Mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath, when developed and frequently practised, brings great reward and advantages," the Buddha said. "And how is this done?"

"A bhikkhu retires to a forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a solitary place, seats himself cross-legged, body erect with attentiveness fixed before him. Attentively he breathes in, attentively he breathes out. . . . He comprehends, 'Calming the activity of thought I breathe in, calming the activity of thought I breathe out.' Thus he trains himself. 'Concentrating the mind I breathe in, concentrating the mind I breathe out. . . . Reflecting on impermanence I breathe in, reflecting on impermanence I breathe out.' This is the way he trains himself. Thus, O bhikkhus, when mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath is developed and frequently practised, there are great rewards and great advantages.

"Whenever the bhikkhu is training himself to inhale and exhale while being aware of rapture, joy, or the mental activities, or while calming down the activity of thought—at such times he dwells in the Contemplation of Sensation, he is full of energy, clearly conscious, attentive, after subduing worldly greed and grief . . . .

"Whenever the bhikkhu trains himself to inhale and exhale while being aware of the mind or while composing the mind or while concentrating the mind or while setting the mind free— at such times he dwells in Contemplation of the Mind, full of energy,

clearly conscious, attentive, having subdued worldly greed and grief. Without mindfulness and clear comprehension, there is indeed no attention of in-breath and out-breath, I say.

"Awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, thus developed, and frequently practised, brings the four Applications of Mindfulness to full perfection." So these are the instructions of the Buddha.

Let us underline the important points to be remembered in developing concentration through mindfulness of breathing, drawing on another important discourse of the Buddha, the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta.[3]

The text says, "He breathes out with mindfulness, breathes in with mindfulness." (Sa sato va assasati, sato va passasati.) This means that the meditator, in practising Ānāpāna, should be mindful of each and every out-breath and in-breath. No breath should be allowed to pass without mindfulness or awareness.

The meditator summons up mindfulness in front (Parimukkhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhāpetvā). The verb we translate here by "summons up" could be translated literally by "making present." This underlines the importance of being actively mindful of the present moment and of the object of concentration. We place our attention before us at the entrance of the nostrils, directly mindful of the out-breath, the in-breath, and the place where the air touches, without letting the mind wander to other objects. Mindfulness is always kept on the end of the nose or the upper lip.

We should be mindful without interruption (Satiṃ avijahanto), for if a person is forgetful or not fully aware, the development of mindfulness of breathing is impossible. The meditative practice cannot be successfully carried out. Thus, we should be mindful at all times (Sato kāri).

We should contemplate with wisdom (Paññāya sallakkhetabbaṃ), led by mindfulness. This means thoroughly knowing every out-breath and in-breath.

Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the in-breaths and out-breaths strike the end of the nose for a long-nosed man and strike the upper lip for a short-nosed man. The important thing for us to remember is to fix the mental concentration on the point where the touch of the air is evident.

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3. *The Gradual Sayings,* II 143.

Here are three points which will be helpful in practising mindfulness of breaths:

1. Be mindful of each breath going out and coming in. Make a mental note of every breath without missing any one.
2. Maintain without a break uninterrupted mindfulness of each out-going and in-coming breath.
3. Establish mental concentration in the area at the end of the nose and upper lip, and observe each successive touch of the air thoroughly and diligently.

The Pāḷi word for meditation, mental culture, training the mind, is Bhāvanā. As we said before, there are two kinds of meditation: development of tranquillity, which comes with concentration, and development of insight, wisdom.

"Bhikkhus, there are these two diseases," the Buddha said.[4] "What two? Disease of the body and disease of the mind. Bhikkhus, beings can be seen who are free from suffering from bodily disease for one year, . . . (or up to) even a hundred years. But, bhikkhus, it is hard to find in the world beings who are free from mental disease even for one moment, except for those in whom the taints are destroyed (that is to say, Arahats)."

Ānāpāna meditation, which leads to concentration and tranquillity, is not unique to Buddhism. This type of meditation can be known outside the period during which a Buddha's teachings are practised. There are forty methods for this type of meditation found in the Buddhist texts and one can reach the highest absorption states with these methods. These states, no matter how pure and high they may be, are still mental creations. They are mind-made, conditioned and compounded. They are not Ultimate Reality. And they are not essential for the realization of Nibbāna.

If one can attain these states one can cleanse the mind of impurities temporarily. As long as one remains in such a pure state, the mind is pure. But the deep-rooted tendency towards impurity is still there. It is only through insight that one eliminates these deep-seated impurities. This is what is unique to Buddhism. But we should clearly bear in mind that mindfulness is essential for insight. We have had a chance now to appreciate how difficult it can be.

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4. Aṅguttara Nikāya II 143 (*The Gradual Sayings* II 146f.).

At the start you will find it extremely difficult to get your mind to concentrate on your breathing. You will be astonished how your mind runs away. It does not stay, not even for a few seconds! So you will need to breathe intentionally. You will find that you need to make an effort to breathe continuously and steadfastly. Then after a certain period, you will experience just that split second when your mind is fully concentrated on your breathing: when you will not even hear sounds that are nearby; when no external world exists for you. This slight moment is such a tremendous experience for you, full of joy, happiness, and tranquillity, that you will want it to continue. But you cannot make it continue. Yet, if you go on practising this steadfastly and continuously, you may get back the experience again and again and for longer and longer periods.

Ānāpāna is the meditation practised by all the Buddhas and their major disciples. The Buddha said it is very refined, subtle, and powerful. It requires good concentration and good intelligence and is therefore not suitable for those with feeble concentration and low intelligence.

We must be mindful of what Sayagyi called the three-in-one: the spot, the in-breath, and the out-breath. We illustrated the three-in-one when we quoted from Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification* this morning. Now let us cite another example he gives, the example of the bell.[5]

"When the meditator's gross in-breaths and out-breaths have ceased, his consciousness occurs with the sign of the subtle in-breaths and out-breaths as its object. And when that has ceased, it goes on occurring with the successively subtler signs as its object. How?

"Suppose a man struck a bronze bell with a big iron bar and a loud sound resulted. The gross sound would be the object of his consciousness. Then, when the gross sound died down, the subtle sound that continued would be the object of his consciousness. It would go on like this with the sign of each successive sound, more and more subtle, as the object of consciousness. . . . For while other meditation subjects become clearer at each higher stage, this one does not. In fact, as the meditator continues to develop it, it becomes more subtle at each higher stage. It even comes to the point where it is no longer manifest. When this happens the

5. *The Path of Purification*, Chap. VIII, ¶¶ 206ff.

meditator should not get up, shake out his leather seat and go away. He should not get up thinking, 'Shall I ask the teacher?' or 'Is my meditation subject lost?', for by going away and disturbing his posture, the meditation subject will have to be started again. So he should continue sitting and substitute the place where he felt the breath for the sensation of the breath itself."

When Sayagyi U Ba Khin spoke of Ānāpāna meditation, he remarked on how very subtle, very deep and how very difficult it is. Only Buddhas and major disciples like Sāriputta and Moggallāna practised it to attain concentration, Samādhi. It is for those with great Pāramīs and the very fact that you are here practicing it indicates that you have enough within you. Pāramī means perfection. We are where we are today because of our actions in the past. The Buddha described how incredibly difficult it is to be reborn a human being. Our chances are as small as the chances of a blind turtle swimming in the ocean putting his head through a round buoy floating there. The chances of living during a period when the Buddha's teachings are available are much smaller.

Depending on how much preparation a person has made, progress in meditation will be fast or slow. When Sayagyi U Ba Khin first learned about Vipassanā meditation, he asked for instruction, and Ānāpāna meditation was explained to him. He tried it and right away he began to see lights. When he did his first full course he was given Vipassanā on the second day. His progress was so fast he did not need to do three days of Ānāpāna. Mother Sayama also saw lights the first time she tried Ānāpāna, and that was trying it in a casual way for only ten minutes or thereabouts.

Not all of us will be so quick, however. And when some of the things that can happen are described, we should not be discouraged if we do not have these experiences.

In Ānāpāna meditation, in order to enable you to know the in-breath and out-breath, you should breathe deliberately at first. In this way, the passage of the breath will become more and more obvious. When this happens, just ease your mind into this path and keep knowing the in-breaths and out-breaths as they occur naturally. As your breathing becomes softer and softer, at first there will be long and short breaths, as there is still entry and exit of the air. But eventually, the length diminishes, until it almost disappears, and all three—in-breath, out-breath and the object of concentration—merge at a point at the base of the nose on the upper lip. At this point, on the upper lip, you will feel a slight

sensation of warmth which is characteristic of air. You must concentrate sharply on this point and as you do so, your mind will calm down. You will have what is called Citta-ekaggata, one-pointedness of mind, and then you will have Samādhi.

As you meditate and achieve one-pointedness of mind, the mind calms down, and the first characteristics of a calm mind will arise, both physically and mentally. First, satisfaction (Pīti) will arise, followed by pleasure (Sukha), and then the indications of a calm mind, such as seeing light, will arise. These also indicate that a state of purity exists. The Buddha said that the mind or consciousness itself is pure and bright, but that the impingement on it of the forces of impurity—greed, hatred, and ignorance—have hidden these qualities. As you meditate, you are removing little by little the forces of greed, hatred, and ignorance from the mind, making it calm down. As we saw, it is stated in *The Path of Purification* that the bhikkhu practicing Ānāpāna must not search for the point of contact at the base of the nose without being aware of both the in-breath and the out-breath. He must know all three. So you see, it is useless to concentrate on this point while thinking of this and that. Also, it is stated in the texts that with awareness (Sati) as the rope and wisdom (Paññā) as the whip, the bhikkhu should concentrate and search for this point of contact.

You will find that after some time the natural characteristic of the air passing in and out at one point will become very pronounced, and you must pay full attention to it and not let it slip away. Nevertheless, it will diminish and eventually disappear. When it disappears, you must reopen the path by breathing in and out consciously and begin to repeat the process. The first indication of purity will arise for the person who has practised like this repeatedly for some time. This indication is not the same for everyone. According to the texts, it may appear like cotton wool, stars, or pearls. To some, it may resemble smoke, clouds, a spider web, a spray of flowers, the moon or the sun. These indications should come if you are following the right path. Perhaps it may appear as a flash of light, or it may appear like the light at dawn. It will not appear, however, simply because you want it to, and it will not appear through your wishful thinking or prayers. What you must remember is that just as people earn money by working for it at their appropriate jobs, so also you must work properly here to achieve this indication.

If there is a desire in you for this indication to arise, it will not do so because your mind will then not be free from desire, or from greed. This indication only arises when a person is free from desire and so long as attachment is predominant, it will not arise.

As you concentrate at the base of the nose with full awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, your thoughts are free of greed, hatred, and ignorance, and such a state of mind is called Samādhi. The moment you become aware of having lost this awareness of the three-in-one, you must reopen the path by knowingly breathing in and out. As you regain this path, your awareness will arise again and then it will disappear—for thoughts will surely arise. This awareness that you are struggling for is very precious and many are the people who have attained Nibbāna based on it.

DAY THREE: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Summum Bonum

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.
sabbarasaṃ dhammaraso jināti.
Sabbaratiṃ dhammarati jināti.
taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṃ jināti.

The gift of the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma,
surpasses all gifts.
The flavour of the Dhamma surpasses all flavours.
Delight in the Dhamma surpasses all delights.
The destruction of craving overcomes all suffering.

Dhammapada v 354

While staying at Jetavana, the Buddha gave this teaching to Sakka, the chief of the Devas of the realm of the thirty-three deities.[1] There was an assembly of these deities during which four questions were raised: "Which gift is the best gift? Which is the best flavour? Which is the greatest delight? Why is the destruction of craving said to be supreme over all other things?" None of the deities were able to answer these questions. For twelve years they looked for an answer everywhere in the ten thousand world systems. Finally they went to the realm of the Four Great Kings who are the guardians of the cardinal points of the compass (north, east, south, and west). When they heard the questions, the Four Great Kings suggested that Sakka, the King of the Devas, would know the answer. But when they approached him, he said, "My friends, only a Buddha can answer these questions. Where is the Buddha residing now?" And they told Sakka that the Buddha was residing at Jetavana. So they went to ask the Buddha. Sakka posed all four questions and the Buddha answered, "Well said,

1. *Buddhist Legends,* III 236-239.

great king! I fulfilled the Pāramīs, the Perfections, which culminated in making the Five Great Gifts, I attained to Omniscience, in order to resolve doubts such as these. Here is the answer: the gift of the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma, is the best of gifts. The flavour of the Dhamma is the best of flavours. Delight in the Dhamma is the best of delights. And as for the destruction of craving, this is how men attain full Awakening, Arahatship. Therefore, it is supreme over all other things." And the Buddha pronounced the stanza we quoted at the beginning.

As we have already mentioned, the Second Noble Truth is the Origin of Suffering, and included in this is the fact that the world is conditioned. This world is based on the law of cause and effect. For every effect there is a cause. If we do good deeds, we will get good results. If we do evil deeds, we will suffer. If it were possible to always do good deeds, we would not have suffering. There are good deeds which lead to great happiness in the sense of worldly happiness. If we give food to a bird, we will greatly benefit. If we give food to a human being, we will benefit even more. The more highly developed in purity the person to whom we make a gift, the greater the reward. There have been people who gave robes to a non-teaching Buddha (a Pacceka-Buddha), to a teaching Buddha or to their chief disciples. People have given great offerings of food, monasteries, and medicine for the monks. It is impossible for us to imagine what great benefits come from such gifts.

But in this stanza, we see that just one single stanza of four lines concerning the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma, taught by a Buddha, is of infinitely greater value than all these other gifts. This is because through the Dhamma men can go beyond earthly happiness. No matter how happy we may be in the conditioned world, no matter how long we are happy, eventually that happiness will end. Eventually we will suffer. Only through the Buddha-Dhamma can suffering come to an end.

From this, it becomes evident why the flavour of the Dhamma surpasses all other flavours. It includes the thirty-seven factors of Awakening which lead to Nibbāna, and Nibbāna transcends the happiness of the conditioned world, since it is unconditioned, without suffering.

Delight in the Dhamma surpasses all others because when we delight in it, there is an inspiration to work for an end of suffering.

Finally, the destruction of craving is the actual ending of suffering. It is the actual arriving at the goal: Full Awakening, Arahatship. And this is greater than anything.

When the Buddha finished teaching the Dhamma to the deities, Sakka paid respects and made a request. "Venerable sir," he said, "since the gift of the Dhamma is so precious, why do you not have the merit of the gift of the Dhamma shared by us? In the future, when you teach the Dhamma to the Community of Bhikkhus, share the merit with us, Venerable sir." So the Buddha called together the Community of Bhikkhus and told them, "Bhikkhus, from this day on, whenever a discourse is given on a special occasion, or a discourse for an ordinary occasion, or even when words of thanks are recited, you are to share merits with all beings."

So that is why we share merits after giving a talk or after meditating, as meditation is practising the Dhamma and is therefore of great merit. You will remember that we emphasized how important mental volition is in doing good deeds or bad deeds. In some planes of existence, it is very difficult to do good deeds. But it is possible to have sympathetic joy, to rejoice in the good deeds of others. Since this is a mental action, it is very powerful. This can be reinforced by speech. That is why the students respond, "Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu," when the teacher shares merits, for this is Pāḷi for "Well said" or "Well done." And many other beings can join us.

The Story of Jotika[2]

The story of Jotika gives us an illustration of how the taste of the Dhamma surpasses all others. Jotika had great Pāramīs; he had made very large gifts to Buddhas of the past. When he was born during the time of Buddha Gotama, he was very rich. His wife was very beautiful. They lived in a house made of gems and precious stones. But one day, Jotika went to the monastery and heard the Buddha teaching. He decided to leave behind all his wealth and become a bhikkhu. So he lived with only his robes and bowl as a bhikkhu and when he attained Arahatship, all his former wealth disappeared. One day some of his fellow bhikkhus asked him if he missed his palace or his wife. When he answered no, they went to the Buddha. "Venerable sir," they said, "this bhikkhu has told a lie." They could not imagine that Jotika did not miss his

2. *Buddhist Legends,* III 313-331.

former life. But the Buddha told them, "Bhikkhus, it is quite true that my son has no longing for any of these things." So we can see that the taste and happiness of the Dhamma is the noblest, the highest, and the best.

The Five Hindrances[3]

Something which is the highest and the best is not easy to attain. You have no doubt noticed as you work that training the mind is very difficult. There are many difficulties, but in particular, there are five which come under the heading of the hindrances (Nīvarāna). They are: (1) sensuous desire, (2) ill will, (3) sloth and torpor, (4) restlessness and worry, and finally, (5) sceptical doubt. You have perhaps encountered some or all of these hindrances while working for a concentrated mind these last few days. You already have the best tool for getting rid of the hindrances. You have your breath and the spot below the nose where you can anchor your attention. Whenever you are aware that the hindrances are there, you can use slightly harder breathing to shake them off.

As long as we are "worldlings"—that is to say, before reaching the first stage of Awakening—we cannot completely eliminate any of these hindrances. But while the mind is concentrated they are not there. A good and an evil thought cannot occur in the mind both at the same time. Only one thought can occur at a time. The mind is so fast it may seem two things are going on at once, but in fact each thought is alone. In that way, the very act of being aware of the hindrance eliminates it for a moment. The thought that knows or recognizes the hindrance comes after the hindrance itself. This is a very useful moment for us to pull back the mind and concentrate it. Instead of feeling depressed or disappointed in ourselves because we have lost our concentration, we should rejoice that we noticed.

So we can temporarily eliminate the hindrances, knowing that their final and complete elimination will only come through attaining full Awakening. But we begin to eliminate them with the first stage of Awakening. The Sotāpanna has no more sceptical doubt. He has experienced the Ultimate Truth, even if only briefly, and he has no doubt concerning the possibility of reaching Awakening and the Path leading to Awakening. When one reaches the third stage (Anāgāmī) all sensuous desire and ill

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3. See Nyanaponika Thera, "The Five Mental Hindrances", *The Wheel*, No. 26.

will are eradicated. It is only at the end, when one is an Arahat, that sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry are ended.

In the Pāḷi canon the five hindrances are called impediments that cloud the mind and stultify insight. If the meditator has not overcome the five hindrances, his insight will lack strength and power and it will be impossible for him to know his own good, the good of others, and the good of both. He will not be able to realize the super-human state of distinctive achievement, the knowledge and vision enabling him to attain liberation. If he overcomes the five hindrances he will have strong insight and he will be able to recognize what is good for himself, for others, and for both. He will be able to attain liberation.

Sensuous desire is like water mixed with many colours. In other words, we are attracted by what seems beautiful to us. Ill will is like boiling water. When we are full of aversion and hatred there is heat and we are agitated. Sloth and torpor, laziness and groggy feelings, are like water covered with moss. It is as if we were clogged up. Restlessness and worry are like agitated water whipped up by the wind. Here worry means feeling discontented or feeling remorse for having done bad deeds or for having neglected to do good deeds. With this restlessness and remorse in us, we cannot sit still. Finally, sceptical doubt is like turbid, muddy water. We cannot see clearly when we are doubting. We find we are wavering, we cannot make a decision. "Should I do this? Or should I do that?" we wonder. It is as if we were divided in two. And the more we dwell on what we have doubts about, the worse it gets. We no longer want to make any effort. We are no longer sure what good action is or what bad actions are, what we should do. We can no longer judge things according to their true value. We have doubts about the Buddha or the teacher, about the Truth and about those who have kept the Teachings alive. We have doubts about cause and effect. In short, we are pretty miserable.

Now how can a meditator get rid of the five hindrances? The Pāḷi texts tell us, "In this regard the meditator who knows there is sensuous desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or sceptical doubt in him knows, 'There is sensuous desire or ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or sceptical doubt in me.' He knows how each hindrance arises, how each comes to be in him. He knows how elimination of each hindrance, once it

has arisen, comes to be. And he knows how in the future a state comes to be where the hindrances do not arise."[4]

With Ānāpāna we can see this very clearly. We sit here working to keep our minds on one spot, below the nose, and on the in-breath and out-breath. Suddenly the mind is somewhere else. That is knowing how the hindrances come to be. We do not need to analyse the particular thought or feeling. We do not need to trace it back to our childhood or back to a past life, even if we could. Seeing how these hindrances arise automatically, despite our efforts to concentrate, is enough. And how do we eliminate them? A few conscious breaths, a few deliberate breaths, and they are gone. It may seem that they are still there. A strong desire may arise. We become aware of it. We breathe a little harder. And for that moment, even if only for a split second, our mind is free from the hindrance. If it is a strong hindrance, a very similar thought or feeling that resembles the first one, its identical twin, may arise. And we will need to start again with a few conscious breaths. But it can be reassuring to know that in this way we are eliminating a whole string of hindrances. It is not the same one coming back each time.

And how will we avoid the arising of these hindrances? If we have clearly understood the first two steps, the last step will be obvious: mindfulness. Working on Right Concentration here and now is the only way to avoid the arising of the five hindrances in the future.

If we truly wish to make an end of suffering, we will realize how important this work is. The Buddha said that a man whose heart is overwhelmed by unrestrained covetousness (that is, sensuous desire) will do what he should not do and will neglect to do what he ought to do. Because of this, his reputation and his happiness will be ruined. A man whose heart is overwhelmed by ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or by sceptical doubts will do what he should not do and will neglect to do what he ought to do. Because of this, his reputation and his happiness will be ruined.

But a noble disciple who has seen these five defilements of the mind will give them up. He will be regarded as one who is of great wisdom, abundant wisdom, clear-sighted, well-endowed with wisdom.

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4. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya, No. 10 [I 60]): *Middle Length Sayings*, I 77f.

Elsewhere, the Buddha said that the hindrances are like the five impurities which result in gold not being pliant and wieldy, make it lack brilliance, make it brittle and difficult to fashion. The five impurities for gold are other metals mixed with it: iron, copper, tin, lead, and silver. But if these baser metals are separated from the gold, it will be pliant and wieldy, brilliant and firm, and one can fashion whatever ornaments one wants with it. Similarly, when the mind has five impurities, five hindrances, it is not pliant and wieldy, it lacks radiant lucidity and firmness, it cannot concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints. But when the mind is freed of the five hindrances, it will be pliant and wieldy, it will have radiant lucidity and firmness and it will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints. It will be possible to direct the mind to any state that can be realized by the higher mental faculties; and if the other conditions are fulfilled one will acquire the capacity to realize the state.

Now you may be saying to yourself, "There's another hindrance. What about all this pain! If I didn't have any pain I would be able to concentrate." But remember, we have been stressing how important the mind is, how important your mental attitude is. And if you look at the five hindrances, you will notice that they take place in the mind and emotions. The problem is not the pain, but rather our attitude to the pain. Because of the pain we feel aversion or we feel restless. So, during Ānāpāna, while we are not working with sensations throughout the body, we keep coming back to the breath. When we come to Vipassanā we will deal with the sensations throughout the body.

It may help to remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be doing this work. For so many years, so many lifetimes, our minds have been dominated by these hindrances. If we can reach only one split second during which the mind is calm, tranquil, concentrated, then this is of great benefit, of great significance for us. And we can remind ourselves that we have encountered the Teachings at a very important time.

Those Who Are Becoming Ariyas

On one occasion when the Venerable Webu Sayadaw visited the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon, he asked Sayagyi U Ba Khin, "Are not sentient beings becoming Ariyas, Awakened, even now, at this time, just as in the Buddha's time?" Sayagyi answered yes. Then Webu Sayadaw asked Sayagyi, "Who are becoming Ariyas in greater numbers, human beings or

Devas and Brahmās?" Sayagyi replied that most of those becoming Ariyas would be the Devas and Brahmās of the higher realms of existence. You see, at the time of the Buddha's death at the age of eighty, he foresaw that four incalculables and twenty thousand billion sentient beings still remained to reach at least the first stage of Awakening and that for them his Teachings would last five thousand years after his death. This number is difficult to imagine. One incalculable (Asaṅkheyya) is a number equal to one followed by one hundred and forty zeros.

Most of those who would become Ariyas would do so during what is known as the Vimutti Period, the period of deliverance. That period begins twenty-five hundred years after the Buddha's death. That is why Sayagyi replied in the affirmative to Webu Sayadaw's first question.

To understand why most of those attaining the Ariya state will be Devas and Brahmās we only need look at the population of the world, which is about five billion, I think. A very small fraction of the people in the human plane are likely to become Ariyas.

The Story of Mātikāmātā[5]

In his booklet *What Buddhism Is,* Sayagyi U Ba Khin said, "A balanced mind is necessary to balance the unbalanced minds of others." He quoted the Buddha's words, "As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back."[6] In a talk to Burmese students at the centre, Sayagyi told the story of a laywoman who lived during the Buddha's time and who was able to work properly.

Sixty bhikkhus went to the Buddha and asked for permission to meditate. The Buddha showed them the method and they went away to seek a suitable place to live in and practise. They came to the village of Mātikāgāma and decided to stay there to meditate. There was a rich woman in that village called Mātikāmātā. She owned a large estate and respectfully requested the bhikkhus to live there and practise their meditation. She also undertook to provide them with food.

So the bhikkhus stayed there in the monastery built by her. But the bhikkhus agreed that no two bhikkhus should live or sit in the same place, in order to meditate better. After some time

5. *Buddhist Legends,* II 1-7.
6. *Dhammapada,* v 33.

Mātikāmātā asked the bhikkhus what they were doing and they replied that they were meditating. She asked why, and on being told that meditation produces a calm mind, she asked whether she could practise also in her spare time. The bhikkhus told her that she could practise it too, and accordingly they showed her the technique. They told her that as Samādhi arose, her mind would become calm and steady until eventually Right Knowledge came to her.

So she selected a suitable place in her house where she meditated every night as soon as her household duties were over. Very soon, her mind calmed down and satisfaction (Pīti) arose, and tranquillity (Passaddhi) and pleasure (Sukha) arose as well as concentration (Samādhi). As she continued with her practice of awareness, Vipassanā knowledge came to her without any teacher guiding her, and she eventually became a Sotāpanna, one who has entered the stream to Nibbāna. Later she became an Anāgāmī, she attained the first three paths and fruition states. Through the Jhānic states, she obtained the divine eye, divine ear, and the ability to see past lives, and even the ability to read other people's thoughts. You will note that no one had to lecture her on the Dhamma. She did just what she was told to do.

With her ability to read other people's thoughts, she sought the status of the bhikkhus who, she thought, must surely have made greater progress. To her surprise, she found that they had not even become Sotāpannas, and she looked for the reasons for their lack of progress. She found that those bhikkhus had given up comfortable lives as laymen and they found that the things lacking in monastic life irritated them so much that their meditation was disturbed. Some wanted a mat to sit on, some wanted sweeter food, etc. In order to satisfy them, the Mātikā lady along with her friends and companions set out to prepare the proper food, collect the mats, and so on, and they supplied the bhikkhus with those the next day.

As each and every bhikkhu received what he had been wanting, they were able to meditate more effectively. In the evening, one of the bhikkhus became an Arahat with the ability to read other people's thoughts. He sought the progress of the others and learned that they too had become Arahats. Indeed, they all became Arahats at the same time, due to Mātikāmātā's ability to read their thoughts and fulfil their wishes.

On Being Cautious

Passati passo passantaṃ
apassantañ ca passati;
Apassanto apassantaṃ
passantañ ca na passati.

He who sees, sees who can see and who cannot see.
He who cannot see, sees neither the one that does
not see nor the one that sees.

Theragāthā, 61

This is the verse pronounced by Vappa, the second of the group of five disciples to get established in the Dhamma. He spoke this verse on the fifth day of the Buddha's teaching them, after they all attained Arahatship. Sayagyi U Ba Khin used to quote this verse quite often when he gave Dhamma talks, because, he said, if one becomes a meditation teacher he will have to encounter Māra, who works against the Dhamma. Māra will play his role, attacking from close by and from far away. So one must be very careful. If one cannot see with one's own wisdom, Māra will come and disturb him in various ways.

Sayagyi reminded his close disciples of this, and he said once, "Hey, Māra will not necessarily come from a long way off. If you are not strong in your Anicca (appreciation of continual change), if you are not living with your Anicca, Māra will attack me through you. He will attack the inner circle, my close disciples." At one time, Sayagyi put up a notice at IMC-Rangoon, saying that when the Dhamma grows it is necessary for the close disciples to be very careful. Otherwise, Māra will play his part. Through you he will attack the Dhamma, attack the mission. He will attack everyone.

Mother Sayama's Beginnings in Meditation and Teaching

We are fortunate to have come into contact with a teacher of the standing of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. And we are fortunate to have people like Mother Sayama who can help us combat Māra and meditate correctly. During Sayagyi's lifetime, in April 1951, when I first started meditating with him, I would come home to my wife, Mother Sayama, and my four-year-old daughter. My daughter wanted to play and my wife wanted some attention. But I wanted to go on with my meditation. So I told Mother Sayama, "You have met U Ba Khin. You can think of him as your teacher and I will explain meditation to you." So I gave her the

preliminaries and explained Ānāpāna to her and to my daughter. My daughter lay down beside me, doing Ānāpāna. After a few minutes she went to sleep. So you can see that Ānāpāna is good for insomnia. Mother Sayama, as I mentioned, saw lights during the first ten minutes or thereabouts, on the first day. On the second day she saw stars and on the third day she saw a disc like the moon. On the fourth day, I gave her Vipassanā, and she was able to feel sensations all through her body.

But I lost all awareness of sensations. Sayagyi liked to tell the story of how I came into his office with tears in my eyes. He laughed and pointed out to me the dangers of trying to pass on the teachings before being told to do so, and he worked with me so I could be aware of sensations again.

Sayama worked at home for nearly two years. By then, in 1952, we had founded the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon. In mid-April 1953, during the Water Festival holidays in Burma, there was the first course at IMC-Rangoon for the families of the men from Sayagyi's office. Sayama meditated with forty other students. After her first course she repeated for nearly one month, and during that month Sayagyi taught her the technique very comprehensively. Starting in May 1953 she dedicated herself to the mission. She and I were with Sayagyi from May 1953, until his death on January 19, 1971. Sayama assisted Sayagyi during all that time. She helped with all the students who came to the centre, both Burmese and foreign. Many of them made significant progress in their meditation. She was constantly with Sayagyi as he worked with the students.

A retired government official of Burma came to the centre when Ven. Webu Sayadaw paid a seven-day visit in June 1953. This was the first time Ven. Webu Sayadaw visited outside his three meditation centres, which were in Kyaukse, forty miles south of Mandalay, in Shwebo, sixty miles north of Mandalay, and another at his birthplace, In-gyin-bin-taw-ya. He usually spent four months each year in those three places. After his visit to Rangoon in 1953, many disciples, such as this ex-government official, wanted him to come to lower Burma every year. So he would come to many cities and towns to give blessings and preach the Dhamma so that many could benefit.

After the ex-government official started meditating with Sayagyi in 1953, he was able to make significant progress in his meditation. When Sayagyi left for the office, the official was

under Sayama's care and she helped him to progress. He told Sayagyi, "Your disciple is not an ordinary disciple." And he gave her the name of Sayama, meaning teacher. From that day, she was known as Sayama and Sayagyi approved of this. Many other people came to the centre and enjoyed the benefits of meditation. Among them, one elderly person, who was a Pāḷi scholar, addressed her as Mother. So she came to be known as Mother Sayama. After Sayagyi died in 1971, many Western students came to the centre and all of them called her Mother Sayama as well.

We worked at the centre in Rangoon from 1971 to 1978 when we came out on October 12th. While there, we taught along with U Tint Yee, President of the Vipassanā Association of the Accountant General's Office. The association owns and operates the centre. There are also U Ba Pho, the Secretary, and other executive members. Some were members of the Vipassanā Research Association founded by Sayagyi in 1952 and were trained to teach meditation. This association had eleven members and Sayagyi was the President. All were told to teach meditation. But all of us were fully engaged in our duties in everyday life until recently, and we do not come forward until our teachings are needed.

DAY THREE: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Heedful Illumine the World

Yo ca pubbe pamajjitvā
pacchā so nappamajjati
So 'maṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti
abbhā mutto va candimā.

Whoever was heedless before and afterwards is not:
Such a one illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds.

Dhammapada v 172

This stanza was given by the Buddha when he was residing at Jetavana, with reference to Elder Sammuñjanī.[1] This elder went about sweeping continually, both in the morning and in the afternoon. One day, he took his broom where Elder Revata spent the day and found him sitting. He thought to himself, "This idler enjoys the pious offerings of the faithful and then returns and sits in his cell. Why should he not sweep at least one room?"

Meanwhile, Elder Revata thought to himself, "I will give this bhikkhu an admonition." So he said to Elder Sammuñjanī, "Come here, brother. Go bathe and then return to me." Elder Sammuñjanī did as he was told. Then Elder Revata admonished him, saying, "Brother, a bhikkhu should not go about sweeping all the time." Then he explained what he should do, not only sweeping. When the time came to collect alms food, he should go forth for alms food and, on returning, meditate. He could, however, sweep once in the morning and once in the evening. As

1. *Buddhist Legends*, III, pp. 5-6.

Elder Sammuñjanī adhered scrupulously to the admonition of Elder Revata, he attained Arahatship in a very short time.

After that, all the rooms remained full of rubbish. So the bhikkhus asked him why he did not sweep them any more. He replied that previously he was heedless but now he had become heedful. The bhikkhus reported the matter to the Buddha who pronounced the stanza with which we began.

There were many such persons in Burma when Sayagyi U Ba Khin was teaching. I shall give you some stories of outstanding persons, such as high officials of Burma. These persons illustrate the statement, "The heedful illumine the world."

The Advantages of Ānāpāna

I have explained that in Ānāpāna the advantage of using the breath as the object of concentration is that the breath is always with us. The only times we do not breathe are when we are still an unborn child, if we are drowning, or if we are already dead. Other cases when there is no breath exist: if you are in an unconscious existence, reborn in the fine-material or immaterial planes, if you are in the fourth Jhānic state or if you have attained the cessation state. But all of us here are breathing.

A retired high government official of Burma thought that he had stopped breathing when he began meditating. But when he told Sayama that his breathing had stopped, even when he got up to leave his cell, she explained that it had not ceased; it had only become very subtle. It was only after he had made further progress that he understood that he had been breathing after all. The reason we can have the impression we are not breathing is that the breath is subtle and our understanding is too dull to be aware of it. So we must strive to develop our ability to be aware of the breath.

If we work correctly the rewards can be very great. As Sayagyi U Ba Khin said, "Only those who take to meditation with good intentions can be assured of success. With the development of the purity and the power of the mind backed by insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one might be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind. It is a common belief that a man whose power of concentration is good and who can secure perfect balance of mind at will can achieve better results than a person who is not so developed.

"There are, therefore, definitely many advantages that accrue to a person who undergoes a successful course of training in

meditation, whether he be a religious man, an administrator, a politician, a businessman, or a student."[2]

The government official mentioned earlier came to the centre after his term of office was over in order to meditate. He was still in an important position and came with many bodyguards, who were armed. He had been educated in the West and, unfortunately for him, he had picked up the bad habit of drinking alcohol. It got to the point where he no longer drank water, only intoxicants. Working under Sayagyi's and Sayama's guidance he was able to go into deep meditation at will for an hour and a half. And he said that once he got established in the Dhamma it was impossible for him to drink intoxicants again. "This is true Sīla," he said. It was no longer a matter of having to strain in order to restrain himself. It was he who gave the title "Sayama" which Sayagyi approved.

There was also a justice from the High Court who was so fat he had trouble sitting down. But once he started Ānāpāna he was able to sit, and with Sayagyi's and Sayama's help he was able to go into deep meditation as he wished. Another man who was a Pāḷi scholar was helped by Sayagyi and Sayama to go into deep meditation at will. He told us that some of his difficult reports for the government took him months to write before he meditated. After developing his concentration he could finish them in a few day's time. He was the person who addressed Sayama as Mother Sayama. An income tax official came suffering from severe asthma. He was not even able to walk up the flight of stairs leading to the pagoda at the centre. But he too attained the state like those mentioned above and found that his asthma was greatly relieved.

They all found that meditation helped them not only in their spiritual attainments, but also in their efficiency in discharging their respective responsible duties as civil servants.

Dr E. K. Nottingham, in her paper on "Buddhist Meditation in Burma" asked, "May [meditation] not possibly help to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy to be used for the building of a 'welfare state' and as a bulwark against corruption in public life?" To this question, in view of the successes of the above-mentioned high ranking civil servants' contribution in their respective jobs, we would say yes.

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2. "The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation," in *Dhamma Texts,* 1985, The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Trust.

It was very easy to give you instructions for doing Ānāpāna. In a few minutes the technique is explained. But the practice is very difficult. Strong mindfulness and good understanding are needed.

In *The Path of Purification,*[3] Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the meditator should follow the example of the ploughman. After ploughing with his oxen, he sets them free to graze while he rests in the shade. The oxen may wander off. If he is skilful and intelligent the ploughman will not wander through the forest looking for them, following their tracks. Instead he will take his rope and his goad and go straight to their watering place where the oxen go for a drink and bath. And when he sees them there he secures them with the rope and prods them on with the goad. In this way he can bring them back, yoke them to the plough, and continue his work.

For the meditator, mindfulness is like the rope and understanding is the goad. He will look for his in-breaths and out-breaths below the nose, above the upper lip, where they normally touch. In this way he has no difficulty in finding them, just as the skilful ploughman was sure to find his oxen at their watering place. He can make the breath secure with the rope of mindfulness and he can yoke them in that spot by prodding them with the goad of understanding.

If the meditator works in the right way the sign will soon appear. As I told you earlier, the sign varies from person to person, but one thing is common to all signs of a purified mind: the signs of purification are white as opposed to black. We must go on giving attention, again and again. Buddhaghosa said, quoting the Ancients:

> Fixing his mind upon the sign
> And putting away everything extraneous
> The intelligent man anchors his mind
> On the in-breaths and the out-breaths.
>
> *Path of Purification,* Ch. VIII, ¶ 219

If we can develop this concentration, it will be of great benefit not only to us, but also to all the world.

You will remember I said that we need to have worked for a long time on the ten perfections before we can encounter the

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3. Chapter VIII, ¶ 219.

Buddha's Teachings, and that the work we have done in the past will determine how fast our progress is. Even during the Buddha's time there were many who did not become awakened. But there were some who attained Awakening very quickly. This was the case for the two chief disciples.

The Two Chief Disciples[4]

There were two friends named Upatissa and Kolita. They were both very rich. One night while they were watching a theatrical performance, they saw a death scene at the end of a play. As they were not accustomed to such realities in their day-to-day lives, they were deeply affected by it. They realized very deeply that one day they too would have to die. So they said to one another, "If there is this phenomenon of death, there must also be a phenomenon of deathlessness." And they resolved to attain it. They abandoned their wealth and went in search of learned teachers. At Rājagaha, modern-day Rajgiri, they met the teacher Sañjaya and became his students. Sañjaya was one of the six best known teachers before the Buddha's Awakening. He had developed to such a high degree that by merely looking at a single bone of a dead man he could tell where he had been reborn. But he did not have the knowledge of suffering, change, and lack of a permanent self (Dukkha, Anicca, and Anattā).

The two friends studied under his guidance and learned his teachings in no time, but they found that Sañjaya could not teach the Deathless, so they decided to look for a better teacher. One day, Upatissa, who was later known as Sāriputta, met Assaji, the youngest of the five ascetics who were the first people taught by the Buddha. The Arahat Assaji recited one stanza of the Buddha's Teachings and half way through the stanza, after only two lines, Sāriputta became established in the fruition state of the first stage of Awakening. He became a Sotāpanna. The stanza Assaji gave was this:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato āha
Tesaṃ ca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādi mahāsamaṇo.

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4. See *The Book of the Discipline,* IV, pp. 52-56; *Buddhist Legends,* I, pp. 198-204; and *The Gradual Sayings,* IV, pp. 50-54.

The Perfect One has explained the cause
Of all conditioned phenomena,
And that which is their cessation—
Thus is the teaching of the Great Recluse.

Sāriputta then went to see his friend and told him about his meeting with Assaji. He told him about the serenity, gentleness, and equanimity that pervaded Assaji and about his teacher Buddha Gotama. He repeated the stanza and Kolita, later known as Mahā-Moggallāna, became a Sotāpanna too.

They went to see the Buddha and ordained as bhikkhus and began their meditation. As soon as the Buddha saw them coming he could tell that they were to be his two chief disciples. And the Buddha said to the bhikkhus around him, "Here come two friends, Kolita and Upatissa. These two will be my chief disciples. They are an auspicious pair." Some of the bhikkhus had been very important in lay life and they disapproved, but the Buddha explained that the two friends had worked hard during countless lives to attain their status, and he recounted some of their past lives to illustrate this. "Bhikkhus, this is what they aspired to," the Buddha said. "I do not act with partiality."

So you can see that it is a waste of time and energy to be envious or jealous of others who make good progress. In the Dhamma there can be no favouritism. We earn whatever we achieve.

Sāriputta and Moggallāna told the Buddha the story of their present life and explained that after becoming Sotāpannas they went back to their teacher Sañjaya. "We wanted to lead him to you," they said, "and we told him of the hollowness of his practice and spoke to him of the advantages of coming here. But he said, 'For me to become a pupil now would be like a jar turning into a cup. It is not possible for me to live like a pupil.' " When they pointed out that many people were turning to the Buddha and asked what would become of him, Sañjaya asked them, "Are there more wise men or more dullards in this world?" "Sir, there are many dullards in this world, but wise men are few," was the answer. "Well," Sañjaya said, "the wise will go to the wise man Gotama and the dullards will come to a dullard like me." And he sent them away.

When they told him their story, the Buddha declared, "Bhikkhus, because of his wrong view, Sañjaya considers the inessential to be the essential and the essential to be inessential. Putting away the inessential, you held on to the essential."

So Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna began to work for Arahatship. Sāriputta went to a cave near Rājagaha called the Bear's Den. And Moggallāna went to the forest near Kallavalaputta in Magadha. He put great effort into his meditation but even so, he was not able to overcome his sleepiness. He tried his best not to fall asleep, but he was unable to keep his body erect and his head straight.

But the Buddha, with a teacher's solicitude for his disciples, did not lose sight of him. With his supernormal vision, he perceived the difficulties Moggallāna was having. And he appeared before him. As soon as he saw the Buddha standing in front of him, most of his sleepiness, fatigue, and restlessness vanished.

"Are you nodding, Moggallāna?" the Buddha asked. "Yes, Lord," he replied. "Well, then, Moggallāna," the Buddha instructed him, "whenever drowsiness comes, you should not give attention to it, you should not dwell on it. In that way, it is possible that your drowsiness will vanish. But if it does not vanish, then you should remember the teachings you have heard and you should review and examine the teachings. If drowsiness still persists, you should repeat in full detail the teaching as you have heard it and learned it. If you are still drowsy you should pull both ear lobes and rub your limbs with your hands. If you are still drowsy you should get up from your seat and wash your eyes with water and look around in all directions and look up at the stars. If drowsiness has still not gone away, you should give attention to the perception of light, to daylight, both day and night. Thus, with your mind clear and unclouded, you should cultivate a mind that is full of brightness. If this doesn't work, you should keep the attention on the body, not letting it stray, and walk up and down, being aware of going back and forth. If all else fails, you may then, mindfully and clearly aware, lie down in the lion position —that is, lying on the right side with one foot placed on the other—and keep in mind the thought of getting up. When you wake you should get up quickly, thinking, 'I must not indulge in the comfort of resting and reclining, in the pleasure of sleeping.' "

So you can see that even for the chief disciples, Ānāpāna meditation is not easy. Moggallāna was able to work, thanks to the Buddha's protection and guidance, and he reached Arahatship within a week. For Sāriputta it took another week because he was second only to the Buddha in understanding the Dhamma, and this understanding required more work.

The Buddha's Advice to King Pasenadi[5]

The Buddha also gave advice to a layman on how to avoid sleepiness. At one time, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to see the Buddha and he walked up and down looking very tired. The Buddha asked him if he had come before having his rest. The king answered that no, he always suffered greatly after eating a meal. You see, he was in the habit of eating boiled rice by the bucketful, accompanied by sauces and curries. So the Buddha told Pasenadi that over-eating always brings suffering, and he pronounced the following stanza:

> If a man is indolent, eats too much,
> Spends his time sleeping and lies and rolls about
> Like a big hog fed on grain,
> Such a simpleton will enter the womb again and again.

And he concluded the stanza with the following verse:

> If a man is constantly mindful, is moderate in what he eats,
> His suffering will be slight. He will grow old slowly and
> live long.

The Buddha taught this verse to Prince Uttara and told him to recite it whenever the king had a meal. After a while the king was content with a small portion of rice and he became thin and cheerful.

Preparing for Awakening

I have mentioned several times the importance of past good actions, developing the ten Pāramīs. Some of you may be worried about whether you have a good stock of Pāramīs. Sayagyi U Ba Khin said that we can assume that only those individuals who have matured in the accumulation of virtues will be inclined to make a bid for release and take seriously to courses of Buddhist meditation.

We may be accumulating Pāramīs in order to become an Arahat. This can take from approximately one hundred to one thousand world cycles.[6] But someone who aims higher will have to work even longer. If one aspires to be one of the eighty leading disciples, it will take ten thousand world cycles. It takes even more

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5. *The Kindred Sayings,* I, p. 108 and *Buddhist Legends,* III, pp. 76-78, 206.
6. See *What Buddhism Is* and "A Treatise on the Pāramīs" (in *The All-Embracing Net of Views*), p. 325.

preparation for one who aspires to be one of the two chief disciples. Greater still is the preparation to be a non-teaching Buddha (a Pacceka Buddha), and then there are even three degrees of preparation for teaching Buddhas: a teaching Buddha whose most developed quality is wisdom (Paññā); a teaching Buddha who is strongest in faith or confidence (Saddhā); and finally, for a Buddha who is highest in effort (Viriya), it takes sixteen Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand world cycles. So the next Buddha in this world cycle, Metteyya, who is the type of Buddha taking the most preparation, started working on the perfections before the Buddha Gotama started.

We have quoted many times from *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* by Ashin Buddhaghosa. When he first went from India to Ceylon, it was to study the commentaries on the Pāḷi Canon. When he asked to see the texts, the bhikkhus in Ceylon gave him two lines of verse and asked him to write a commentary on them as a test of his sincerity and understanding. The result was a book that is over eight hundred pages in translation and which summarizes all the essentials of the teachings found in the Pāḷi texts. The bhikkhus, when they read this commentary, *The Path of Purification,* exclaimed that Buddhaghosa must be the Bodhisatta (the one intent on Awakening) who would become the next Buddha, Metteyya.[7]

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in speaking of this commentary, said that if we divided it into one thousand parts and then divided Sayagyi's own teaching into one thousand parts and compared them, they would fit together, part by part, perfectly.

Now we should not use an aspiration as an excuse for not working. Only a Buddha can confirm an aspiration and give a sure prediction. That is because only a Buddha can see far enough back and far enough ahead to see if a person has made the right preparation and has the potential to fulfil an aspiration.

There is the case of a bhikkhu given in *The Path of Purification.*[8] The Elder Mahā-Saṅgharakkhita, when lying on his deathbed, was asked whether he had attained Awakening. He answered no. A young bhikkhu said to him, "Venerable sir, people have come from as far away as twelve leagues, thinking you have reached

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7. See *The Path of Purification*, p. xxii (quoting from the Mahāvaṃsa).
8. Chapter 1, ¶ 135.

Nibbāna. It will be a disappointment for many if you die as an ordinary man."

The elder said, "Friend, thinking I would see the Buddha Metteyya, I did not try for insight. Help me to sit up and give me the chance." The young bhikkhu helped him to sit up and started to leave the room. Just as he left, the elder snapped his fingers to indicate that he had attained Arahatship.

The bhikkhus assembled and said to him that it must be difficult to attain the supreme state in the hour of death, but he said, "That was not difficult, friends. But I will tell you what is difficult. Friends, I see no action done by me without mindfulness and unknowingly since the time I ordained." So you can see how difficult it is to be mindful for those of us who have not reached the goal. And if the bhikkhu said that it was easy to reach Nibbāna, the meaning here is that the final goal was easy because all the necessary work had already been done. Until we have prepared ourselves, it will not only be difficult, it will be impossible.

Another thing to know concerning aspirations is that if we have made an aspiration and had it confirmed by a Buddha, it is certain that we will not reach Awakening until the time is right. But the more we prepare, the harder we work, the easier it will be to fulfil our wishes. If we do not work, we may have to suffer a great deal.

Too Much Effort, the Case of Soṇa[9]

We have talked a great deal about making an effort, but let me tell you the case of a bhikkhu who made too much effort. During the Buddha's time there was a young man named Soṇa who was so delicate, hair grew on the soles of his feet. One day, the king, Bimbisāra of Rājagaha, assembled representatives from eighty thousand villages and he sent a message for Soṇa to come. Soṇa's parents cautioned him that even though the king sent for him because he wanted to see the soles of his feet, he should be careful not to show disrespect by pointing the soles of his feet towards the king. He should sit cross-legged, with the soles uppermost so the king could see them. Soṇa was carried to the palace and there, he seated himself as he had been told to do. The king instructed the representatives concerning lay life. Then he said, "Now go and pay respects to the Buddha. He will instruct you in the aims of the lives to come." They went to the Buddha, who taught them.

9. *The Book of the Discipline*, IV, pp. 236-246.

They took the Triple Refuge and left. But Soṇa stayed and asked to be ordained a bhikkhu.

When he began to work, he walked up and down, striving for progress, and his delicate feet blistered. The walk was covered with blood. So the Buddha went to him and sat down on the seat prepared for him. He asked Soṇa, "While you were alone, Soṇa, did you not just think, 'I am as energetic as any of the Buddha's disciples. And yet my heart is not free of the taints through not clinging. My family is still rich. I could use these riches and make merit. Suppose I return to lay life and use those riches to make merit?' " Soṇa evidently felt he had not acquired enough Pāramīs in the past to attain release. But that was not his problem.

The Buddha asked him further, "Were you a good lute player when you were a layman?"

"Yes, Lord," Soṇa answered.

"When the strings of your lute were too taut, did your lute sound well and respond well then?"

"No, Lord," was the reply.

"When the strings of your lute were too slack, did your lute sound well and respond well?"

And again the answer was no.

"When the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too slack, but were evenly tuned, did your lute sound well and respond well then?"

"Yes, Lord," Soṇa answered.

"Similarly, Soṇa, making too much effort leads to agitation, and too little effort leads to slackness. Therefore, work for well-balanced energy, acquire well-balanced spiritual faculties, and take that as your sign."

"Yes, Lord," Soṇa replied.

So this is my message to you, take that as your sign:

> Not too taut nor too slack,
> Work with balanced energy.
> You are bound to succeed in due course
> if you follow our instructions scrupulously.

DAY FOUR: MORNING DISCOURSE

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā
manoseṭṭhā manomayā
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena
bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato naṃ dukkham anveti
cakkaṃ va vahato padaṃ.

Phenomena are preceded by mind.
Mind is their chief; they are made of mind.
If a person speaks or acts with an evil mind,
Then suffering follows him as a wheel
Follows the foot of the ox.

Dhammapada v 1

The Story of Cakkhupāla

During the Buddha's time, there was a bhikkhu who became an Arahat and at the same time lost his eyesight.[1] Even an Arahat is not an exception to the law of cause and effect, and as long as his material body with its mental activity lasts, unwholesome deeds done in the past can result in such things as illness. The difference between the awakened person and an ordinary person is that once a person is awakened, there is no longer the conflict and reaction to pain—or pleasure, for that matter. So there is no mental suffering.

Some bhikkhus came to the monastery where this Arahat was staying, and they were looking around, as the Buddha and eighty great disciples were there too. But a heavy rain prevented them from seeing the bhikkhu, Cakkhupāla, so they decided to go in the morning. The rain stopped during the night and Cakkhupāla went out to walk up and down. Due to the rain, the walk was covered with insects. As Cakkhupāla was blind, he stepped on

1. *Buddhist Legends,* 1 146-158.

them and killed many of them. When the bhikkhus came to visit him in the morning, they saw the insects and went to report this to the Buddha. "When he had his eyesight he lay around and slept all the time. Now that he is blind he takes it in his head to walk up and down," they said.

When they mentioned that he had killed many insects, the Buddha asked them, "Did you see him killing them?" They answered no. "Just as you did not see him killing them, neither did he see those living creatures. Those who are free from unwholesome tendencies can have no intention of causing death." So we can see that the mental volition accompanying an act is the most important aspect in the law of cause and effect.

The bhikkhus asked how someone who was an Arahat could become blind. "Through the influence of his past volitional acts," was the answer. And the Buddha told the bhikkhus the story of the past life which caused Cakkhupāla to become blind.

In a past life, Cakkhupāla was a physician. He treated a woman who had trouble with her eyes. The woman promised to become his slave, together with her children, if he cured her. The cure worked, but the woman had second thoughts about being a slave and pretended that her eyes were not any better.

The physician knew she was faking and decided to get even. "I don't need her fees," he thought to himself, "so I'll make her blind." And he gave her an ointment which he made her apply and she lost her eyesight. The Buddha ended his explanation with the verse we quoted from the *Dhammapada,* explaining that deeds done in the past inevitably bear fruits at some time or other.

In this story we see the aspect of *kamma* in which there is retribution for volitional acts. There is also a continuation aspect, the transmission of individual characteristics, impressions, tendencies, and so on throughout one's lives in the cycles of rebirth (Saṃsāra). An Arahat is free from all impurities, but he must reap the fruit of all the seeds which he himself has sown as long as the mind-body entity lasts. The Buddhas and Arahats do not accumulate fresh *kamma* as they have eradicated the roots—ignorance and craving—but like all other beings they are not exempt from the inevitable consequences of good and bad actions done in the past. Mind precedes all actions. It serves as the principal element both in performing and in reacting to deeds. It is mind that rules and shapes action. Words and deeds are also produced by mind.

The Story of Maṭṭhakuṇḍali

In this first verse of the *Dhammapada,* and in the second, which we will examine in a moment, the Buddha emphasizes the great part the mind plays in men's lives. He explains how deeds are good or evil according to the pure or impure state of mind. And he speaks of the fact that the consequences of such deeds are inevitable:

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā
manoseṭṭhā manomayā
Manasā ce pasannena
bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato naṃ sukham anveti
chāyā va ananpāyinī.

Phenomena are preceded by mind.
Mind is their chief; they are made by mind.
If a person speaks or acts with a pure mind,
Happiness follows him like a never departing
shadow.

Dhammapada v 2

This second verse is the complement of the first. The first taught that evil results in evil. This one shows us that good results in good. This verse was spoken with regard to Maṭṭhakuṇḍali, the son of a rich man who was exceedingly stingy.[2] The boy suffered from jaundice and was on the point of death because his father was so afraid of spending money he would not call a doctor to treat his son. When he finally did call a doctor, it was too late.

The Buddha perceived the sad condition of Maṭṭhakuṇḍali and went by his house so the boy would see him before he died. The Buddha knew that he would then die with a pure heart. As a consequence, the boy would be reborn in a deva plane and be able to receive the teachings there and reach the first stage of Awakening, and his father, seeing the fate of his son, would attain that stage as well.

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2. *Buddhist Legends,* I 159-165.

The Story of Paṭācārā

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve
apassaṃ udayabbayaṃ
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo
passato udayabbayaṃ.

One could live a hundred years not understanding
that all conditioned states rise and pass away.
It would be far better to live one day
understanding all conditioned states rise and pass
away.

Dhammapada v 113

This verse was given in connection with Paṭācārā.[3] She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Sāvatthi, worth four hundred millions. When she grew up her parents put her in a palace seven stories high and had her guarded, but she misconducted herself with her servant. Knowing her parents would never approve, she and the servant ran away. They lived in a distant village, the husband farming and gathering firewood and leaves in the forest, Paṭācārā doing all the cooking and washing.

In due course she became pregnant. She begged her husband to take her home to her parents, saying, "A mother and father always have a soft spot in their heart for a child." But the husband was afraid of what the parents would do to him and refused. So she decided to go on her own. She left word with the neighbours and went. When the husband came home and learned what had happened, he set out to follow her. He overtook her, tried to persuade her to return, but she refused. And on the way she gave birth to a son. It no longer seemed necessary to continue on home now, so they returned to the village. And a second time she became pregnant and left for home. Her husband caught up with her again and she felt the birth pains.

But this time, as the husband was looking for material to build a shelter, a deadly snake bit him and he died. Paṭācārā gave birth to a son alone. A storm raged all night long and she took her children in her arms and crouched on the ground to protect them. All night she stayed in this position. The next morning, thinking her husband had abandoned her, she set out again. Soon she came across the body of her husband and she said, "My husband is

3. *Buddhist Legends,* II 250-256.

dead because of me," and she continued towards her parents' house wailing and lamenting.

She came to a river that was swollen because of the storm and as she was too weak to wade across the stream with both children, she left the older boy on the near bank and carried the new-born baby across. She laid him down and started back for the older boy. When she was in midstream, a hawk swooped down and took the new-born baby, mistaking him for a piece of meat. The mother raised her hands and screamed, "Get away! Get away! (Su! Su!)" The older boy saw his mother raise her hands and thought she was calling him. He fell in the stream and was carried away.

Paṭācārā continued on her way, all the more upset at the loss of her two sons. On the road she met a man from Sāvatthi. She asked about her family. The man said, "Please don't ask me about them. Ask about anyone else you wish." But she insisted and was told the storm had destroyed the house, and her parents and brother had died. "Look," the man said, "you can see the smoke of their cremation over there."

This was too much. Paṭācārā lost her mind. She wandered about without any clothes, but she was unaware that she was naked. She wandered around, weeping and wailing for her husband, her sons, her parents, and her brother.

The Buddha saw her coming from afar as he was teaching the bhikkhus, and he knew that she had been fulfilling the perfections for one hundred thousand world cycles. At the time of the Buddha Padmuttara, she had been present when he pointed out a bhikkhunī who was foremost among the bhikkhunīs in being versed in the Dhamma, and she made an aspiration to one day meet a future Buddha and attain the same status. Buddha Padmuttara considered whether the potential was present in her and whether in the future this would happen, and then he gave a sure prediction that she would encounter the Buddha Gotama and fulfil her aspiration. Only a Buddha can have that kind of vision and give a sure prediction.

So when the Buddha saw Paṭācārā, he knew that only he could be a refuge to her. The moment the disciples saw her coming, they wanted to drive her away, but the Buddha told them to allow her to approach. When she came up, he said to her, "Return to your right mind." And she was suddenly aware of her state and crouched on the ground because she was ashamed of her nakedness. A man threw his cloak over her. Then she approached the

Buddha, paid respects, and asked him to be her refuge, and she told him of all that had happened.

The Buddha said to her, "In the round of birth and decay, you have wept over the loss of sons and loved ones over and over again. You have shed more tears than there is water in the four oceans." And he gave the following stanza:

> The four oceans contain a small amount of water
> Compared with the tears that man has shed,
> Distraught through sorrow and suffering.
> Woman, why do you remain heedless?

As he spoke, her grief became less intense. Seeing that her grief had calmed somewhat, he told her, "Paṭācārā, sons and loved ones cannot be a shelter or a refuge to one who is on his way to a future life. How much less so during the present life. The wise should restrain themselves through moral actions and thus make clear the path leading to Nibbāna." At the end of the Buddha's discourse, she became established in the first stage of Awakening, and the taints in her, which were as numerous as the particles of dust in the whole earth, were burned away.

She requested that the Buddha admit her to the Order of Bhikkhunīs and as a bhikkhunī continued to work for full Awakening. One day she was washing her feet and as she poured out the water, some spilled on the ground. The water ran a little way and stopped. The second time, it ran a little further. A third time it went even further. And she used this as her subject of meditation. "Just as the water I spilled the first time ran a little way," she reflected, "living beings in this world die when they are young. And just as the water I spilled the second time ran a little further, living beings in this world die when in the prime of life. And like the water that went still further the third time, living beings in this world die in old age."

The Buddha, seated in his Perfumed Chamber, saw that she was ready for full liberation. He sent forth his luminous image and said to her, "Paṭācārā, it is far better to live a single day or even a single moment seeing the rise and fall of the five aggregates of being than to live a hundred years without seeing their rise and fall." And he instructed her using the verse we quoted at the beginning. At the conclusion of the verse, Paṭācārā attained Arahatship, along with the supramundane faculties, and she

became foremost among the bhikkhunīs in being versed in the Dhamma.

The Four Noble Truths

Faith is no doubt a prerequisite, but it is the practice of the teaching which really counts. Therefore, the Buddha said:

> Each individual must walk along the path himself.
> Buddhas can only point the way.[4]

Today, this afternoon, we will be teaching you Vipassanā Meditation. Before we teach you Vipassanā Meditation, I owe you some explanation of the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths, taught by the Buddha in his first sermon, form the basis on which this system of philosophy is founded. This sermon is known as the Dhamma-cakka-pavattana Sutta—that is, the Discourse to Set in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma. The first three of the Four Noble Truths expound the philosophy of the Buddha while the fourth, namely the Eightfold Noble Path, which is a Code of Morality-cum-philosophy, serves as a means to the end.

Now, what are the Four Noble Truths? They are: (1) Dukkha Sacca, the Truth of Suffering; (2) Samudaya Sacca, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering; (3) Nirodha Sacca, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the ending of suffering; and (4) Magga Sacca, the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

In order that one can come to a complete understanding of the fundamental concepts of the philosophy of the Buddha, emphasis is laid on the need for the realization of the Truth of Suffering. To bring home this point, the Buddha tackled the problem from two different angles: by a process of reasoning and by a process of experiencing.

In using the approach of reasoning, the Buddha made his disciples see that life is a struggle, life is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering. But the influence of sensuality is so strong in mankind, men are normally apt to forget themselves, to forget the price they have to pay for sensual pleasures.

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4. See the Buddha's discourse to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, *The Middle Length Sayings*, I 52-57.

Just think for a moment of how uncomfortable it must be in the prenatal period, and of how the child has to struggle for existence from the moment of birth. Think of the preparations necessary if one is to face life and how, as an adult, the struggle goes on up to the last breath. You can very well imagine what life is. Life is indeed suffering.

The more one is attached to self, the greater the suffering. But the pains and suffering a man has to undergo are suppressed in favour of momentary sensual pleasures which are only occasional flashes of light in the darkness. If it were not for the delusion and ignorance (Moha) which keeps him from the truth, man would surely have worked out the way for emancipation from the round of "life, suffering, and death."

In using the process of experiencing, the Buddha taught how one could see for oneself the true nature of all conditioned states. He made it known to his disciples that the human body is composed of Kalāpas (sub-atomic units), each dying simultaneously as it becomes. Each Kalāpa is a mass formed of the eight nature elements. The first four are called the Maha-Bhūtas: that is to say, the essential material qualities which are predominant in a Kalāpa. They are Pathavī, Apo, Tejo and Vāyo, or the element of extension (literally, earth), cohesion (water), radiation (heat and cold), and motion (air). The other four elements are merely subsidiaries which are dependent on and born out of the first four. They are Vaṇṇa, Gandha, Rasa, Ojā or colour, smell, taste, and nutritive essence.

A Kalāpa is the minutest particle noticeable in the physical plane. It is only when the eight nature-elements, which merely have the characteristic of behaviour, are together that the entity of a Kalāpa is formed. In other words, during the very brief moment of the co-existence of these eight nature-elements of behaviour, there is a mass which is known as a Kalāpa. These Kalāpas are in a state of perpetual change or flux. They are nothing but a stream of energy, just as a candle's light or the light of an electric bulb are streams of energy. The body, as we call it, is not an entity as it seems to be, but a continuum of matter with the life-force co-existing.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in his booklet, *What Buddhism Is,* points out that to a casual observer a piece of iron is motionless. But the scientist knows that it is composed of electrons, all in a state of perpetual change or flux. If this is true of a piece of iron, then

what will be the case of a living organism such as a human being? The changes that are taking place inside a human body must be more violent. And Sayagyi asked, "Does man feel the rocking vibrations within himself? Does the scientist who knows that all is in a state of change or flux ever feel that his own body is only energy and vibration?" What will be the repercussion on the mental attitude of the man who introspectively sees that his own body is mere energy and vibration? To quench his thirst, one can drink a glass of water from a village well. But suppose his eyes are as powerful as a microscope. He would surely hesitate to drink the well water in which he would see the magnified microbes. So also when one comes to a realization of the perpetual change within himself (Impermanence, Anicca), he must necessarily come to the understanding, as a sequel to that, of the realization of the Truth of Suffering. This comes through acutely feeling the radiation, vibration and friction of the atomic units within. Indeed, life is suffering, both within and without, to all appearances and in ultimate reality.

What then is the origin of suffering? The origin of suffering, the Buddha said, is craving (Taṇhā). Once the seed of desire is sown, it grows into greed and multiplies into craving or lust—either for power or for material gains. The man in whom this seed is sown becomes a slave to these cravings and he is automatically driven to strenuous efforts of mind and body to keep pace with them until the end comes. The final result must surely be the accumulation of the evil mental forces generated by his own actions, words, and thoughts which are motivated by desire (Loba) and anger (Dosa) inherent in him.

Philosophically, it is the mental forces of actions (Saṅkhāra) which react in the course of time on the person originating the actions, and these mental forces of actions are responsible for the stream of mind and matter, the Origin of Suffering within.

What, then, is the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering? The path is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha in his first sermon. As we have already said, this Eightfold Path is divided into three main stages: Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā.

Sīla (morality) includes three steps: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Samādhi (equanimity of mind) includes three steps: Right Exertion, Right Attentiveness, Right Concentration. And Paññā (wisdom) has two steps: Right Aspiration and

Right Understanding. We have already discussed in detail the first six steps coming under Sīla and Samādhi. Now let us examine Paññā: Right Aspiration (Sammā-saṅkappa) and Right Understanding (Sammā-diṭṭhi).

Right Understanding of the truth is the aim and object of Buddhism and Right Aspiration is the analytical study of mind and matter, both within and without, to come to a realization of truth. Right Aspiration is also translated by some as Right Contemplation.

The terms for mind and matter in Pāḷi are Nāma and Rūpa. Nāma is so called because of its tendency to incline towards an object of sense. Rūpa is so called because of its impermanence due to perpetual change. The nearest terms in English to Nāma and Rūpa are therefore mind and matter.

Nāma, or mind, strictly speaking, is the term applied to consciousness, feeling or sensation, perception, and volitional energies (Viññāna, Vedanā, Saññā, Saṅkhāra). These, together with matter (Rūpa), the material state, make up what we call the Five Aggregates (Pañca-kkhandā). It is in these five aggregates that the Buddha has summed up all the mental and physical phenomena of existence which in reality is a continuum of mind and matter co-existing, but which to a layman is taken to be his personality or ego.

In Right Aspiration, the disciple who has developed by then the powerful lens of Samādhi will focus his attention into himself and by introspective meditation make an analytical study of the nature of matter first, then of the nature of mind and mental properties. He feels and at times he also sees the Kalāpas in their true state. He begins to realize that both matter and mind are in constant change. They are impermanent and fleeting. As his power of concentration increases, the nature of forces in him becomes more and more vivid.

This is the explanation given by Sayagyi in his lectures, *What Buddhism Is.*

DAY FOUR: EVENING DISCOURSE

Ti-lakkhaṇa: Meditating on the Three Characteristics

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ
kusalassa upasampadā
Sacittapariyodapanaṃ
etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

Avoiding all evil, Doing good,
Purifying one's own mind—
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

Dhammapada v 183

"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.
"Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.
"Sabbe dhammā anattā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.

"All conditioned states are impermanent."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

"All conditioned states are unsatisfactory."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

"All states, conditioned or unconditioned, are
without a controlling, enduring self."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

Dhammapada vv 277-279

The story given in the *Dhammapada Commentary* concerning the first of these verses is as follows: There were five hundred bhikkhus who had received a subject of meditation from the Buddha. They had made every effort but were not able to attain full Awakening. So they returned to the Buddha to obtain a subject of meditation that was better suited to their needs. The Buddha thought to himself, "What will be the most profitable meditation subject for these bhikkhus?" And he saw their past. During the time of Buddha Kassapa, this group of bhikkhus had devoted themselves to the meditation on the characteristic of impermanence for twenty thousand years. Therefore, the Buddha now taught them how to meditate using the characteristic of impermanence (Anicca). "Bhikkhus," he said to them, "in the sphere of sensual existence and in the sphere of non-sensual existence, all the aggregates are impermanent. They have no ultimate reality." And so he spoke the verse beginning, "All conditioned states are impermanent."

The second verse, on the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned states, was given to another group of bhikkhus. Their story is the same as the first group except that in their past life, they had used the characteristic of unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha) as their subject of meditation.

For the third verse the story is the same except that these bhikkhus had used the lack of a controlling, enduring self (Anattā) as their subject of meditation.

And all three groups, working on subjects suited to them, were able to attain Arahatship.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in his discourse, "The Essentials of Buddha-Dhamma in Meditative Practice," laid emphasis on the need for the correct understanding of Anicca, Dukkha and Anattā. These

are the three characteristics of all conditioned things. Sayagyi said, "If you know impermanence (Anicca) truly, you know Dukkha (suffering) also as a sequel, and the lack of ego (Anattā) as ultimate truth. But it takes time to understand the three together.

"Impermanence (Anicca) is the essential factor which must be experienced first and understood by practice. A mere reading of books on Buddhism or a book-knowledge of the Buddha-Dhamma will not be enough for the understanding of true Anicca because the experiential aspect will be missing. It is only through experience and understanding of the nature of change (Anicca) as an ever-changing process within your very self that you can understand change in the way the Buddha would have you understand it. This understanding of Anicca can be developed as it was in the days of the Buddha by persons who have no book-knowledge whatsoever of Buddhism.

"To understand Anicca, one must follow strictly and diligently the Eightfold Noble Path which, as we have seen, is divided into the three steps of Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā: Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom or Insight.

"Sīla, or virtuous living, is the base for Samādhi, the control of the mind to one-pointedness. It is only when concentration is good that one can develop Paññā, Wisdom.

"So, Sīla and Samādhi are the prerequisites for Paññā. By Paññā or insight is meant the understanding of Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā through the practice of Vipassanā, that is to say, Insight Meditation."

Full Understanding Through Investigating

Now let us look at the exposition of the three characteristics of all conditioned states and the full understanding through investigating (Tirana-pariññā) as given by the teacher of Sayagyi's teacher. Venerable Ledi Sayadaw discusses these three characteristics in his book *The Manual of Insight* (Vipassanā-dīpanī).[1] Ledi Sayadaw was a very learned bhikkhu in Burma who lived at the beginning of this century.

The three prominent features are: the mark of impermanence (Anicca-lakkhaṇa), the mark of suffering (Dukkha-lakkhaṇa), and the mark of lack of soul (Anattā-lakkhaṇa). This evening we will concentrate on impermanence.

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1. *The Wheel,* Nos. 31, 32.

Radical Change and Subtle Change

There are two aspects of impermanence: radical change and change over a longer term or what could be termed subtle change.[2] In Pāḷi, radical change is called Vipariṇāma and subtle change is called Aññathābhāva (literally, becoming something else). If radical and subtle changes are seen clearly, it will be obvious that mental and material phenomena are actually impermanent. There are five prominent features in subtle change: birth, growth, continuance, decay, and death. We can illustrate these with the example of a lamp. Lighting the lamp is the birth of the flame. This is the birth of the material phenomenon, but it is not fire. We observe that the flame flares up. This is the growth of the material phenomenon, but it is not fire. We observe that the flame continues in its normal state of burning. This is the continuance of the material phenomenon, but it is not fire. We observe the flame dying down. This is the decay of the material phenomenon, but it is not fire. We observe that the flame goes out. This is the death of the material phenomenon, but it is not fire. The property of heat is the fire. The flame quivers because of the presence of these prominent features. Or it may quiver when the lamp is moved, and in that case it may be said that the quivering is due to wind. These five prominent features of the subtle changes in the fire are the marks of impermanence. Through observing and taking note of these five features, it can be understood that the flame is impermanent. Similarly, it should be understood that all moving things are impermanent.

Our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin advised us, "For progress in Vipassanā meditation, a student must keep knowing Anicca (impermanence) as continuously as possible." The Buddha said, "It would be to your benefit if you could keep on knowing Anicca even when answering the call of nature."

Now let us examine again from the point of view of Abhidhamma philosophy. When we know that the five aggregates (the five Khandhas) immediately arise and then disappear, it is not difficult to visualize that such things are impermanent. They are born and then perish (Udayabbaya, meaning "rise and fall, birth and death"; Khandhānaṃ Udayabbayaṃ, meaning "rise and fall of the aggregates").

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2. See Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 24.

Not only in modern science but also in Buddhism, there are fundamental particles or Kalāpas. In the human body there are millions of atoms and cells. They consist of a temporary union of the four primaries which we discussed last night. The smallest particles, Kalāpas, arise and disappear. The old is succeeded by the new, giving rise to the concept of Anicca, impermanence.

By introspective meditation on the realities of nature in himself, it came vividly to the Buddha that there is no substantiality as there seems to be in the human body. It is nothing but the sum total of innumerable millions of these Kalāpas. Each of them is about one part of a particle of dust raised by the wheel of a chariot in summer, the particle being divided into 46,656 parts. That is how our teacher, Sayagyi, explained this in one of his lectures.

The last words of the Buddha just before he passed into Mahāparinibbāna were, "Decay or Anicca is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." This is in fact the essence of all his teachings during the forty-five years of his long ministry.

Our teacher Sayagyi reminded us, "If you will keep up the awareness of Anicca that is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in the course of time." And he continued, "As you develop in the understanding of Anicca, your insight into 'what is true of nature' will become greater and greater. So much so that eventually you will have no doubt whatsoever of the three characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha, and Anatta. It is then only that you are in a position to go ahead for the goal in view."

So this will give us an introduction to appreciating the significance of impermanence, Anicca. We will discuss the other two characteristics of all conditioned states—Dukkha and Anattā—in later talks.

Pañca-kkhandhā: The Five Aggregates[3]

Now let us examine the five aggregates, the five Khandhā:

(1) Matter (Rūpa-kkhandha): what we know as material objects, both inside ourselves and outside ourselves.

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3. For a detailed discussion of the five aggregates, see Ashin Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, Ch. III, ¶¶ 32-230; the *Dhammasangani*, (translated by Jagdish Kashyap, *Abhidhamma Philosophy* [reprinted by Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1982]; and by Mrs Rhys Davids, *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics* [P.T.S., reprinted 1984]); and Egerton C. Baptist, *Abhidhamma for the Beginner* (Colombo, Sri Lanka, ca. 1959).

(2) Sensations or feelings (Vedanā-kkhandha): our experience of our bodies coming into contact with matter or thoughts.
(3) Perceptions (Saññā-kkhandha): that is, the perceiving of colour or shape or sound, etc.; recognizing what we are experiencing.
(4) Volitional acts (Saṅkhāra-kkhandha): mental acts; our response to contact.
(5) Consciousness (Viññāṇa-kkhandha): the bare awareness of things, before we understand what we are experiencing.

Mind and Body. Looking at these five groups of existence, we might notice the importance the mind plays. Only one out of five is what we call hard matter, material existence. Four are what we call mind, mental activity. This is very different from dividing ourselves into mind and matter, as if they were equal. In fact, the mind is more important. This may seem hard for us to believe. We may be used to associating reality with what we see and feel outside ourselves. Perhaps we think of our bodies as more real than our minds. Let us look into this a little more closely.

Matter. Matter is the result of the coming together of four basic elements, the Four Great Primaries (Cattāro Mahā-bhūtā) which are traditionally known as: solidity, liquidity, heat or cold, and motion (Paṭhavī, Āpo, Tejo, and Vāyo).

(1) Solidity or the earth element includes whatever is recognizable through sensations of pressure or touch.
(2) Liquidity or the water element includes continuity, cohesion.
(3) Heat or the fire element includes the various degrees of heat and cold.
(4) Motion or the wind element includes movement.

These four elements are present in all matter in varying degrees. There will be one element that will predominate and determine the characteristics of any particular material manifestation. A lump of clay, for example, will be experienced mainly as the earth element. But there is a certain amount of cohesion (the water element) holding it all together. There is also some heat. And if we could see inside the atomic structure, there is an amazing amount of movement.

We can experience all these elements for ourselves, except for cohesion. Solidity we can feel: weight, heaviness or lightness. Heat we can feel, or cold. We experience motion. Cohesion, however, we can only deduce intellectually, because we see that

things do not fly apart. But on the level of direct experience, we can only feel one thing at a time, one thing after the other. If our powers of concentration are not highly developed, we may have the impression that one thing runs into another, but in actual fact our mind only knows one thing at a time.

Combinations of the four basic elements give secondary qualities: colour (Vaṇṇa), smell (Gandha), taste (Rasa), and nutriment (Ojā). Our lump of clay will be red or grey or brown, etc. If our sense of smell is good we will be able to smell it. And so forth.

These eight elements are all present in inanimate material things. For there to be life, vitality must be present. For there to be sensorial experiences, there must be physical sense organs: eyes to see, ears to hear, noses to smell, tongues to taste, bodies to feel, and minds to think and imagine.

Mind. The other four aggregates make up what we call mind.

Let us take *consciousness* first. In this context, consciousness is meant in a very limited sense. It is just bare awareness, without any recognition or reaction to what is being experienced. There are six kinds of consciousness, depending on the sense organ which leads to consciousness: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—because the mind is a sense which receives mental objects just as the eye receives light. These mental objects are ideas that are based on past experience, and past experience came through the first five senses.

The Buddha explained that it can be compared to different kinds of fire.[4] When grass is burning we call it a grass fire. If wood is burning we say it is a wood fire. So it is with consciousness. When the right elements come together for there to be sight, there is "eye consciousness". These elements include: *matter*—that is, a body or object made up of the four essential elements, in other words, a visual form; *life*—you have to be alive to see; *the eye* (or eye basis)—if you are blind you will not see; *light*—if it is pitch black, you cannot see anything; and *attention* (or consciousness)—if you are in a coma or in deep sleep, you will not see. All these elements must be present for there to be sight-consciousness. If we say "He does not see," then we are describing the lack of sight-consciousness. It does not exist when one of these elements is not present. When it is dark at night, for example, and no source of light is present, then sight-consciousness does not arise in the

4. *The Middle Length Sayings,* I 315.

organ of the eye. It is temporarily suspended. But it will arise if the light of a fire is introduced. And if the light is put out, sight-consciousness also will stop.

Just as there were five prominent features for the material understanding of change, there are the same five features for mental phenomena, such as consciousness. Just as the light from the flame comes into existence, grows, continues, decays and dies out, so too, sight-consciousness, which is dependent on that light, will come into being, grow, continue, decay and die out.

The presence or absence of consciousness depending on the functions of hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching can be understood in the same way we have understood for sight consciousness. There must be sounds present for the ear, odours present for the nose, tastes present for the tongue, and ideas, thoughts and images present for the mind. And all, of course, are impermanent, both in terms of radical change and subtle change. Mind consciousness has many different manifestations. The element of radical and subtle change is apparent through the changes of the different kinds of thought. The mental consciousness accompanying the different types of sensations, for example, are very evident, whether it be the changes of pleasure, pain, joy, grief, or a neutral feeling. Changes in perception are very obvious too, with initial application, sustained application, from good to bad and back again. Anyone can easily discover that while they are sitting alone, many different emotions will colour the mental consciousness, each arising, one after the other: greed, disinterestedness, hate, loving kindness, and so on.

Now we come to the next aggregate, *perception.* Once we are conscious of anything that comes into the field of the senses, then there can be perceptions or recognition of the distinctive aspects of the object: such as red or blue or yellow, loud or soft, rough or smooth, etc. Perceptions, like consciousness, are of six kinds, depending on the six senses.

After the perception of an object comes a *sensation.* Again, there are six kinds of sensation or feeling, named for the six senses that give rise to them. So there are sensations that come into being through visual contact, auditory contact, etc.

But there is something new here too—another dimension we do not find in just bare awareness and recognition. The feelings or sensations are agreeable to our body or agreeable to our mind.

Or they are disagreeable to our body or disagreeable to our mind. Finally, there are indifferent or neutral feelings.

Neutral feelings are easily overlooked, as we are much more used to thinking in terms of accepting or rejecting instead of just letting be. Many of these neutral feelings do not make as strong an impact on us as the feelings which are liked or disliked.

In Vipassanā, we develop our awareness of sensations, learning to observe agreeable, disagreeable, and indifferent sensations with equanimity. This can be done with any one of the six senses, but the sensation of touch is the best for developing equanimity. The objects which stimulate the other five senses are very weak. We do not notice clearly the impact of light on the eye or sound on the ear, etc. The actual impact of most sense objects is accompanied by indifferent feelings. In the short space of time during which we simply register the fact that the eye is receiving light—before we react to the image conveyed by that light—we do not like or dislike any particular image. The response comes later.

With touch, however, the pleasant feeling that accompanies moral actions and the pain that accompanies immoral actions is immediate. The comparison given in the Pāḷi text[5] says that the impact on five of the senses is very faint, like hitting a wad of cotton with another wad of cotton. With the sense of touch it is like putting the wad of cotton on an anvil and striking it with a hammer: the hammer will squash the cotton and make the anvil ring.

Now we come to the last aggregate and the one that is of greatest interest to us here in a meditation course. It is the aspect of reality we can do something about, and in doing the right thing, we can begin to come out of our suffering. This is *volitional acts* (Saṅkhāras), acts of the will.

This is above all the domain of reaction. The coming together of matter and mind. The combination of consciousness, the senses, objects to be sensed—all result in a perception of a particular object, a single sensation. And there is a response. We like. Or we dislike. Or we are indifferent. The sensation is either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. We react.

We tend to grasp what is pleasant, reject what is unpleasant, and ignore the neutral. We act. We either do a good act or a bad act. The energy associated with the act is called Kamma. We act with

5. Ashin Buddhaghosa, *Atthasālinī*, 263 (*The Expositor*, 349f.).

mind, speech, or body. These acts will have consequences, cause and effect. Good acts will bring good results. Bad acts will bring unpleasant results. Neutral acts will bring no results.

If we could stop before there was any reaction, all that has happened up until the moment of reaction would not lead to anything. The sensations will still be agreeable or disagreeable or neutral, but we will not cling to them or reject them. We will just leave it at that.

If you look closely at what I have just said, you may notice something rather surprising. Are we really saying we should stop doing good actions? It is not quite that simple. There are two ways of judging actions. (1) One can judge an action by the results it will have in the world around the person who did the action. (2) One can judge an action by the results it will have for the person who did the act.

If we take the case of someone who is capable of living without reacting, without these volitional acts of the will, we will find that person's conscious acts are all for the good of the world around them. But as they are acts without the energy to create Kamma, these acts will have no consequences for that person. If we could see inside that person, we would see that he does not react. His actions are not accompanied by desire for results or by disliking. We would find only spontaneous acts. Truly spontaneous acts will always be beneficial to others. Harmful acts will always be acts done after reacting. As you may have guessed, the person who can act spontaneously is a person who is fully liberated, fully awakened.

We will be capable of acting spontaneously only after we have reached our goal. In the meantime, we are learning. And we have to work with what we have. We have to start out from where we are now.

The acts of an ordinary person can be classified as good or bad, skilful or unskilful, leading to good fortune or leading to misfortune, leading to ordinary happiness or unhappiness. These actions can be premeditated or prompted or encouraged. They can be prompted either by someone else or by ourselves. Or actions can be unprompted, un-induced, automatic, spontaneous. So far, we have eight possibilities: all the combinations of good and bad, prompted and unprompted, by ourselves and by someone else.

Our actions can be accompanied by pleasure, displeasure, or by indifference. So three times eight makes for twenty-four possible kinds of actions. And our actions have root causes, too: desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, non-desire, loving kindness, knowledge. But at this point, our mathematics gets complicated because more than one of these may be present for one action. Or in some cases, certain root causes cannot exist together. Bad actions, for example, will always be done out of ignorance. Greed or hatred may be present too, but not both. We cannot desire and hate something at the same time. This may seem to be possible, though, because the mind works so fast and we can desire something one split second and hate it the next split second.

On the other hand, good acts are sometimes done with knowledge, sometimes without. Let us take an example. A boy is walking down the road with his mother and they see a big stone in the road. The mother tells the boy to pick up the stone and throw it on the side of the road so no cars coming along will have an accident. The boy is happy to be helpful, so he picks up the stone and throws it. Here we have a good action, prompted by someone else, accompanied by pleasure.

But maybe the boy does not want to pick up the stone and does it only because his mother insists. It is still a good act, still prompted by someone else, but now it is accompanied by displeasure.

What if the boy is alone and thinks, "My mother would tell me to move the stone and she'll be proud of me when I tell her"? He moves it happily: a good act, prompted from within, accompanied by pleasure.

Not all boys are so nice, however. A boy may come along, see the stone, and think, "I'll put it over here so a car is sure to hit it. My friends will think that's fun." He moves it happily: a bad act, prompted from within, accompanied by pleasure. And so on.

But what about someone who is awakened? How would we classify his actions? Here we must realize there are two levels of equanimity. For the ordinary person, there can be a sort of neutral emotion in between liking and disliking. But the desire to do, the desire to make things happen is still present. For the awakened person, there is a different kind of equanimity. No desire to do enters into it. There is just pure action. There is a stone. He removes it. But no prompting is necessary; the liking, disliking is not present. There is pure equanimity.

We can understand this intellectually, but it does not mean we will be able to go out now and clear the roads of stones with perfect equanimity. No. To understand it directly, we will have to develop our minds to the point where we have perfect control. Ānāpāna and Vipassanā are the way to do that. In the meantime, we should cultivate good actions even though our good acts are not done with the purity of an awakened person.

It is an *un*vicious circle: the more good acts we do, the easier it is to lead good lives, and that makes it easier to concentrate, which helps us develop insight, which prompts us to do good deeds.

DAY FIVE: MORNING DISCOURSE

Seeing the Deathless State for One Day is Better than 100 Years Without

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve
apassaṃ amataṃ padaṃ.
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo
passato amataṃ padaṃ.

One could live a hundred years not seeing the deathless state. But knowing all things arise and vanish for just one day is better.

Dhammapada v 114

The Story of Kisā-Gotamī[1]

Yesterday I told you the story of Patācārā who lost all her family. There is a similar story, showing how the world is full of suffering.

There was a young mother by the name of Kisā-Gotamī. She was born in a poor family and people took no notice of her. Her name, Kisā, meant "thin" or "small". Then, after she married and had a son, she became popular because of this. But her son died at an early age and that which gave her importance in life was gone. She had never encountered death, so she did not understand. She thought the child was seriously ill, and she went around with the child on her hip, looking for a cure. Someone told her to go to the Buddha. By that time, she had almost gone crazy. People laughed at her and she felt great agitation.

When she went to the Buddha where he was living in the Jetavana grove, the Buddha was teaching the bhikkhus. She stood in the hall and asked the Teacher to give her the medicine

1. We use the version of this story given in the commentary to the Therī-gāthā (see *Psalms of the Sisters,* pp. 106-108). A slightly different version is found in *Buddhist Legends,* II, 257-260.

she had searched for in vain. The Buddha saw that she had never encountered a dead person before and that she was ready to be established in the Dhamma. He told her to bring him some mustard seeds. She started to leave, but the Buddha told her to wait a moment. "The mustard seeds must come from a house where no one has died," he told her.

So Kisā-Gotamī went around the town with her dead child on her hip, hoping to find what she thought would be a cure for him. But she soon discovered that there was no visitor as frequent as death. She began to realize that death is universal. The force of death overwhelmed her, and she saw that the Buddha wanted to teach her a lesson. She took the child to the cemetery. She knew now that he was not the only child that had died.

She returned to the Buddha and became a bhikkhunī. The meditation she had practised in the past came to her rescue. It was not difficult for her to realize that nothing endures forever. She realized that in all the planes of existence beings die, even in the Brahmā worlds. Only an Arahat passes away completely never to be born again, never to die again. She was ready for the higher prescription that would cure her once and for all.

The Buddha gave her a discourse on the four floods (Ogha) which overwhelm us all. They are also known as the four taints or intoxicants (Asava). These are: (1) sensual desire, (2) desiring continued existences, (3) holding wrong views, and (4) ignorance. An Arahat is one who has crossed the floods (Ogha-tinno). Kisā-Gotamī grasped the Truth which ordinary mortals fail to understand. When she attained the Deathless, the Buddha spoke the stanza saying that one day spent with the knowledge that all conditioned things arise and vanish is superior to a hundred years spent in ignorance.

The Story of Mother Visākhā[2]

Another time, the woman who was the leading female lay disciple, Visākhā, came to the Buddha. Her clothes and hair were wet. When the Buddha asked what the reason was, she told him, "Lord, a dear, well-loved grandchild of mine has died. That is why I have come at this unusual hour with my clothes and hair wet." This was a sign of mourning.

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2. For the story of Visākhā see *Buddhist Legends*, II 59-84. On the death of her granddaughter, see *op.cit.*, 84f.

The Buddha asked Visākhā, "Would you like to have as many grandchildren as there are people in Sāvatthi?" To have many children was considered the greatest happiness in this world. So Visākhā answered yes to the Buddha's question.

"But Visākhā," the Buddha asked, "how many people die each day in Sāvatthi?"

"Lord, anywhere from one to ten people die each day in Sāvatthi. There is never a day that someone or other doesn't die."

"Then would you ever be without wet clothes and hair?"

"No, Lord," Visākhā answered. "I have had enough of so many children and grandchildren."

And the Buddha told her that someone with one hundred loved ones would have one hundred pains. Even one loved one would mean pain. "Those who have no loved ones," the Buddha said, "have no pains. They are without sorrow, dispassionate, undespairing." And he pronounced the following verse:[3]

> Sorrow and mourning, suffering of every sort
> Happen in the world because of loved ones.
> When there are no loved ones they end.
> They who have no loved ones are happy and sorrowless.
> He who seeks dispassion without sorrow
> Should have no loved one in the world.

We should remember, of course, that here, when the Buddha speaks of love, it is in the sense of being attached.

Visākhā was known as Migāra's mother. Migāra was actually her father-in-law. He was established in the Dhamma thanks to Visākhā, and he told her that because of that she was like a mother to him. It is in this spirit that the students address Sayama as "mother".

When Visākhā said that she had had enough of children and grandchildren, it was a significant remark, because she had ten sons and ten daughters. Each of her children had ten sons and ten daughters. That made four hundred grandchildren. Each of the grandchildren had twenty children. So that meant there were 8,000 great-grandchildren. With Visākhā and her husband, there were 8,422 people in the family. It is said that when Visākhā was sitting with some of her daughters, granddaughters, and

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3. Udana, p. 92 (*Verses of Uplift*, pp. 111f.; also in *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 156.)

great-granddaughters, it was impossible to tell which one she was. It was only when she got up, pressing on her knees because she was older that one could deduce which woman was Visākhā. Her beauty was incomparable. And she lived to be one hundred and twenty.

Throughout her life she fed the bhikkhus of Sāvatthi. It was said that there was not a single bhikkhu living in Sāvatthi who had not tasted her food. Every day she fed thousands and thousands of bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs and lay disciples.

Mother Visākhā was established in the first fruition state at the age of seven, but, as we have seen, this had not eradicated all suffering in her life. Suffering was gone only when she actually experienced the state of fruition, and she would need to work further to arrive at the stage when all suffering would be eliminated, once and for all.

Suffering (Dukkha)[4]

Yesterday we talked about the three characteristics of existence: impermanence (Anicca), suffering (Dukkha), and the lack of a permanent self (Anattā), and we went into some detail concerning impermanence. This morning, let us examine suffering more closely.

The characteristics of impermanence, Anicca, are intimately tied to the characteristics of suffering, Dukkha. Whether the changes are abrupt—such as death and rebirth—or whether they are over a long term, as long as the body is alive, the possibility and inevitability of death is there. As long as there is change and impermanence, there is suffering.

Decay and death are the most feared things on the conditioned level of existence. We live for a certain period, but only because there are various things which sustain our lives, keep us going. If they are not present we will die. Without food, air, and warmth, our bodies cannot live. But these bare necessities are not enough. We have to fear many kinds of disease and ailments, both physical and mental. No matter how many precautions we take, we never know when some physical or mental disease will come. And even if we could avoid illnesses, our bodies decay when we grow old.

Every material phenomenon possesses these radical and subtle changes. Every mental phenomenon in the world of sensuous

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4. This discussion of Dukkha is based on Ledi Sayadaw's *Exposition of Insight* (Burmese ed., *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 26; *The Wheel* 31/32, pp. 67-72).

desires, in the fine-material world and immaterial world in the Brahmā planes is subject to change. Men, Devas and Brahmās, not to mention the beings of the lower realms, are all impermanent, and therefore they are all suffering. For the deities and Brahmās, this characteristic of change is difficult to see as there is so much pleasure in their existence, and so they have difficulty appreciating suffering, Dukkha. In that way, we can look on our pain as a friend that enables us to work for Right Understanding.

Suffering can be understood in its three aspects: (1) suffering as actual pain (Dukkha-dukkhatā), (2) the suffering inherent in all conditioned states (Saṅkhāra-dukkhatā), and (3) suffering that results because impermanence exists (Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā).

Suffering as actual pain covers both physical and mental pains. Inherent suffering refers to the oppressive nature of all conditioned states due to their continual arising and passing away. To have continued existence as a material and mental entity requires great effort, continual effort, in each and every existence. Even existence in the planes which appear to be pure pleasure, pure happiness, are included—in fact, existence in such planes requires the greatest effort. Out of all those who abandon sensual pleasures, renounce the world and practise the Sublime States, making great sacrifices, hardly one in a hundred attains the Brahmā worlds. And very few people are inspired to work for that happiness, for the Brahmā worlds. Even though they believe that they exist, the effort required seems too hard, too difficult, and too painful. And suppose they do make the effort and manage to reach the Jhāna states; maintaining them requires great care, constant effort. Otherwise, they can be lost very quickly, for what might seem to be a very insignificant cause.

In the Pāḷi texts there are examples which show this. There are men who retire to the forest and work to attain the special powers. If they develop these powers, they can even go through the air, thanks to the psychic powers of the fourth Jhāna. But there are cases where simply hearing a woman's voice as she is singing is sufficient to make such men lose their powers and they come down with a jolt. All the concentration, the Samādhi, that they developed is lost in a moment for the slightest reason. The sound of a woman singing was enough for latent sensual desire to arise in them, and these states cannot be maintained if there are impurities. So, working for this kind of worldly happiness is very difficult and very fragile.

Suffering that comes from impermanence includes the fact that at any time, any day, any minute, death can occur if the circumstances are favourable for it. The conditioned mind-body entities of men, Devas and Brahmās are the real ills, for they are subject to all three sorts of suffering (Dukkha).

We can divide suffering (Dukkha) into eleven aspects: (1) the suffering of birth, (2) the suffering of decay, (3) of death, (4) sorrow, (5) lamentation, (6) the suffering of the body and (7) of the mind, (8) the suffering which is despair, (9) suffering which results from association with enemies, (10) from separation from loved ones, and (11) the suffering due to not getting what we want.

The suffering of birth means more than just being born as a human or Deva, etc. There is included here the more profound sense of the birth of the defilements, the birth or coming to be of actions—whether mental or verbal or physical, and there is the birth or the coming to be of effects. The defilements include greed, hatred, dullness, error, conceit, and so forth. The coming to be of effects, caused by past actions, includes diseases, ailments, and all the different kinds of painful feelings in the body.

When we sit here doing Vipassanā, the purity we have created with our concentration creates favourable conditions for the latent bad actions of the past to mature. The pain we feel is the result of our past actions. So all of us, I think, are getting very well acquainted with this aspect of suffering. Some students may feel depressed and say to themselves, if there is all this pain, then I must be a very bad person. When that happens, we should remind ourselves that we have had countless lives before, and this pain does not come just from our actions in the present life. The very fact that the pain has entered the field of consciousness is a sign that there must be a degree of purity to draw it out. And as we progress in Vipassanā and know these pains to be impermanent, changing, we are gradually eliminating them.

If we work hard in this life, we will not need to worry about another aspect of the suffering due to impermanence, and by that I mean the possibility of being reborn in the lower worlds as animals, etc.

Among the defilements, greed is very fierce and violent. It will arise at any time it finds favourable circumstances, like a fire that is fed with gunpowder. When it is present it is very difficult to overcome it. It grows in volume in an instant. And greed is not alone. There can be hatred, dullness, and so on, up to one

thousand five hundred defilements, all of them very powerful. How fortunate we are to have this possibility to overcome them. With a few conscious breaths we can calm the mind and return to the important work of knowing Anicca with a balanced mind, thereby eliminating the defilements.

A hill which is inhabited by a poisonous serpent is feared by everyone. No one will approach it. Similarly, existence as a human being or a Deva or Brahmā will be seen as undesirable by those who are established in the Dhamma.

The defilements all exist in connection with mental activity. And mental activity precedes physical actions, so the coming to be of actions is as fierce as the defilements. Just as people fear villages where thieves and robbers live, just as honest people do not go near such villages, so also existence as a human being, Deva, or Brahmā is to be feared, and those bent on Deliverance do not dare approach such existences with thoughts such as, "This is me" or "This is my body."

So we see that every type of existence, whether it be as a human being, a Deva or a Brahmā, is suffering, Dukkha. Even moral actions which result in worldly happiness, in lives in the higher planes, even moral actions furnish food for the defilements, fuel for the flames of the defilements.

The suffering of decay and death can also be understood in a profound sense. They are the momentary decays and deaths which follow a being from the moment of conception and at all times they are ready to cause him to fall into realms of suffering whenever circumstances permit.

Mental and physical suffering and despair are obvious Dukkha and undesirable. They can occur at any moment for men, Devas, and Brahmās, and in some lower planes of existence they are constantly present.

Association with what one does not want includes coming in contact with persons, creatures, things, or objects that one would not like to come into contact with or even see.

Separation from loved ones includes both persons and material possessions that one always wishes to be in contact with and with which one does not want to be parted, either in life or in death.

Suffering due to not getting what we want will result when we work hard, but in vain, trying to fulfil any one of our desires.

Of these eleven varieties of suffering, birth, decay and death are the most important. We can be constantly in touch with them in

Vipassanā meditation. Each sensation takes birth, decays, and dies. So we can see that in working to know impermanence, Anicca, we are working at the same time to know suffering, Dukkha.

The Experience of Dr Wright

It is difficult to give a talk about suffering without sounding a little gloomy. Some people even have the mistaken impression that Buddhism is pessimistic. That is one reason I like to acquaint you with the examples of those who have tasted the happiness to be derived from meditation.

There was a black American working as a Cultural Attaché in the American Embassy in Rangoon who was brought to the International Meditation Centre to work with Sayagyi and Sayama in April 1957. He was friends with a Small Cause Court's judge in Burma. This judge had practised a different Buddhist meditation technique and even taught that technique to others. He had come to meditate at IMC-Rangoon, and when Sayama told him he would be sitting for one hour, he laughed. He was used to sitting without moving for twenty-two hours, he exclaimed. So he started, a little reluctant to be working under a woman's guidance, especially since he was a meditation teacher himself. But before the first hour was over he understood that he was now in contact with a very powerful technique. He could not sit as before, not even for one hour. And from that moment, he had deep respect for Sayama.

So he encouraged Dr Wright, the black American, to meditate with Sayagyi and Sayama. The judge was an old student, so he could come after work, meditate, spend the night, and in the morning go to his work. In that way he further encouraged Dr Wright.

Dr Wright had met many spiritual leaders in Burma before coming to the Centre, but this was his first meditation course. As usual, during the day, Sayama was in charge as Sayagyi was at his office. One of the members of the executive committee of the Vipassanā Association, and also a member of the Vipassanā Research Society set up by Sayagyi, was at the Centre doing a course, so U Maung Maung Khin was able to translate for Sayama and Dr Wright.

One day, Dr Wright was disturbed and requested U Maung Maung Khin to tell Sayama. At the Centre in Rangoon, the students meditate either in cells or in one of eight rooms around

the pagoda and the teachers sit on the raised platform in the centre of the pagoda. Dr Wright was in a cell on the side of the Bodhi tree, and Sayama came and took her place in the centre.

Dr Wright explained that he was having trouble because when he closed his eyes, he saw the figure of an ogre that came face to face with him. Sayama, thinking that he too might have difficulty accepting her advice, suggested he ask Sayagyi about this when he returned from his office. But Dr Wright told her, "I will take your word as coming from the authority. I will do exactly as you tell me to." So she simply said, "You must have clung to something which is not conducive to your meditation."

Dr Wright took a small Burmese purse out of his pocket and started to hand it to her. "Don't give it to me," Sayama said. "Maung Maung Khin should take it."

Maung Maung Khin hesitated. He was a little concerned about coming into contact with the object. So Mother Sayama insisted, explaining that if it affected her, there would be no one to teach, but if he took it, she would be able to give him protection. So Maung Maung Khin took it and put it under the pillow of Dr Wright's friend.

Dr Wright felt pity for the ogre and wished to share merits with it. And he reported that it seemed as if a great storm blew away the ogre. Then he was able to meditate properly.

When the judge came back that evening, he was told about the incident and asked that the object be taken away from under his pillow. Sayagyi said, "Why not throw it away? You have seen its effect. Do you still feel the same attachment?" So Dr Wright threw it over the fence into an uninhabited plot of ground at the back of the Centre.

In fact, there was a sign at the Centre during Sayagyi's time telling students to turn in to the manager any beads, strings, or other such objects. Sometimes, like Dr Wright, we have to learn the hard way the wisdom of such instructions.

After that incident, Dr Wright saw in his mind's eye a vision of Sayagyi who was very big, with a Buddha beside him, and to the side, he saw a very small black figure, and Dr Wright took the figure to be himself—"looking like a monkey jumping around," he said.

When he did Vipassanā, Dr Wright did very well. At that time, the lower meditation cells were being constructed. They were pouring concrete not five feet from his cell, which was on the

opposite side of the pagoda from the one in which he worked on Ānāpāna. And when he meditated, he could remain for an hour and a half without hearing the vibrator.

Dr Wright went back to America and in 1963 Sayagyi sent him a letter authorizing him to teach Ānāpāna. He was the first person to be authorised to teach outside Burma. The letter was presented to him in a public ceremony at the Burmese Embassy in Washington, D.C., given by the Burmese Ambassador. Dr Wright reported that within three years he had preached to 10,000 people: college men and women, and Congregational ministers like himself.

Sayagyi liked to tell the story of the time the secretary of the Pali Text Society of England came to the Centre in Rangoon. When she learned that an American professor of religion who had never studied the Pāḷi texts was lecturing on Buddhism, she asked how this was possible. Sayagyi told her that he knew the Buddha-Dhamma from personal experience. And he added that Sayama, too, had never studied the texts seriously, and yet she can answer any question put to her, not only by laymen but also by learned bhikkhus. She could answer from what she knows personally, from her own experience. When you answer from experience, how can you be wrong?

DAY FIVE: EVENING DISCOURSE

Straighten Your Fickle Mind

Phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ
dūrakkhaṃ dunnivārayaṃ
Ujuṃ karoti medhāvī
usukāro va tejanaṃ.
Vārijo va thale khitto
okamokata ubbhato
Pariphandati 'daṃ cittaṃ
Māradheyyaṃ pahātave.

The wise man makes straight his unsteady, fickle thoughts so difficult to guard, difficult to control, like the fletcher making straight his arrow.
Thoughts which are striving to shake off the power of Māra writhe and quiver like a fish thrown upon dry land.

Dhammapada vv 33-34

The Importance of Following the Teacher's Advice[1]

The Buddha gave these teachings when he was staying on the Cālikā mountain, with reference to Elder Meghiya. Meghiya was the eighth bhikkhu to serve as the Buddha's attendant. And following him, the Buddha's cousin, Ānanda, served as his attendant for the rest of his life, discharging his duties with distinction.

On one occasion, when Meghiya was still his attendant, Meghiya came back from his alms round and went to the bank of

1. *The Gradual Sayings,* IV 234-237 (We include the repeated section of the discourses from IV, pp. 231-233).

the river Kimilālā, near Jaṅtugāma. There, he saw a mango grove and thought to himself that it would be a nice place for him to meditate. He returned to the Buddha and requested permission to go to the mango grove to meditate.

"Wait for a while, Meghiya," the Buddha answered. "Wait until some other bhikkhu arrives. I am alone."

But Meghiya requested the same thing three times. Finally the Buddha said,"What can I say as you talk of putting forth effort over and over again? Do as you please, Meghiya."

So Meghiya left the Buddha alone and went to the mango grove. As he meditated, three types of unwholesome thoughts occurred to him: he had sensuous thoughts, malicious thoughts, and cruel thoughts.

Meghiya thought to himself, "This is very strange. I renounced the world with faith so why should I be assailed by these evil, unwholesome thoughts?" And he returned to the Buddha and reported to him, "Lord, as I was staying in the mango grove, meditating, three sorts of unwholesome thoughts occurred to me: sensuous thoughts, malicious thoughts, and cruel thoughts."

Now it happens that Meghiya in a past life had been a king residing in that mango grove, and it is because he had a harem that his mind was assailed by sensuous thoughts; and as the king had given orders to execute criminals, this resulted in cruel thoughts, full of hatred, assailing him. The Buddha reminded him that he had discouraged him from going to the grove but that he had insisted on acting impetuously.

The First Condition Conducive to Emancipation: The Good Friend

Then the Buddha pronounced the verses we have quoted, and followed them with a discourse. In it he instructed Meghiya concerning the five conditions which are conducive to the emancipation of the mind (Ceto-vimutti): (1) the good friend, (2) a moral life, (3) listening to the Teachings, (4) practising the Teachings or Dhamma, and, finally, (5) the attainment of insight, wisdom.

A good friend is one who has right speech, in whose presence one hears what has not been heard, corrects what has already been heard, gets rid of doubt, sets one's views straight, and who helps one to gain confidence. Or, it is someone who trains us in faith, morality, learning, generosity, and understanding. The best of friends, of course, is the Buddha himself. As he said, "It is because I am a good friend that living beings who are subject to birth are

able to free themselves from birth." The Buddha may not be able to do our meditation for us, but it is due to him that we are able to learn how to work, and it is due to him and those who work in accordance with his teachings that we can have the protection and guidance necessary for making progress. I have already given you the passage from *The Path of Purification* concerning the teacher of meditation as the good friend, and who the best person to go to is, starting with the Buddha and working down to "a teacher who knows the texts, guards the heritage, protects the tradition and who follows the teachers' opinion rather than his own."[2]

The Story of Jotipāla[3]

The Buddha himself had a good friend in one of his past lives who aided him. In that life, his name was Jotipāla, and it was during the time of his predecessor, the Buddha Kassapa. Jotipāla was to receive his final sure prediction (Niyatavivaraṇa) from Buddha Kassapa. His friend, Ghaṭikāra, suggested they visit the Buddha, but Jotipāla answered, "Who wants to meet a shaven-headed monk!" And due to the unwholesome mental volition accompanying that negative remark, when he was the Bodhisatta Siddhattha, he had to work for six years in order to attain Awakening. If he had not said that, it would have been much quicker.

Jotipāla's friend decided to make him be reasonable, even if it meant being rough with him. So when they were bathing in the river, he grabbed Jotipāla by the hair and threatened to drown him if he refused to go see the Buddha Kassapa. And that worked.

The Story of Devadatta and Ajātasattu[4]

The wrong kind of friend can mean great suffering for us. The Buddha's cousin Devadatta was a bhikkhu who at first worked very hard and although he did not attain to any fruition states, he did develop the Jhānas. He was such a good bhikkhu that one of the chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta, praised him highly. But ambition got the best of him and he decided he wanted to be head of the Community of Bhikkhus. He saw the Buddha as if he were the president of the Saṅgha and thought it was a role that could be

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2. *The Path of Purification*, Chap. III, ¶ 64.
3. *Middle Length Sayings*, IV 243-246.
4. For references concerning Devadatta, see *The Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, I 1106-11. For Ajātasattu's visit to the Buddha, see *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I 65-95.

passed on to someone else. When the Buddha refused to make Devadatta head of the Saṅgha, he decided to take over by force.

Devadatta was friends with Prince Ajātasattu, the son of King Bimbisāra, and told the prince to kill his father and take over the throne and that he, Devadatta, would kill the Buddha and take over the Saṅgha. He could not kill the Buddha, though he tried several means, including rolling a huge rock down on the Buddha, sending a wild elephant against him, and sending archers to shoot him. But Ajātasattu did manage to kill his father.

Now patricide is one of the five major crimes that inevitably mean rebirth in the very next life in the lowest of hells where one will remain for an incredibly long time. So because of his friend, Ajātasattu suffers greatly.

But of course Ajātasattu's suffering did not wait for the next life to begin. His conscience was not clear. One evening on the full moon day, after he was king, Ajātasattu went to see the Buddha and on arriving at the mango grove where the Buddha was sitting with many monks meditating, he was worried because there was no sound. He thought it meant there was a plot against him. And when he listened to the Buddha's sermon he could not concentrate on it properly as his worries distracted him. After he left, the Buddha told the bhikkhus that if Ajātasattu had not killed his father that sermon would have been sufficient to make him a Sotāpanna.

The Second Condition: Morality

So we come to the second quality that is conducive to liberating the mind: morality. If one is a bhikkhu, there are the rules laid down by the Buddha to guide the Saṅgha (the Pāṭimokkha). A bhikkhu or bhikkhunī should see the danger involved in committing the least offense. And we, as laymen, can develop this appreciation of the importance of keeping the five precepts permanently and the eight precepts on special days or when we are doing a meditation course.

The Third Condition: Listening to the Doctrine

Listening to discourses concerning the Buddha's Teachings is the third quality preparing us for liberation. The Buddha told the demon Āḷavaka that listening to discourses on the Dhamma was the way to acquire wisdom.[5] This we can understand as including

5. *The Group of Discourses*, 30f. and *The Kindred Sayings*, I 275-278.

reading books on the Dhamma as well. We can acquire a good theoretical knowledge, as this will inspire us to work and will help us work better. At times, listening to a talk or reading can help us understand experiences we have already had. Sometimes, you may find that a particular talk will seem boring. Then later, after you have worked and gained experience, the same talk will suddenly come to life. What seemed to be only dull theories you will realize to be very real.

We can include here as well Right Speech. The Buddha told Meghiya that there were ten sorts of speech which are suitable for releasing the meditative mind—talk which would greatly reduce the defilements and be conducive to a decisive turning away from infatuation with the world and lead to detachment, to complete cessation, to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, and finally to Full Awakening, Nibbāna.

When we talked about Right Speech as part of the Noble Eightfold Path we mentioned many types of speech to be avoided. Here we can look at the more positive side of Right Speech.

The Buddha recommended (1) talk about desiring little; (2) talk about contentment; (3) talk about solitude, which can be physical or mental solitude and the highest solitude, Nibbāna; (4) talk about remaining aloof, which includes talk about abstaining from voluptuous association with women, a very important point for bhikkhus. This includes talk about their beauty, resulting in sensuous desires, or looking at them, having conversation with them, eating together with them or having physical contact with them, as all these are conducive to arousing sensuous desires, and all of these are against the bhikkhus' rules. Talk about remaining aloof for the bhikkhus includes as well talk about abstaining from any improper association with laymen. Then there is (5) talk about making the right effort, (6) talk about morality, (7) talk about Samādhi, concentration, (8) talk about Paññā, wisdom, understanding, (9) talk about deliverance (Vimutti), meaning talk about the fruition states of Nibbāna (Ariya-phala) and, finally, (10) talk about knowledge and vision of deliverance (Vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana), meaning Retrospective Knowledge (Paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa). Retrospective knowledge comes just after attaining an absorption state or one of the paths or fruition states in the four stages of Awakening. After a fruition state, for example, the meditator sees in retrospect the path, the fruition, the abandoned

defilements, the remaining defilements, if any, and one sees in retrospect Nibbāna.

The Fourth Condition: Practising the Dhamma

The fourth quality conducive to liberating the mind is the practice of the Dhamma. This of course means working for concentration through meditation. The meditator should put forth effort and work resolutely to eliminate all unwholesome states and to acquire wholesome states. He should be firm in his effort and should not put aside the practice of wholesome acts. The Buddha said that only the energetic can obtain deliverance from suffering. Success comes only after repeatedly trying.

The Fifth Condition: Insight

Finally, there is the fifth quality of liberating the mind, and this is Insight, Wisdom, actually understanding the true nature of reality. This can only come through Vipassanā. Only Vipassanā gives the wisdom which leads to the discernment of the arising and vanishing of phenomena. Only Vipassanā destroys the defilements. Only Vipassanā leads to the complete and final cessation of suffering, to Nibbāna.

The Buddha made this very clear to Meghiya by saying that he should complete the development of these qualities by (1) contemplating the loathsomeness of the body in order to eradicate passion (Rāga)—this is especially important to bhikkhus who must confront sensual desires and dominate them more thoroughly than lay people. (2) He should contemplate on Loving-kindness (Mettā) and develop it in order to eradicate ill will (Vyāpāda). (3) Then the meditator should work on mindfulness of in-breaths and out-breaths in order to suppress thought-conception (Vitakka), that is, laying hold of a thought, giving a thought attention. (4) The meditator should contemplate the characteristic of impermanence (Anicca) in order to eradicate the conceit of "I am" (Asmi-māna). "Meghiya," the Buddha said, "he who realizes the characteristic of impermanence, Anicca, realizes the characteristic of Anattā automatically. He who realizes the characteristic of the lack of self eradicates the concept 'I am' and attains Nibbāna in this very life."

At the conclusion of his discourse the Buddha gave the stanza we quoted at the beginning.

How do we measure up to the Buddha's advice to Meghiya? Here, we are associating with good friends, working as the

Buddha would want them to work. We are developing morality, we listen to talks on the Dhamma, we practise development of concentration, and we are developing insight. So we deserve five out of five.

No-self (Anattā)

Now let us look in more detail at the third characteristic of conditioned states, Anattā, Not-self, Non-ego, lack of an eternal self, the uncontrollable aspect. In the ultimate sense, no self-sufficient ego or soul, or abiding substance is to be found in the physical and mental phenomena of existence or outside them. This is the central doctrine of Buddhism. Unless this is understood there is no real knowledge of Buddhism. Without this understanding, one will think his personality is experiencing suffering, that his personality performs good and evil actions and will experience the results of those acts, that his personality will enter Nibbāna, that his personality walks on the Noble Eightfold Path.[6]

In Pāḷi, the word Anattā is made up of *an,* designating a negation, and *atta,* which in the ordinary sense means essence or substantiality. The Buddha explained that there are two levels of language.[7] There is conventional language, which we use when we talk in everyday life, and there is language which conforms to Ultimate Truth. This second type of language is very rigorous, as it must be very precise and accurate. This is the language used in the third part of the Pāḷi texts, the Abhidhamma, which can be translated as Ultimate Truth. We will not find mention of persons in those texts, but rather "a process of physical and mental phenomena." Many of the texts in the Suttas, or the collection of the discourses, also use this sort of language that deals only with ultimates. But the Buddha taught the truth using conventional language as well, and he explained carefully that one should not misunderstand him when he spoke. It would have been very inconvenient to give a talk to ordinary people saying, "this process of physical and mental phenomena" rather than "I". But the Buddha said that whenever he used words like "I," "me," or "mine," there was no mistaken idea in his mind that any controlling, permanent self existed.

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6. See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary,* s.v. Anatta.
7. See, for example, *Dialogues,* I 263.

As with the assembly of parts
The word "chariot" is countenanced,
So, when the aggregates are present,
"A being" is said in common usage.

Saṃyutta Nikāya, I 135.[8]

Ashin Buddhaghosa points out that when component parts such as axles, wheels, frame poles, etc., are assembled, there is something we call a chariot.[9] In the ultimate sense, however, no one of the parts is the chariot. When various materials enclose a space in the right way, we say there is a house. When the fingers and thumb are placed in a certain way, we say there is a fist. In the same way, when the five aggregates of material form, sensations, perception, mental formations, and consciousness come together, we speak in common usage of "a being" or "a person." But in the ultimate sense, if each component is examined separately, there is no basis for the assumption "I am" or "I".

Venerable Ledi Sayadaw points out that insight knowledge into No-self (Anattā) is essential in order to dispel the erroneous belief in an eternal soul.[10] If we are to do this, it is necessary to develop insight knowledge into impermanence (Anicca) because once there is a good appreciation of impermanence, it is easy to acquire insight into No-self. Insight knowledge into suffering (Dukkha) is not fully acquired until later, and that is why there are four stages in the attaining of liberation, since subtle craving and conceit remain until the last stage of Arahatship is reached.

It is essential that people today, who have encountered a period when a Buddha's Teachings are available, work to escape from rebirth in the lower realms of suffering. It is not possible to work for this when a Buddha's Teachings are not encountered. Thus, we should strive to contemplate or meditate on the impermanence of things in order to fulfil insight knowledge of No-self.

The main thing for us to work on is maturity of knowledge. If our knowledge is ripe, it is possible to attain insight into impermanence while listening to a discourse or while living the householder's ordinary life.

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8. We use the translation of Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification,* Chapter XVIII, ¶ 25.
9. *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XVIII, ¶ 28.
10. Ledi Sayadaw, *Manual of Insight (The Wheel* 31/32, pp. 77-80) and *Manuals of Buddhism,* pp. 29f.

"To him whose knowledge is developed," Ven. Ledi Sayadaw continues, "everything within and without oneself, within and without one's house, within and without one's village or town, is an object at the sight of which the insight of impermanence may spring up and develop." It is not necessary for us to consider the momentary deaths which occur innumerable times during a blink of the eye by studying the texts of the Abhidhamma. Through meditation, we can experience radical change and subsequent change taking place in our own bodies. They can be evident to, and personally experienced by, every living person.

The truth of Anattā is fundamental to Buddhism, and it is also the most difficult part of the Teachings to understand. Even if we have a clear theoretical understanding, we still think and act with the thought of "I," "me," "mine." Only when we understand through Anicca the rapid rise and fall of all physical and mental phenomena do we truly understand Anattā.

It is not necessary for us to try to force ourselves to believe this before we know it through our own experience. If we should try to force ourselves to believe, it would only create conflict and make it more difficult to work. That is why we quoted Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who said that no one who worked under his guidance was expected to believe in what he said. "When you see, then you will believe," he said.

On Belief, The Discourse to the Kāḷāmas

In the Buddha's time there were a group of laymen who asked the Buddha how to know what to believe. Let us look in more detail at this story, found in the Kesaputtiya Sutta.[11] The Buddha was going around the districts of the kingdom of Kosala with a large following of bhikkhus. They went to the town of Kesaputta, the market town of the Kāḷāmas. The Kāḷāmas had heard of the Buddha—that he was Fully Awakened, a teaching Buddha, endowed with knowledge and perfect conduct, a Perfect One, the Knower of the World, unexcelled tamer of men, the teacher of men, devas and Brahmās, the Awakened One, the Glorious One. He had realized himself the Ultimate Truth, and he had made known this world together with the worlds of devas, Māras and Brahmās, together with the communities of the bhikkhus and Brahmans, gods and men. He was preaching the Dhamma, good in the beginning, the middle and the end, rich in meaning. He

11. *The Gradual Sayings,* I 170-175.

taught the higher practice which is perfect, complete and pure. Such was the reputation of the Buddha.

So the Kāḷāmas went to the Buddha, hoping he would be able to clarify a question for them."Lord," they said,"there are monks and Brahmans who come to Kesaputta. They expound and explain their own views and they cast aspersions on the views of others, despising them and treating them with contempt. Then other monks and Brahmans come, teaching their views and casting aspersions on the views of others. So we have doubts about these views, we are uncertain about them. Who speaks the truth and who speaks falsehood?"

The Buddha answered that they had good cause to have doubts. "Come, Kāḷāmas," he said. "Don't accept views from hearsay, from what you have been told, because it is mentioned in the scriptures, through logical reasoning, through weighing evidence, or because you like a view after having pondered about it, or because someone else's reasoning seems plausible, or because you think, 'This monk is our teacher.' Kāḷāmas, when you know through your own experience, 'These ideas are unprofitable, faulty, censured by the wise and they lead to harm and suffering,' then you should reject them."

And through questions and answers, he pointed out to the Kāḷāmas that when greed arises in a person, it will harm him. When a person filled with greed is overcome and his mind obsessed to such a degree that he kills sentient beings, steals, commits adultery, tells lies and urges others to do such acts, it will lead to harm and suffering for a long time. A person who commits such acts out of hatred will likewise suffer for a long time for that. If wrong actions result because of ignorance, the results are the same.

So we can see that the Buddha is not telling the Kāḷāmas to go on doubting once they have seen clearly. In the modern world, it can become fashionable to doubt, even after we have learned something.

Next, the Buddha pointed out to the Kāḷāmas that when greed was absent, a person will not take life, steal, commit adultery, tell lies, and he will not tell others to do so. This would be good for him. And we should accept things like this which we realize ourselves are good, faultless, praised by the wise and which when practised and observed lead to good and happiness. Things such as these we should acquire and live with. So, when greed is absent,

when ill will is absent, when delusion is absent, good deeds and good results from those deeds will come about.

And then the Buddha taught the Kāḷāmas the four practices that lead to the Brahmā abodes, the Brahma-vihāra. We explained these the other day: Loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karunā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā). The Buddha instructed the Kāḷāmas thus, "A man should live pervading the whole world, above, below, across, all around in all directions with thoughts attended by equanimity— abundant, exalted, measureless, without hostility or malevolence."

This practice can give good results no matter what we believe. It can lead to rebirth in one of the higher worlds, in a state of bliss. If there is no other world, and if cause and effect do not exist, then our present life will be happy, as we will be free from enmity, malice, and suffering. If evil comes to those who do evil deeds, then one is assured of happiness as one has done good deeds. If evil does not result from evil deeds, even so, if one has not done evil, one will be happy.

The Kāḷāmas were able to understand the Buddha's discourse to them, and the truth was so clear to them that they took the Triple Refuge. We can surmise that the Buddha saw that they were not yet ready to practise meditation, for he does not mention it in his discourse, and from other talks, we know that the four Brahma-vihāras prepare us for meditation. But the Buddha was able to see what his listeners were able to understand and always suited his discourse to his listeners.

DAY SIX: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Path of Purification

"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.
"Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.
"Sabbe dhammā anattā" ti
yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindati dukkhe
esa maggo visuddhiyā.

"All conditioned states are impermanent."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

"All conditioned states are unsatisfactory."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

"All states, conditioned or unconditioned, are
without a controlling, enduring self."
When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.
This is the path to purity.

Dhammapada vv 277-279

The whole teaching is based on emancipation. The Buddha said, "Just as the ocean has only one taste—the taste of salt—the

Teaching has only one taste—the taste of Emancipation."[1] The goal is the attainment of the Paths of the four stages of Awakening and their Fruition States (Magga-phala), and through them, final Nibbāna. These cannot be obtained without the practice of Vipassanā-bhāvanā, Insight Meditation. This is made clear in many places in the texts. For example, here is a verse from the Dhammapada (v 276):

Tumhehi kiccam ātappaṃ,
akkhātāro Tathāgatā.
Paṭipannā pamokkhanti
jhāyino Mārabhandhanā.

> You must make the effort yourself. The Perfect Ones (the Buddhas) are (only) teachers. Meditators who have entered (the Path) are released from the bonds of death (Māra).

Let us look at the discourse of the Buddha that is most relevant to this verse.[2] The Buddha gave this discourse while residing at Sāvatthi in the Jetavana Grove monastery given by the layman Anāthapiṇḍika. He told the bhikkhus that there is no possibility, no cause or reason, for one who regards any conditioned phenomenon as being permanent (Nicca) to be filled with insight knowledge (Vipassanā-ñāṇa). Without insight knowledge it is impossible to enter the Path of Assurance (Sammatta-niyāma). And without entering the Path of Assurance, it is impossible to realize the four stages of Awakening which culminate in full Awakening: the stages of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, and Arahat. So you see that even after having tasted Nibbāna, there is still work to be done, still graduated steps to climb.

One who realizes that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent (Anicca), however, has the possibility, has cause and reason, to be filled with insight knowledge, to enter the Path of Assurance and to realize the fruition states of the four stages of Awakening.

In the same way, if one considers conditioned phenomena as being happiness (Sukha), as being self (Atta), it is impossible to successfully complete the training. But if one considers conditioned phenomena as unsatisfactory (Dukkha) and without self (Anattā), it is possible to complete the training.

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1. *The Gradual Sayings,* IV 139.
2. *The Path of Discrimination,* pp. 401-404.

Finally, if Nibbāna is considered to be unsatisfactory (Dukkha), there is no possibility, no cause or reason for one to be filled with insight knowledge, to enter the Path of Assurance and to attain the fruition states of the four stages of Awakening. Only if Nibbāna is seen as happiness (Sukha) is it possible to fulfil the training. The happiness of Nibbāna, of course, is not the same as the happiness of the everyday world of conditioned phenomena.

How are we to realize that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and without self? You will remember that these three characteristics are intimately connected one to the other. If one is understood, the others will be understood as well. So, we can begin by striving to realize just one of the three. True understanding means direct understanding, first-hand understanding. Experiencing the truth of one of these three characteristics will prove to be very different from accepting theories about it. Theories and opinions are too easily modified, changed, distorted, proven to be wrong, or badly understood. Direct experience will give us the type of knowledge that stays with us. We will not have doubts about what we have proven ourselves.

The Buddha said that when he spoke of understanding the world, he was talking about understanding oneself, our mind-body entity. If we understand ourselves, we understand the world. Not in the sense that we and the world are one, but in the sense that the law of ultimate reality governs how our mind and body function, and that law governs how all material and mental states in the conditioned world function. If we can see the law as it operates in us, we will understand its functioning outside ourselves. But we must *know* it, not just know *about* it. We can watch others swim, study techniques for learning to swim, but unless we enter the water and actually swim, we will never know how.

So we will be striving to know changes as they take place in our sensations. This will be the key that will open the door of direct knowledge, insight knowledge, for us.

Awareness of Impermanence

Sayagyi U Ba Khin's advice to us is to keep knowing change, Anicca, as continuously as possible.[3] The Buddha's advice to the bhikkhus is that they should try to maintain the awareness of

3. The following discussion is based on "The Essentials of Buddha-Dhamma in Practice," *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 89-98.

Anicca or Dukkha or Anattā in all postures, whether sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. This depends, of course, on which of the three characteristics serves as the subject of meditation, and in our case, we should work to know Anicca every moment. The continuity of awareness of Anicca which will lead to the realization of Dukkha and Anattā as well, is the secret of success. The last words of the Buddha, just before he breathed his last and passed into Mahā-pari-nibbāna were, "Decay or Anicca is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence."[4]

In fact, this is the essence of all his teachings during the forty-five years of his Buddhahood. If you keep the awareness of Anicca which is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in due time.

Meanwhile, your insight into what is true of nature will become greater and greater as you develop your understanding of Anicca. Eventually, it will develop to such an extent that you will have no doubt whatsoever of the three characteristics: Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā. Only then will you be in a position to go ahead towards the goal in view.

Now that you know that Anicca is the first essential factor, you should try to understand what Anicca is with real clarity and as extensively as possible—in order not to get confused as you practise or through discussions.

The real meaning of Anicca is impermanence or decay. That is to say, the inherent nature of impermanence or decay in everything that exists in the universe—whether animate or inanimate.

Kalāpas

In explaining the theory of Anicca, the Buddha started with the behaviour of matter, and matter as known to the Buddha is very much smaller than the atom which science of today has discovered. Everything that exists in the universe, both animate and inanimate, is composed of Kalāpas, each dying out simultaneously as it becomes. We have already explained that the Kalāpas are a brief coming together of the four predominant material qualities and the four subsidiary qualities dependent on them. The life span of a Kalāpa is a moment, there being a trillion such moments in the wink of an eye of a human being. They are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. To a developed student in Vipassanā

4. *Dialogues of the Buddha,* II 173.

meditation, they can be felt as a stream of energy. The human body has no substance, even though it seems to; it is rather a continuum of an aggregate of matter (Rūpa) with the life force (Nāma) coexisting.

When we know that our body is composed of tiny Kalāpas all in a state of change, we will know the true nature of change or decay. Change and decay result from the continual breakdown and replacement of Kalāpas, all in a state of combustion, and this must necessarily be identified with Dukkha, the truth of suffering. Only when you have experienced impermanence as suffering will you come to a realization of the truth of suffering—the first of the Four Noble Truths on which so much emphasis has been laid in the teachings of the Buddha. Why? Because once you realize the subtle nature of Dukkha, and that as a conditioned being you cannot escape from it even for a moment, you will become truly afraid of, disgusted with, disinclined to your state of existence and look for a way to escape to a state beyond suffering. It is possible to know that state and to have a taste of it, even as a human being. This happens when one reaches the first stage of Awakening, Sotāpatti (also called Sotāpanna). Then you will be developed well enough to go into the unconditioned state, the state of Nibbāna, the state of peace within.

But positive results will be seen much sooner. As soon as you are able to keep up the awareness of Anicca in your everyday life, you will know for yourself that a change is taking place in you, both physically and mentally, for the better.

Here your attention is primarily on the changing nature of matter, the sensations in the body. At times the attention will only be on the changes of the sensations. At other times, your attention will be on the changing nature of the thought elements of attention projected towards the process of change in the sensations. When you are contemplating the change of matter, you realize also that the thought-elements arising simultaneously with that awareness are also in a state of transition or change. In that case, you are being aware of Anicca in both mind and matter (Nāma-rūpa).

It is possible to develop the understanding of Anicca through any of the six organs of sense: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind. In practice, however, we have found that of all the types of sensations or feelings, the sensations arising through contact of touch with the component parts of the body cover a wide area for

introspective meditation. Not only is the surface larger, but the sensations are more tangible. These sensations, of course, result from the friction, radiation and vibration of the Kalāpas within the body, and they are constantly changing. A beginner in Vipassanā meditation can come to the understanding of Anicca more easily through body feelings. Anyone is free to try other means, but we suggest that you should be well established in the understanding of Anicca through body sensations before any attempt is made through the other senses.

The Ten Levels of Insight Knowledge

There are ten levels of knowledge or realization in Vipassanā.[5] The first step is theoretical knowledge, and these talks can help us with that, or we can read books. But all nine of the remaining steps can only be reached through true Buddhist meditation with the aid of a competent teacher.

(1) The first step, then, is an appreciation of Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā by close observation and analysis (Samma-sana).

(2) The second step is the knowledge of the arising and dissolution of matter and mind (Rūpa and Nāma). Whenever we experience the changes taking place in our sensations, we are on this level (Udayabbaya).

(3) The third stage is the knowledge of the rapid changing nature of mind and matter. It is experienced as a swift flow of current or a flash of energy. The decay aspect, or breaking up of the Kalāpas, is most prominent at this stage (Bhaṅga).

(4) As all aspects of our mind and body are experienced as insubstantial, there arises the knowledge that this very existence is dreadful (Baya).

(5) We know that this very existence is full of evils (Ādīnava).

(6) We know that this very existence is disgustful (Nibbidā).

So we see that three out of ten steps are devoted to seeing the negative aspects of conditioned existence. Our attachment is so strong it takes a very strong dose of medicine to cure us of this illness of conditioned existence.

The last four levels or stages towards Awakening concern the effort to be put forth:

(7) We know there is an urgent need to escape from this very existence (Muccitu-kamyatā).

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5. The ten are given in Venerable Anuruddha's *Compendium of Philosophy*, pp. 210f. (See also U Shwe Zan Aung's introductory essay to the translation, pp. 65f.)

(8) We know that the time has come to work with full realization for liberation, using Anicca as the base (Paṭisaṅkhā).

(9) We know the stage is now set for us to detach ourselves from all formations (Saṅkhāra) and to break away from ego-centredness (Saṅkhārupekkhā).

(10) And lastly, we gain the knowledge that will accelerate the attempt to reach the goal (Anuloma).

Those who reach the goal in a short time will know these ten steps only in retrospect. As you progress in your understanding of Anicca, you will get through these ten levels of attainment—subject, however, to adjustments or help at certain levels by a competent teacher. You should avoid looking forward to any attainment, as anticipating them will distract you from the continuity of awareness of Anicca. Only this constant awareness can and will give you the desired goal.

Meditation as Laymen

Not all of you will reach the final goal in a short time, however. So let us look at the way to work and benefit as laymen, here and now. First we must activate the Anicca in ourselves—experience our inner selves in Anicca, and this will eventually bring us to a state of inner and outer calm and balance. Being engrossed in the feeling of Anicca within will achieve this.

Today, with the world facing serious problems, many of which threaten mankind, the time is ripe for everyone to take to Vipassanā meditation and learn how to find a deep pool of quiet in the midst of all that is happening. Anicca is inside everyone. It is within the reach of everyone. Feel Anicca, experience Anicca, become engrossed in Anicca, and it will be possible to cut away from the world of ideation outside. Anicca will be the gem of life which you will treasure to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy for your own well-being and for the welfare of society.

When Anicca is properly developed, it strikes at the root of your physical and mental ills and gradually removes whatever is bad in you—the sources of your physical and mental ills.

During the Buddha's lifetime there were around nineteen million people in Sāvatthi and the neighbouring countryside. About fifteen million of those people were Ariyas who had reached the first stage of Awakening.[6] The number of laymen who took to Vipassanā must have been more. Anicca is not

6. See *Buddhist Legends*, I 147.

reserved for men who have renounced the world. It is for the householder as well. Despite the drawbacks which make a layman restless these days, a competent teacher or guide can help a student to get Anicca activated in a comparatively short time. Once it is activated, he will only need to try and preserve it. But he must make a point of working for the third level of Vipassanā knowledge whenever the opportunity presents itself. This is the stage with the knowledge of the rapid changing nature of matter and mind (Bhaṅga). If you reach this level, there will be little or no problem, because you should then be able to experience Anicca without much effort, almost automatically.

In this case Anicca will become your base to which you can return as soon as the domestic needs of daily life are over. There is likely, however, to be some difficulty for you if you have not reached the stage of Bhaṅga yet. It will be just like a tug of war for you between the Anicca within and the physical and mental activities outside the body. So, it would be wise for you to follow the motto of "Work while you work; play while you play." You will not need to be activating Anicca all the time. It should suffice if you confine this to the regular period or periods set aside in the day and night for this purpose. During this time at least, an attempt must be made to keep the mind and attention inside the body with the awareness exclusively of Anicca. Your awareness of Anicca should be from moment to moment—so continuous that you do not allow for the interpolation of any discursive or distracting thoughts which are definitely detrimental to progress.

If this is not possible, you will have to go back to mindfulness of your breath, because Samādhi is the key to Anicca. And for good Samādhi, Sīla has to be perfect, since Samādhi is built on Sīla. For good Anicca, Samādhi must be good. If Samādhi is excellent, awareness of Anicca will also become excellent.

There is no special technique for activating Anicca other than the use of the mind set to a perfect state of balance and attention projected to the object of meditation. In Vipassanā the object of meditation is Anicca. Therefore, if you are used to drawing back your attention to body sensations, you will be able to feel Anicca directly. You should first experience Anicca on or in the body in the area where you can easily fix your attention, changing the area of attention from place to place, from head to feet and from feet to head. At times you should probe into the interior. No attention is to be paid to the anatomy of the body. Direct attention is given to

the formation of matter (Kalāpas) and the nature of their constant change.

If these instructions are observed, there will surely be progress, but the progress depends also on past perfections (Pāramī) and your devotion to the work of meditation. If you attain high levels of knowledge, your power to understand the three characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā will increase and you will accordingly come nearer and nearer to the goal of Ariya, one who has tasted Nibbāna. You must keep the goal in view.

The Three Erroneous Ways of Observing

Now let us look at a discussion of two aspects of misunderstanding. This is a text on the three erroneous ways of observing (Vipallāsa) and the three types of erroneous thought (Maññanā)[7] found in *The Exposition of Insight,* written by our teacher's teacher, the venerable Burmese monk Ledi Sayadaw.[8]

The Pāḷi word "Vipallāsa" means hallucination, delusion, erroneous observation, or taking that which is true as being false and that which is false as being true.

These erroneous observations can be of three sorts: (1) erroneous observations pertaining to perception; (2) pertaining to thought; and (3) pertaining to views or beliefs. The erroneous observation through perception can wrongly perceive something which is impermanent as being permanent, something impure as pure, ill as good, and lack of self as having self. Thoughts and views can also be subject to these four aspects of erroneous observation. They can be summed up by "This is mine. This is my self, my living soul."

We can give three similes to illustrate the three erroneous observations through perceptions, thoughts, and views.

The Erroneous Observation through Perception. There is a farmer who has a rice field near a forest. When he is away, deer come and eat the young sprouts. So the farmer bundles some straw into the shape of a man and sets it up in the middle of the field. He ties it to look like it has a body with a head, hands and legs. And he paints on a face. He covers the straw with old clothes

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7. The English translation of Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's texts uses the terms "hallucinations" (Vipallāsa) and "fantasy" (Maññanā). Following a suggestion made by Dr Kedar Dwivedi, we have used translations that are closer to modern psychological terminology.
8. Published as "The Manual of Insight" in *The Wheel,* 31-32 (see pp. 5-9). *The Manuals of Buddhism,* pp. 2-4.

and puts a bow and arrow in the hands. Then, when the deer come to eat the plants, they see the artificial man. Taking it to be a real man, they are frightened and run away.

It is clear that the deer are deceived in their perception of the form in the middle of the field. Another illustration would be a man who cannot distinguish east and west, even though he can see the sun rise and set. He will wander around and be lost. Once an error has been made, it will establish itself very firmly and it will be very difficult to remove it. There are many things within ourselves which we are continuously perceiving incorrectly. We think we see permanence and a soul, whereas there is only impermanence and lack of soul. We are like the deer who see the straw man and take him to be a real man. This illustrates the erroneous observation through perception.

The Erroneous Observation through Thought. Now let us look at the simile of the erroneous observation through thought. There is an art of illusion called magic, through which lumps of earth are shown to a crowd, and everyone who sees the lumps takes them to be lumps of gold and silver. For a time, the illusion fools men's eyesight. So their beliefs, observations or ideas are false. In the same way, our thoughts and ideas are in the habit of wrongly taking false things to be true. And thus we delude ourselves. For instance, at night we often are deceived into thinking we see a man when it is actually a stump of a tree that we are looking at.

In this world all our mistaken ideas about what comes into the field of observation are due to the action of distorted thought. Erroneous observation through thought is deeper and more difficult to understand than that of perception since it deludes us by making false things seem true. But the erroneous observation of thought is not as deeply rooted as distorted perception, so it can be easily removed by investigation or by searching into the causes and conditions of things. This is the illustration for the erroneous observation through thought.

The Erroneous Observation through Views. The next simile illustrates the erroneous observation through views, which is deeper and more firmly established than the erroneous observation through thought.

The simile is of the man who has lost his way. There was a large forest haunted by evil spirits; demons who lived there built towns and villages. A man who was not acquainted with the roads

through the forest came along. The demons had created their towns as splendidly as those of celestial beings and assumed the forms of deities. They made the roads as pleasant and delightful as those of the deities. When the man saw them, he thought they would lead to delightful villages and turned aside from the right road. He went astray, arrived in the demon's village and suffered accordingly.

In this illustration, the large forest stands for the three worlds: (1) the world of sense desires (Kāma-loka), (2) the world of fine-material existence (Rūpa-loka), and (3) the world of immaterial existence (Arūpa-loka). The man represents those who live in these worlds. The right road is Right Views. The misleading road is Wrong Views. Right Views are of two sorts: those that pertain to the world and those pertaining to Awakening. Right Views of the world can be summed up by this statement: "All beings are the owners of their deeds. Every deed, both wholesome and unwholesome, committed by oneself is one's own property. They follow one throughout the whole of one's life." Right View pertaining to Awakening means the knowledge of the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, knowledge of the Aggregates, the sense bases and lack of self.

The Right View of the world is the right road to continued existence. The worlds of fortunate beings (humans, devas, Brahmās) are like the towns of good people, where the man wanted to go. Wrong views that deny moral and immoral deeds and their results are like the wrong, misleading roads. They lead to the unfortunate worlds which are the abodes of the tortured—animals, ghosts (Petas), demons (Asuras), and the hells. These are like the towns of the demons in the forest. The Right View pertaining to Awakening is like the right road that leads out of the rounds of existence. Nibbāna is like the town of good people.

The views "my body" and "my soul" are also like the wrong and misleading roads. Even with the planes of existence of fortunate beings like humans, devas, and Brahmās, the world is like the town of the demons because of the ceaseless renewing of existence.

How are we to uproot these erroneous ways of observing and see clearly? Only through insight, Vipassanā, can we escape the road of the demons. And for insight, we must continue to maintain our morality in order to have the necessary concentration.

The Three Types of Erroneous Thought

Now let us look at the three types of erroneous thought (Maññanā). In terms of modern psychology, we would call these cognitive distortions. Maññanā means fantasy, high esteem for one's ego, strong imagination or pretending to oneself that one is what one is not. Erroneous observation arises because of ignorance and erroneous thought arises because of hallucination.

There are three sorts of erroneous thought: (1) erroneous thought caused by craving (Taṇhā-maññanā), (2) erroneous thought caused by conceit (Māna-maññanā), and (3) erroneous thought caused by wrong beliefs (Diṭṭhi-maññanā).

The first kind, erroneous thought caused by craving, means the mistaken idea that "This is mine, I own this." It is clinging to what in reality is not mine, does not belong to me. According to ultimate truth there is no "I." If there is no "I" there can be no "This is mine, I own this." Both personal and impersonal objects outside ourselves are strongly imagined to be ours or not ours. We think, "This is mine, that is not mine." Personal objects refer to one's body. Impersonal or external objects mean one's relations—such as father, mother, etc., and one's possessions.

The second kind of erroneous thought is caused by conceit. This means imagining that personal attributes such as eyes, ears, hands, legs, moral virtue, intuition, knowledge, possessing powers, etc., are "I," that they are included in "I am." Or, it means the belief that there is an "I" reinforced by impersonal objects such as family, relations, surroundings, dwellings, possessions and so forth.

Finally, erroneous thought caused by wrong views is the wrong view towards the personal attributes, thinking, "This is my body, my essence, my soul. This is the essence of my being." This can be explained through the simile of the pot. There can be a pot made from clay or iron, and consequently there is the expression "earthenware pot" or "iron pot." Clay or iron when properly shaped is called a pot. In reality the pot has no permanent existence. "Pot" is simply a name for a temporary shape.

Similarly, the primary elements, such as the earth element (that is to say, the element of extension), the water element (the element of cohesion), etc., these primary elements come together temporarily to form a living being and are taken to be the essence of that being. We have the impression that the element of extension is the living being, the "I."

Another name for these three kinds of erroneous thought is the Three Holds (Gaha), indicating their power to hold tightly and firmly. We are caught in their grasp, as it were. They will cause erroneous and unwholesome actions to multiply. At first they will grow slowly and gradually. But as they multiply continuously, they go beyond all limits. They will not decrease if allowed to go on growing. So, they are also called the Three Multipliers (Papañcas).

The Two Dogmatic Beliefs

Now let us examine the two kinds of dogmatic beliefs (Abhinivesas). By dogmatic belief we mean a strong belief, fixed as firmly in the mind as doorposts, stone pillars, or a big monument—so immovable that determined effort will not displace them.

They are: (1) dogmatic belief induced by craving (Taṇhâbhinivesa) and (2) dogmatic belief induced by wrong views or beliefs (Diṭṭhâbhinivesa). Dogmatic belief that comes from craving leads to the mistaken belief throughout the long succession of lives that each body, head, hands, etc., is ours. We are attached to the body.

Dogmatic belief that comes from wrong view refers to the firm and unshakeable belief in the existence of the soul or self in a person or creature. It means the belief that there is an unchanging superior thing that governs the body. They are also called the two great supports for craving and wrong view (Taṇhā-nissaya, Diṭṭhi-nissaya). They take their support in the five aggregates and mental-physical phenomena (Nāma-rūpa).

The Two Stages

Next, let us look at the two stages of being (Bhūmis): (1) the stage of the ordinary being and (2) the stage of the noble being (Ariya-bhūmi). In terms of the ultimate truth, the stage of the ordinary being is an hallucination, a wrong view. All creatures of the ordinary worldly kind have their support in wrong view (Diṭṭhi-vipallāsa), thinking, "There is in me, or in my body, something that is permanent, pleasurable, and substantial." Ordinary beings have their support in the fantasy of wrong view, the grasp of wrong view, the multiplier of wrong view. Therefore, they cannot be released from the status of ordinary existence as long as they continue to use wrong view as their support.

At the stage of noble existence, all hallucination is eradicated. There is, in the ultimate sense, Right View, Right Understanding.

One knows, "There is in me and in my body nothing which is permanent, pleasurable, and substantial." As an Ariya lives with Right View as his main footing, Right View can be called the stage of the Ariya.

If a person who has been an ordinary being during countless existences in the rounds of existence of no known beginning eradicates the hallucination of error and attains Right View, he becomes a Noble One, an Ariya, at that very moment. Even if in the stages of Awakening lower than Arahatship there can remain some hallucinations of the mind and perception; those who have reached those levels will not do the sort of unwholesome deeds that will cause them to come back in the lower worlds of misfortune. The weighty perceptual distortion is eradicated. The two remaining erroneous ways of observing would merely enable them to enjoy such worldly pleasures as they have lawfully earned.

The Two Destinations

Then we come to the two destinations (Gatis). Gati means "going," that is, going from life to life, through rebirth. It is the future destination of beings. There is (1) the destination of ordinary beings (Puthujjana-gati) and (2) the destination of noble beings (Ariya-gati). The first sort of destination is dispersive (Vinipātana) because one is liable to be reborn in any of the thirty-one planes of existence, depending on one's past Kamma. Just as one cannot tell where a fruit falling from a tree will come to rest, so also, it is impossible to predict where one will take rebirth if one is an ordinary being. Everything that is born must die. So the two great evils of death and dispersion are inseparably linked to every ordinary being.

"Dispersal after death" is worse than death itself, because the four realms of misery are wide open to the ordinary man when he dies. No matter where he is, there is no intervening period of time between the two existences. In the wink of an eye, he may be reborn as an animal, as a wretched ghost (Peta), as an earth spirit such as the enemies of Sakka, the king of the Devas. The same thing can happen if one is in the higher planes of sensual pleasures. But from the Brahmā planes of fine-material and immaterial existence, there is not a direct fall into the four realms of misery. First, one will become a man or a Deva. But from those existences, the lower realms are open to him.

Why do people fear death? It is because of this dispersal after death. If one could be reborn where one wished, there would be no fear of death.

We find two similes in the Pāḷi texts which help us understand the deeper significance of the dispersion of existence. They are the simile of the dust on the fingernail[9] and the simile of the blind turtle.[10]

One day, the Buddha put some dust on the tip of his fingernail and asked the bhikkhus, "If these few grains of dust on my fingernail were compared in quantity with all the dust in the universe, which would be greater?" The bhikkhus replied, of course, that the dust throughout the universe was much greater.

"Similarly," the Buddha told them, "those who are reborn in the realms of men and Devas after they die are very few, like the grains of dust on my fingernail. Those who are reborn in the four realms of misery are exceedingly many, like the dust in all the universe. Whether they die as men or Devas, or die in one of the lower realms, it is the same."

If we think only of the number and variety of creatures living in the oceans of the world, we will get some impression of how great the evil of dispersion is.

On another occasion the Buddha told the bhikkhus, "Imagine a blind turtle living in the ocean. He dives down in the water and swims constantly in any direction. There is also the yoke of a wagon floating in the ocean on the surface of the water, carried along in all directions by the tide, the current, and the wind. Imagine that the turtle keeps swimming and the yoke keeps floating for an incalculable length of time. It may happen that eventually the turtle and the yoke arrive at precisely the same place at the same time so that the blind turtle puts his head up through the yoke. Is it possible?" The bhikkhus replied that in ordinary terms it was not, but if it were possible for the turtle to live long enough and the yoke could last without rotting or breaking up, then a world cycle which lasts such a long time might be long enough for such a thing to happen.

"Such an occurrence should not be considered difficult," the Buddha continued, "for it is a hundred times harder, a thousand times more difficult for a man to be reborn as a man if ever he is

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9. *The Kindred Sayings,* II 175f.
10. *The Kindred Sayings,* V 384f. (cf. *The Middle Length Sayings,* III 214f.).

reborn in the four lower realms. Only those who perform good deeds and abstain from doing unwholesome deeds can attain existence as men or Devas. Beings in the four worlds of misery cannot discern what is virtuous and what is vicious, what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral, what is meritorious and what is demeritorious. They live lives of constant immorality and demerit, tormenting one another with all their power. Creatures in the hells and ghost world in particular live very miserable lives due to the punishments and torments which they experience with sorrow, pain, and distress."

The creatures described in this discourse as living in the lower worlds are far from human existence because they always look down and never look up. By looking down, I mean that their ignorance becomes stronger and stronger as they go from one existence to another. Just as the water of a river flows down to the plains, so too, they tend towards lower existences.

Now, after this rather depressing picture, let us give some balance by talking about the Destination of the Noble Ones (Ariya-gati). They are delivered from the dispersion of existence after death. There is the possibility to be reborn in the higher planes and to choose one's destiny. It is like a bird who flies in the air and lights wherever it pleases. Men, Devas, and Brahmās who have attained Ariya status can go to even better planes of existence. Should they die unexpectedly, without aiming at any particular plane, they are sure to be reborn in a higher plane and are free from rebirth in the four realms of misery. If they are reborn as humans they are never born poor, nor are they fools or heretics. And the same is true for Devas and Brahmās. They are entirely free from the destiny of ordinary beings.

So this explanantion should not depress us, thinking of all the bad things that could happen to us. Rather, we should be inspired to work for that state that will assure us of happy lives and eventually the end of all rebirth.

DAY SIX: EVENING DISCOURSE

To the Vigilant There Is No Fear

Anavaṭṭhitacittassa
saddhammaṃ avijānato
Pariplavapasādassa
paññā na paripūrati.
Anavassutacittassa
anuvāhatacetaso
Puññapāpapahīnassa
natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ.

One whose mind is unsteady, who does not understand the True Doctrine, whose faith wavers, does not become perfect in wisdom.

One whose mind is not submerged (by defilements), whose mind is not perplexed, who is above merit or evil, who is vigilant, (for such a one) there is no fear.

Dhammapada vv 38-39

Elder Cittahattha[1]

The Buddha spoke these verses while in residence in Sāvatthi in reference to Elder Cittahattha. The story goes that one day the son of a good family of Sāvatthi was looking for his ox in the forest when he happened upon a monastery. As he was quite hungry, the bhikkhus told him to help himself from the remnants of their meal, now lying in the dust-bin. The food was very tasty, prompting the young man to ask a question. "Venerable sirs," he

1. *Buddhist Legends,* II 12-17, and *The Dhammapada Commentary,* I 131-134 (Rangoon: Union Buddha Sāsana Council, 1966). Cf. Jātaka no. 70 (*Jātaka Stories,* I 168-171).

began, "did the venerable ones go today for any special invitation for alms food?" "No, devotee," the bhikkhus answered, "bhikkhus always get their alms food in the usual way." Then the young man thought, "We do not get such rice with tasteful curries even though we work continually day and night. But these monks are always receiving good food. What is the use of leading a household life? I will become a bhikkhu." With this thought, he approached the bhikkhus and asked to be ordained. The bhikkhus consented and he spent several days performing many helpful monastic tasks until, having become quite fat on the plentiful food and offerings, he had second thoughts about his decision. "Why should I earn a living going round for alms food? I shall revert to lay life." And he went back home.

Only a few days after he returned home he became thin again. "Why should I bear this suffering?" he asked himself. "I shall become a bhikkhu." And he returned to the order, only to leave once again after a few days. In this way, he left the household life and returned to the Order six times, always accepted back by the bhikkhus because of his many helpful services. The bhikkhus named him Cittahattha, which we can translate as "In the clutches of the mind," because he used to act according to his whims and fancies.

While he was shifting back and forth in this way, his wife conceived a child. On the seventh occasion of his return to lay life, he went into his bedroom to fetch his yellow robe and noticed his wife asleep on the bed. The clothes she wore had fallen off, saliva was flowing from her mouth, and she was snoring through her nose with her mouth open. She looked like a swollen corpse. He was struck with the idea of impermanence and suffering, and he thought to himself, "I have been a bhikkhu for so long a time, but because of this woman, I have not been able to remain as a bhikkhu." He then picked up his robe, and, tying it across his belly, he left the house, repeating the words "impermanence and suffering" on his way back to the monastery. As he did so, he attained the fruition State of Sotāpatti.

When he arrived, he asked to be ordained one more time. "We cannot ordain you," the bhikkhus replied. "How could you become a bhikkhu? You have been shaving your head so often it is like a whetting stone." But in consideration of his usefulness, the bhikkhus accepted him back into the Order and in a few days time

he attained Arahatship along with analytical knowledge.[2] "Venerable sirs," he told the bhikkhus, "I went away at a time when I had in me attachment, but now that has been cut off." Then the bhikkhus reported his words to the Buddha. "True, bhikkhus," the Teacher responded, "at the time when the mind of my son was still unsteadfast and at the time when he had not understood the true doctrine, he did shift about between lay life and being a bhikkhu. But at this moment he has abandoned both merit and demerit." And the Buddha pronounced the verses with which we began.

The Story of Kuddāla-paṇḍita

Later the bhikkhus were discussing the incident. "Burdensome indeed, brethren, are these mental depravities," one bhikkhu observed. "Even such a respectable young man, endowed with the qualities of an Arahat, when disturbed by depravities, entered the Order and returned to lay life alternately for as many as seven times." Hearing the discussion, the Teacher proceeded to the hall and took the seat prepared for him. He asked the bhikkhus what they were discussing and they told him. "It is true, bhikkhus," the Teacher replied. "The mental defilements are burdensome indeed. If they were in material form and could be stored somewhere, the universe would be too small for them and the Brahmā realm too low for them. These depravities disturbed even an eminent person endowed with wisdom like me. Who can describe their effect on others? On account of a small measure of beans and corn and a spade, I renounced the world and returned to lay life for as many as six times." "When was that, Lord?" the bhikkhus asked, and the Teacher told them the story.

During the time when Brahmadatta was king of Banaras, a man named Kuddāla-paṇḍita (the Sage of the Spade) adopted the life of a non-Buddhist ascetic and lived in the Himalayas for eight months. During the rainy season, when the ground was wet, the ascetic thought, "I have in my house a nāḷī measure of beans and corn as well as a spade. I should not let those seeds spoil." So he left the mountains and returned to lay life. He planted the seeds, and later, when he had harvested them, he set aside a nāḷī measure

2. The Jātaka version says the Elder also studied Abhidhamma apart from helpful services to the bhikkhus and it is said that he mastered the whole seven books of the Abhiddhama when for the seventh time he became a bhikkhu and by much chanting of the Doctrine won insight and attained Arahatship.

of new seeds and consumed the rest. He then thought, "for the present, what good is the household life to me? I shall renounce the world again for eight months," and he did so.

In this way, because of the small measure of seeds and the spade, he renounced and then returned to the world for as many as seven times. But on the seventh occasion, this thought occurred to him: "Because of this spade, I have been shifting about between ascetic life and lay life. I shall throw them away." And he went to the bank of the Ganges. He thought to himself, "If I see the spot where they fall, I might wade in and recover them; I shall throw them in such a way that I do not see where they fall." He wrapped the seeds in a piece of cloth and tied it to the blade of the spade. Standing on the river bank, his eyes closed, he swung the spade three times above his head and threw it into the Ganges. Turning round, he looked, and not seeing the spot where the seeds and spade had fallen, he exlaimed: "I have conquered! I have conquered! I have conquered!"

At that very moment, the king of Banaras, having subjugated a frontier region, arrived at the river and was setting up his camp. As he went into the river for a bath, he heard the farmer's cry. Kings, naturally, are not pleased to hear expressions like "I have conquered!" He went up to the farmer and asked, "Just now, I have crushed the enemy and come back with the thought that *I* have conquered. But you are exclaiming that *you* have conquered. What do you mean by it?" Kuddāla-paṇḍita replied, "You conquered the external enemies and your conquest may yet turn into defeat. for my part, however, I have conquered the internal enemy of greed, and it will not overcome me anymore. The conquest of that enemy alone is worthy." Then he spoke this verse:

> The victory which must be won again is not true victory.
> True victory is victory which need not be won again.

At that very moment, the ascetic, looking at the Ganges, developed concentration of his mind on the subject of meditation on water and having gained an absorption state, he sat cross-legged in the air. The king, after hearing the religious discourse of the future Buddha, paid obeisance, begged for ascetic life, and renounced the world with his army. The space covered by his retinue extended about a league. Furthermore, a king of a neighbouring country, hearing about this renunciation, came

with the idea of seizing the kingship, and discovering that prosperous city deserted, he thought: "The king who renounced the world after discarding such a city will not do so for an inferior position. I too should do the same." He approached the future Buddha, begged for the ascetic life and renounced the world together with his retinue. In this way, seven kings renounced the world after discarding their riches, and the hermitage extended to seven leagues.[3] The future Buddha, taking all these people under his care, led the holy life and proceeded to the Brahmā world.

The Buddha concluded the story by saying, "At that time, bhikkhus, I was Kuddāla-paṇḍita. When passion holds fast the mind, it is hard to release it. When greed springs up in the mind, it is hard to chase it away. Even those who are as wise and good as in this story are rendered foolish in this way."[4]

Once at IMC-Rangoon, when Sayagyi was still alive, Venerable Webu Sayadaw, the Burmese monk I mentioned before, visited the Centre with many of his disciples. After seeing the disciples of Sayagyi, he said, "Sayagyi's disciples are always smiling and joyful. Why is this?" he asked. "Because with the teacher's teachings they are enjoying the spiritual life, with their faculties serene." Sayagyi never liked to see people who practised meditation looking gloomy and sorrowful. The Teachings are opposed to an attitude of mind which is sorrowful, gloomy and penitent. An attitude of mind such as this, which is an indication that the person is being pessimistic, feeling guilty perhaps about their past actions, is a hindrance to the realization of truth.

The Story of Cūlapanthaka[5]

We have mentioned several times that our ability to work and the speed of our progress depends on how much preparation we have made. I have told you stories of meditators who were able to understand Anicca very quickly. Now let me tell you the story of a dullard. Even a person who is slow to learn, if he works properly, can practise the Teachings and arrive at the goal.

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3. The Jātaka version says the King of Devas saw that Kuddāla-paṇḍita was engaged upon a Great Renunciation and instructed Vissakamma, the architect of the Devas, to construct quarters in the Himalayas.
4. This lesson at the end of the story is from the Jātaka version.
5. *Buddhist Stories,* I 299-310; *The Dhammapada Commentary,* I 95-100.

Uṭṭhānen' appamādena
saṃyamena damena ca
Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī
yaṃ ogho n' ābhikīrati.

Through energy, vigilance, restraint, and self-control, the intelligent person should make himself an island that is not overwhelmed by the flood.

Dhammapada v 25

This verse was given in reference to the Elder Cūlapanthaka. In Rājagaha there was a rich merchant who had a daughter. When she grew up, he built a seven-story building to keep her in and had her closely watched. But she was attracted to her slave and, afraid that their relationship would be found out, she said, "It is impossible for us to live here. If my parents find out, they will cut me into pieces. We must go and live somewhere else." So they went away.

She became pregnant and when the birth was near, she told her husband, "My time is near and giving birth without any friends or relatives to help would be courting trouble. Let us go to my parents' house." But the slave feared for his life and kept putting her off.

She thought to herself, "Because of the seriousness of what he has done, this fool doesn't dare go. But actually parents care for their children's welfare. I will go whether he comes or not." So she left. When the husband came home and found she had left, he went after her. He caught up with her and she gave birth at the place where he overtook her. There was no point in continuing to her parents' house, so they went back. And they called the boy Panthaka, meaning "on the road." And the same thing happened again soon after. So they added "big" to the older boy's name (Mahā) and called the second boy "little on the road" (Cūla-panthaka).

The oldest boy heard his friends talking about their uncles and grandparents when he played with them so he asked his mother if they were without relatives in the village. "Yes," his mother said, "you have no relatives here. But in Rājagaha your grandfather is a rich merchant and we have many relatives." So the boy wanted to go there. The mother did not tell her son why she had left home. Finally both boys pestered their mother so much she said to her husband, "These boys are pestering me to death. After all,

my parents won't eat us alive when they see us. Let's take the children to see their grandparents."

"I can't face them," the husband replied, "but I'll take you there." So they took the boys and stopped in a resthouse at the city gates of Rājagaha. The mother sent a message to her parents. Their reaction was, "In the rounds of rebirth there is no one who has not been a son or a daughter, but our daughter and this slave have greatly offended us. It is impossible for us to see them. Let's give them enough to live on and let them go live where they please. They can send the boys to us, however." So the boys went to live with their grandparents.

Mahāpanthaka was old enough to go with his grandfather to hear the Buddha's discourses, but Cūlapanthaka was too young. Mahāpanthaka, through hearing the Buddha regularly, developed an inclination to become a bhikkhu and he asked permission of his grandfather. His grandfather was delighted, "I would rather *you* become a bhikkhu than anyone else in the world," he said. "If you can become a bhikkhu, do so." You see, it is very meritorious to help someone become a bhikkhu. If we become a bhikkhu or help someone else to do so, then we will be able to ordain in a later life.

So Mahāpanthaka became a novice. His preceptor gave him one of the forty techniques of meditation, the one which involves contemplating the hair, body hair, nails, teeth and skin. This type of meditation is especially appropriate for bhikkhus. And Mahāpanthaka mastered many teachings of the Buddha and when he was old enough, he took the full ordination as a bhikkhu.

So he lived with the bliss of the Fruition States, and it occurred to him, "Would it not be possible to give this bliss to Cūlapanthaka?" He went to his grandfather and asked permission to admit Cūlapanthaka to the Order of Bhikkhus. Permission was given. One reason the banker gave permission so readily was that he was a well-known lay disciple of the Buddha, and when people asked who the mother of his grand-children was, he was ashamed to explain about his daughter's immoral act.

Cūlapanthaka was established in the practice of the moral rules, but it was soon obvious that he was slow in his spiritual progress. He was given a stanza with only four lines:

> Behold the Buddha in resplendent glory, like the fragrant red lotus blossoming in the morning, and the shining sun in the sky.

But he could not learn even four lines.

There was a reason for this, of course. During the time of the Buddha Kassapa, the Buddha Gotama's predecessor, he had been a bhikkhu. During that life, he had been very intelligent, and he had made fun of a bhikkhu who was slow to learn. The bhikkhu was embarrassed because of his mockery and refused to learn his lessons. So this is why Cūlapanthaka was born a dullard. When he tried to learn more, he forgot what he had already learned.

Four months passed and he had not learned even one verse. So Mahāpanthaka went to him and said, "You are not worthy of remaining in the Order. How can you reach the goal of the bhikkhu's life if you can't learn four lines? You should leave." But Cūlapanthaka never aspired to lead the life of a layman. He was very attached to the Buddha's Teachings.

Now at that time, a layman named Jīvaka, a physician and the foster child of a prince, invited the Buddha and the five hundred bhikkhus residing with him to come for a meal. Mahāpanthaka was in charge of arranging for such invitations. He accepted, saying, "There is one bhikkhu, Cūlapanthaka, who is of little intelligence, who is not advancing in the Dhamma. I accept the invitation for all except him."

When Cūlapanthaka heard this, he thought to himself, "The Elder must be disappointed with me. What is the use of remaining in the Order of Bhikkhus. I would do better to become a layman again and live giving charity and doing other meritorious deeds." And the next day, early in the morning, he set out to give up his robes. The Buddha would always survey the world in the morning to see who was ready to benefit from his Teachings, and he realized what was happening. He went ahead and was walking in front of the door Cūlapanthaka would go through to leave. Seeing the Buddha, Cūlapanthaka paid respects.

The Buddha asked him, "Where are you going at this time of day?" And Cūlapanthaka answered, "Lord, my brother has sent me away. I am leaving the Order." The Buddha then asked, "Your admission in the Order is my concern. Why did you not come to me when your brother sent you away? What good can there be in returning to life as a layman? Come, stay with me." So saying, the Teacher, stroking him on the head with his palm marked with auspicious marks, took him away and made him sit down in front of the Perfumed Chamber (Gandhakuṭī). Then he gave him a clean piece of cloth produced by his supernormal

power and said to him, "Cūlapanthaka, stay here facing east and rub this piece of cloth while reciting the words, 'Taking on the impurity' (Rajoharaṇaṃ) over and over."

As Cūlapanthaka rubbed the cloth, repeating the words "Taking on the impurity," it became soiled. And he thought, "This cloth was very clean, but because of me it has changed and become soiled." The Buddha, who had gone to Jīvaka's home for the meal, realized that Cūlapanthaka had set his mind on insight, reflecting that conditioned things are impermanent. So he sent forth an image of himself and said to Cūlapanthaka, "It is not only the piece of cloth that is soiled and made dirty by dust. Within you there exist the dust of desire, hatred and ignorance. Remove them." And he repeated this in a verse:

> Desire (Rāga) is called dust (Raja). It does not mean dust. It means passion. Having abandoned this dust of passion, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of passion.
>
> Hatred (Dosa) is called dust. It does not mean dust. It means ill will. Having abandoned this dust of ill will, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of hatred.
>
> Ignorance (Moha) is called dust. It does not mean dust. It means delusion. Having abandoned this dust of delusion, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of delusion.

At the end of the verses, Cūlapanthaka attained Arahatship together with analytical knowledge, and with that, he came to understand the implication of all the Teachings (the Tipiṭaka).

In a former life, Cūlapanthaka had been a king, and in going around the city, he wiped his forehead with a clean piece of cloth and it was soiled. He realized, "This cloth which was clean has changed because of my body." And he developed the idea of impermanence, thinking, "Unstable indeed are conditioned things." This past deed was the supporting factor in his making progress.

When Jīvaka brought water to pour as a symbol of donation to the Buddha, the Teacher asked him, "Are there still bhikkhus at the monastery?" When Jīvaka replied that Mahāpanthaka had said there were none left behind, the Buddha told him that there were. So Jīvaka sent someone to see.

Cūlapanthaka realized what his brother had said and so he created a thousand bhikkhus and filled the mango grove with them—some mending robes, others dyeing them, others studying, etc. The man sent by Jīvaka returned and said, "The mango grove is full of bhikkhus." The Buddha said, "Go to the monastery and say that the Teacher summons the bhikkhu named Cūlapanthaka to come." But the man came back saying that voices had come from all thousand bhikkhus declaring, "I am Cūlapanthaka, I am Cūlapanthaka." So the Buddha said, "Go get hold of the first bhikkhu to say he is Cūlapanthaka. The others will disappear." And this proved to be true. So Cūlapanthaka joined the others.

After the meal, the Buddha told Jīvaka that Cūlapanthaka would give the discourse usual after such an occasion, and he delivered a discourse that covered all the Teachings—the three Piṭakas.

That evening, a group of bhikkhus were discussing what had happened. The Buddha went to them and sat on the seat prepared for him. He looked at the assembly with a heart full of tenderness and loving kindness and thought, "The conduct of this assembly is so pleasant that there is no movement of hands or feet, no coughing or sneezing. They are so full of respect for the Buddha and awed by his glory that if I should sit for the rest of my life without speaking, they would not break the silence and speak first. I will initiate the talk." And he asked the bhikkhus the subject of their conversation. They told him, and the Buddha said that this was not the first time he had been a refuge to Cūlapanthaka.

In a former life, there was a young man who went to Takkasilā, the city renowned for its teachers, to study. Out of five hundred pupils, he gave the greatest service to the teacher, Cūlaseṭṭhi, doing everything, beginning with massaging his feet. But he was so slow in learning, he could not remember any of the Teachings. He lived there a long time but could not learn even one verse. He was discouraged and asked permission to leave. The teacher wanted to reward him for his services, and so he decided to teach him a charm. He took him to the forest and taught him a phrase, repeating it hundreds of times, "You are transgressing; why do you do so? I am aware of it." When the young man learned the charm, the teacher sent him away.

So he returned to Banaras, his native town. Now one day, the king of Banaras decided to go about incognito to see if he could learn of any wrong deeds he may have done which he was unaware of, thinking, "One does not see one's own faults, but others do." He knew that the people discussed all sorts of topics when eating in the evening, so if he was ruling his kingdom unrighteously, they would say that they were being oppressed by penalties and taxes. Otherwise, they would praise the king.

There happened to be two thieves boring a tunnel between two houses in order to steal and the king saw them. He stopped in the shadow of the house to watch. The house they were trying to get into was the place where the young student who had come back from Takkasilā was sleeping. The thieves got in, and the young man woke up and decided to recite the charm: "Why are you transgressing? I know what you are doing." The thieves, thinking they were discovered, fled.

The next day, the king sent for the young man and asked him to teach him the charm he had heard the night before. So the young man said, "Very well, your majesty. You should sit on a seat on the same level with me and learn it." So the young man taught the king the charm and the king gave him a thousand coins as a teacher's fee.

Later, one of the king's generals paid the royal barber a thousand coins and told him to cut the king's throat while he was shaving him. The barber agreed. When the time came for the king to be shaved, the barber soaped the beard with scented water and sharpened the razor. Then he held the forehead of the king back to shave him, but found the razor was not sharp enough for what he was planning to do. So he began to sharpen it again.

At that moment, the king remembered about the charm and decided to recite it: "You are transgressing. Why are you transgressing? I know what you are doing." Sweat started pouring off the barber, who thought that the king was aware of what he was going to do, and, frightened, he dropped the razor and fell at the king's feet. Kings are quick witted, so the king said, "Hey, you wicked barber. You thought the king didn't know?" The barber asked for pardon. "Let it be, " the king answered. "Just tell me what it was." On being told, the king realized he owed his life to the young man, his teacher. He banished the general from the kingdom and sent for the young man and made him the new general.

Thus, the Buddha said the present life was not the only time he had been Cūlapanthaka's refuge, for in that past life, Cūlapanthaka was the young man and the Bodhisatta (Buddha-to-be) was Cūlaseṭṭhi, the teacher who gave him the charm. And he gave the following verse:

> A wise and discerning man can elevate his position using only a little capital, just as one can fan a small fire into a big blaze.

On another occasion, the bhikkhus were discussing what had happened to Cūlapanthaka, and the Buddha gave the verse we began with:

> Through energy, vigilance, restraint and self-control, the intelligent person should make himself an island that is not overwhelmed by the flood.

Energy means putting forth effort (Viriya); vigilance means being constantly mindful; restraint means leading a moral life; self-control means controlling the senses. A man who possesses these four faculties will be able to make himself an island—in other words, become an Arahat—and none of the four floods of sensuous desires, desire for future lives, wrong beliefs, and ignorance, will be able to overwhelm him.

DAY SEVEN: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Radiance of Meditation

Divā tapati ādicco,
rattim ābhāti candimā,
Sannaddho khattiyo tapati,
jhāyī tapati brāhmaṇo,
Atha sabbam ahorattiṃ
Buddho tapati tejasā.

The sun shines during the day. The moon is radiant at night. The warrior shines in his armour. The Brahman (fully Awakened) shines as he meditates. But the Buddha shines both day and night.

Dhammapada v 387

This verse was pronounced by the Buddha when he was residing in the monastery given by Mother Visākhā. It was spoken to Elder Ānanda in confirmation of what the Elder had seen.[1] On a special festival day, King Pasenadi of Kosala went to the monastery, dressed in all his armour and bearing garlands and perfumes. At that moment, Elder Kāḷudāyī was sitting in the outer circle of the Order of Bhikkhus, having entered a deep meditation state. His body was pleasing to look at, for it was of a golden hue. Just at that moment, the moon rose and the sun set. Elder Ānanda looked at the radiance of the sun as it set and of the moon as it rose. Then he looked at the radiance of the king's body and the radiance of the meditating Elder and at the radiance of the Buddha. The Teacher far outshone the radiance of all the others.

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1. *Buddhist Legends,* III, 278f.

Venerable Ānanda paid respects to the Buddha and said, "Venerable sir, as I gazed at the radiance of all these bodies today, the radiance of your body alone satisfied me. For your body far outshone the radiance of all these others." And the Buddha said, "Ānanda, the sun shines during the day, the moon at night, and the king when he wears his armour. The Arahat shines when he has left human associations behind and is absorbed in meditation, but the Buddhas shine both by day and by night. They shine with a fivefold brightness." And he uttered the verse with which we started.

The inference here is that a meditator can also shine while he is meditating. Even Arahats only shine when they are meditating. The Buddha alone shines all day and all night. Such is the power of your meditation.

The Story of the Herdsman Nanda[2]

Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā,
verī vā pana verinaṃ
Micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ
pāpiyo naṃ tato kare.

Whatever an enemy could do to his enemy, or even
a hostile (person) to (another) hostile (person)—a
wrongly-directed mind would do worse to one.

Dhammapada v 42

This verse was spoken by the Buddha when he explained to the bhikkhus about the death of Nanda. Nanda looked after the herds of the lay disciple Anāthapiṇḍika. Nanda invited the Buddha to come to his house, but the Buddha knew that he was not ready and waited for his wisdom to mature. Finally, when he knew Nanda would benefit, he went to him and established him in the first stage of Awakening. Nanda followed the Buddha when he left, and after a while the Buddha took leave of him. On his way home, Nanda was shot and killed by a hunter's arrow.

The bhikkhus who were with the Buddha said to him, "Lord, if you had not come, he would not have been killed." But the Teacher said, "Bhikkhus, whether I came or not, there was no escape for him from death in whichever of the four directions and the four corners he might have gone." Nanda's death, of course, was the result of some bad deed done in a past life. It is the

2. *Buddhist Legends,* II 22f. and *Dhammapada Commentary,* I 140f.

wrongly-directed mind, mentioned in the verse, that is responsible for the wrong deed which results in great harm.

The mind can be directed towards ten kinds of evil which include breaking the precepts and the three unwholesome roots. The three unwholesome roots are greed, hate, and delusion—here, in the sense of wrong beliefs. The precepts which the wrongly-directed mind tends towards breaking are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, and vain talk. As you can see, it is possible to subdivide the precepts concerning speech, as there is more to wrong speech than telling lies.

Right Understanding[3]

During the first few days, when we were practising Ānāpāna, we looked at the six parts of the Noble Eightfold Path that apply to Ānāpāna. Now that we are fully on the path with Vipassanā, we can give a detailed look at the last two steps: Right Understanding (Sammā-diṭṭhi) and Right Contemplation (Sammā-saṅkappa). I will base the discussion on *The Manual of Constituents of the Noble Path* by Venerable Ledi Sayadaw who was the teacher of Sayagyi U Ba Khin's teacher.

Right Understanding or Right View can be divided into three aspects: (1) Understanding correctly that only two things can follow living beings from one existence to the next—wholesome acts and unwholesome acts (Kammassakata sammā-diṭṭhi); (2) understanding rightly the ten kinds of subjects concerning the rounds of existence, the results of intentional actions, and liberation; and (3) there is right understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

There exists in the world property such as houses, cars, gold, and silver. They belong to us in our present existence. When we die, that property cannot accompany us. Possessions of this sort are like borrowed property. Only mental, verbal, and physical volitional actions accompany us in this as well as in future lives. Volitional actions are not liable to destruction by fire, water, rulers, thieves, or enemies.

All living beings perform the three kinds of volitional actions—physical, verbal, or mental—at all times when they are awake. All their work is done thanks to these actions. When they are asleep these actions are inert. When they die, they cease to function as

3. *The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 221-236.

far as that body is concerned. The three kinds of volitional actions are either good or bad, and they can give results either in this life or in a future life.

We gave the ten kinds of immoral conduct with the second *Dhammapada* verse we quoted. We must avoid wrong actions in gaining a livelihood, in acquiring material goods, and in seeking knowledge. This will make for good volitional actions (Kamma) which have to be performed in this existence. But we must do more than be free of wrong conduct if we aim at future existences and if we wish to be born in a good abode. We must also do good actions such as generosity, observing the eight precepts on special days. We must practise meditation and pay respects to the Triple Gem: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha.

If we indulge in the ten kinds of wrong actions (breaking the precepts with insistence on the various kinds of wrong speech), if we act out of covetousness, ill will, or wrong views, then those intentional deeds will lead us to the lower planes in future existences.

We should observe for ourselves how mental, verbal, and physical volitional actions are being performed everywhere: on land, in the water, and in the sky, by all kinds of living creatures. Having seen this with our own eyes, we can understand also that these beings have been acting in the same way in their past existences for endless world cycles. And they will go on acting this way in the future. And there are infinite universes in all four directions with creatures on land, in the water, and in the sky, performing these three types of volitional acts. Then we will understand that good results come from wholesome actions and the various kinds of misery and suffering come from unwholesome actions. You may own nothing—not even a single coin—and yet you can be happy if you possess mental volitional action in the form of knowledge and wisdom.

Those who wish to acquire worldly gains, such as wealth, governmental standing, and honour in this life, can achieve their wish if they exert themselves and acquire education and knowledge. These things do not come by simply wishing for them or praying for them. If that were possible, no one would have to learn the arts and sciences or have to farm and so on. And just as what one gains in this world comes through one's own efforts, so too, someone who performs the good deeds we have enumerated will be born in a wealthy family or in a Deva world in a future life.

Therefore, the Buddha said that our volitional actions are our property (Sabbe sattā kammassaka). The Kamma we make, that is, our volitional acts, can be compared to seeds. A plant in the past has produced a seed. The seed has potential in it, potential energy that will cause the seed to develop into a plant like the one it came from if the right conditions prevail. And *that* plant will produce new seeds. Just as the seed will resemble the plant it comes from, wholesome deeds will lead to life as a human or Deva. Unwholesome deeds will lead to a life in a demon world, as a wandering ghost, an animal, or a life in one of the hells.

A plant is a physical phenomenon only. There is no volitional consciousness in a plant. But sentient beings are made up of both physical and mental phenomena. The mental factor is the most important. One mental factor can produce only one new rebirth consciousness. Therefore, although a being has many wholesome and unwholesome volitional acts in a given existence, only *one* will produce a rebirth consciousness and determine that life. A being is not created by some higher being. Such a belief is wrong view. Right view is the realization that beings such as men, animals, and so on, come into new existences because of the seeds of past Kamma performed in previous world cycles.

A material inheritance can only be called our property while we live in one life. But mental, verbal, and physical Kamma will follow us through all our lives. That is our true inheritance. Wholesome Kamma such as feeding dogs, pigs, birds, and fowl can result in a hundred happy existences. Feeding virtuous bhikkhus can give rise to countless happy existences as a man or a Deva. Giving alms that are worth only twenty-five pence can yield beneficial results worth more than a thousand pounds in future existences. But if a person kills an animal such as a fish, fowl, or a pig, he may be killed in more than a thousand future existences.

If we plant a tiny apple seed, it can give a big tree that will bear innumerable apples. Similarly, a seed of wholesome Kamma such as alms giving, morality, or meditation can yield more than a hundred thousand good results in future existences. The effects of one's Kamma always accompany one in many existences, yielding good or bad results at the opportune moments. This is why the Buddha said that our volitional actions are our inherited property (Sabbe sattā kamma-dāyada).

There are several causes for the growth of a plant: the seed, the earth, and water. The seed is the primary cause. The soil and

water are secondary causes. For a human being, past wholesome actions are the primary cause. Parents are the secondary cause. This is why the Buddha said our wholesome and unwholesome actions are the origin of our wanderings in many lives (Sabbe sattā kamma-yoni).

We have parents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, relatives and friends, teachers whom we love and rely on—but only for a short period, only until we die. Our Kamma, on the other hand, will be a constant companion. Only our wholesome volitional actions can give us happiness and prosperity in future existences. This is why the Buddha said that only volitional actions are the true friends and relatives that accompany beings throughout all their lives (Sabbe sattā kamma-bandhu).

Wholesome Kamma is our protection in our present lives against danger, and we must rely on it in order to avoid suffering in future existences. It will be our refuge in every existence, as the law governing Kamma operates in this universe as well as in the other innumerable universes, whether we encounter the period during which a Buddha's Teachings can be encountered (Buddha-sāsana) or not. That is why the Buddha mentions Kamma alone and not the Triple Gem in saying, "Only volitional actions are the true refuge of beings, wherever they may wander in many lives." (Sabbe sattā kamma-ppaṭisaraṇa.)

"Refuge" means reliance upon or taking shelter for protection against troubles and dangers. It does not only mean paying respects. The Pāḷi word "saraṇa," usually translated "refuge," means "that which can save, give support or protection." And in our daily lives, we rely on material things as a protection. For example, food and drink are the support for long life; medicine and proper diet are relied on to effect a cure; governments protect us against robbers and criminals; a building protects us from the rain and cold; the earth is a support, as well as water, fire, and air.

At the present time, with the Teachings of the Buddha still alive, there are three more refuges: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. The four refuges can be compared to the four kinds of refuge for a sick man. He can rely on a doctor, good medicine, nurses, and on following their advice. The Buddha resembles the doctor who is expert in curing diseases. The Teaching, the Dhamma, is like the medicine. The Order or Saṅgha is like the nurse. And the wholesome mental, verbal, and physical Kamma

of our past and present lives is like the sensible action of the patient who follows directions.

This is Right Understanding from the point of view of understanding correctly that only wholesome and unwholesome acts can follow living beings from one existence to another.

There are ten kinds of understanding with regard to the rounds of existence, the results of intentional actions, and liberation from suffering (Dasa vattuka-sammā-diṭṭhi). First there is right understanding that generosity if performed with benevolence in one existence will yield beneficial results in subsequent existences (Atthi dinnaṃ). Secondly, there is right understanding that liberality if done on a large scale with faith in and respect for the virtuous qualities of the recipients yields beneficial results in future existences (Atthi yiṭṭhaṃ). Then thirdly, there is right understanding that gifts, even on a small scale, if made with good will, will yield beneficial results in future existences (Atthi hutaṃ). Fourthly, there is right understanding that cruel deeds done to beings in one existence will yield bad results in subsequent existences, and that refraining from such evil acts yields beneficial results (Atthi sukata dukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko).

You will note in passing that great emphasis is laid on the fact that most results are not in the same existence but rather in future lives. If the reverse were true, it would be obvious to everyone that the rewards and sufferings that result from wholesome and unwholesome deeds were inevitable.

The fifth and sixth points are right understanding that good and evil deeds done to one's mother and to one's father yield good and evil results respectively in subsequent existences. We can see that our duty to our parents is so important it is singled out and given in two separate points (Atthi mātā, atthi pitā).

The seventh point is the right understanding that there really exist beings of apparitional rebirth who are invisible to the human eye. Beings of apparitional rebirth are those that do not take conception in the womb of a mother. Due to the force of their previous Kamma, they are born complete with limbs and organs of the body which will not develop further but remain as they are. Beings of apparitional rebirth exist in all other planes except the animal plane. There are eight hells as well as ghosts (Petas), demons (Asuras), earth deities or Devas, ogres, Nāgas, and Garulas. Above the human plane there are Devas of the six heavenly worlds, and the Brahmās of the twenty Brahmā planes,

which consist of three planes for the first Jhāna, three for the second Jhāna, three for the third Jhāna, and seven for the fourth Jhāna. Above those, there are four immaterial planes (Arūpa). In the lower three of the twenty Brahmā planes, there is a Brahmā of great power who is regarded by some mistaken persons as God.

The sun, moon, stars, and constellations in the sky are the heavenly mansions of Devas. By seeing those heavenly abodes, one can visualize the existence of higher planes of the Devas, Sakkas, and Brahmās.

Even when men are close to those beings, men are unable to see them with their human eyes (Atthi sattā opapātika). It is only when they make their forms visible that men can see them.

The eighth and ninth points are right understanding that this world is the human world (Atthi ayaṃ loko) and that the others worlds consist of the four lower worlds, the Deva planes, and Brahmā planes (Atthi paro loko) and that there are an infinite number of universes in all directions.

Finally, we come to the tenth point, which is right understanding that there really exist, in this human world, persons like the Omniscient Buddha, bhikkhus, and Brahmans (in the sense used by the Buddha of "a righteous man") who practise the true Dhamma and possess tranquillity of mind, and who, having seen and realized this very world and other worlds through their own insight, impart their knowledge to others (Atthi loke samaṇa-brāhmanā samaggatā sammāpaṭipannā ye imañ ca lokaṃ parañ ca lokaṃ sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti).

Right Understanding of the four Noble Truths is the penetrative insight into the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. These we have already dealt with in previous talks.

Right Contemplation

The last step in the Eightfold Noble Path is Right Contemplation or Right Thought (Sammā-saṅkappa). We can divide this into three parts: (1) Right Thought which is free from greed and sensuous desire, aiming at an escape from the round of rebirths (Nekkhama saṅkappa); (2) Right Thought for the Welfare of all living beings (Abyāpāda saṅkappa); and (3) Right Thought for the non-injury of all living beings (Avihiṃsa saṅkappa). So this includes renouncing stimulating sensuous desires and developing loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity.

Dependent Origination

Now let us look at how cause and effect work in conjunction with our volitional acts. This doctrine, known as Dependent Origination (Paṭicca-samuppāda), is one of the basic teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, "Deep indeed is dependent origination, Ānanda, and it appears deep. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, become like muñja grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence, the cycles of rebirth (Saṃsāra)."[4]

This is the doctrine that was referred to by Venerable Assaji when Upatissa, who was later known as Sāriputta, asked him to explain the doctrine of his teacher. As we have seen two lines mentioning this doctrine were sufficient for Ven. Sāriputta to reach the first fruition stage of Awakening:

> *Ye dhammā hetuppabhāvā tesaṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato āha,*
> *Tesaṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃ vādī Mahāsamano.*
>
> The Perfect One has explained the cause of all phenomena, and that which is their cessation—such is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.
>
> *The Book of the Discipline,* IV 54

This doctrine is not something invented by the Buddha, or a cleverly worked out philosophical system open to modification and amendment. It is not the invention of some divine being. Dependent Origination is the ultimate reality of all phenomena—the arising of conditioned states and the cessation of conditioned states. This goes on whether there is a Buddha or not.

> *Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati, imasmiṃ asati idaṃ no hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.*
>
> When *this* is, *that* comes to be.
> With the arising of *this, that* arises.
> When *this* is not, *that* does not come to be.
> With the cessation of *this, that* ceases.[5]

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4. *Dialogues of the Buddha,* II 50.
5. This statement occurs in several discourses: for example: *Middle Length Sayings,* II 32, III 107; *Kindred Sayings,* II 23, 66, etc.

This ultimate truth of Dependent Origination was discovered by the Buddha through his Awakening. After he was Awakened, he sat by the foot of the Bodhi tree at Gaya, experiencing the supreme bliss of emancipation.[6] When the seven days were over, he emerged from his concentrated meditation and, during the first watch of the night, he thought over the arising aspect of Dependent Origination (Anuloma): "When *this* exists, *that* comes to be. With the arising of *this, that* arises."

In the middle watch, he thought over Dependent Origination from the point of view of cessation (Paṭiloma): "When *this* does not exist, *that* does not come to be. With the cessation of *this, that* ceases." And in the last watch of the night, the Buddha reflected on Dependent Origination both arising and ceasing: "This is the arising of suffering, the origin of suffering. This is the end of suffering."

Here are the eleven steps of Dependent Origination:

Dependent on ignorance, volitional formations arise.

Dependent on volitional formations, consciousness arises.

Dependent on consciousness, the mind-body phenomenon arises.

Dependent on the mind-body phenomenon, the six bases for the senses arise.

Dependent on the six bases for the senses, contact arises.

Dependent on contact, sensations arise.

Dependent on sensations, craving arises.

Dependent on craving, clinging arises.

Dependent on clinging, conditioned existence arises.[7]

Dependent on moral and immoral actions in the present existence,[8] the process of rebirth arises.

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6. *Verses of Uplift,* pp. 1-3.
7. According to the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, *bhava* as the result of clinging means *upapatti-bhava* (existence through the rebirth process). See Ven. Nārada's translation, *A Manual of Abhidhamma,* pp. 358, 364. This includes existence in the eleven realms of sense desire *(kāma-bhava)*, existence in the sixteen fine-material realms *(rūpa-bhava)*, and existence in the four non-material realms *(arūpa-bhava)*. See *Ten Suttas from Dīgha Nikāya,* p. 161, note 1.
8. According to the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, *bhava* as the condition for rebirth means *kamma-bhava* (the existence of [volitional] actions) — volitional actions done in the present leading to future rebirth and the mental phenomena associated with such actions. See the references in the preceding footnote.

> Dependent on the process of rebirth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise.
>
> Thus does the whole mass of suffering arise.

Dependent Origination from the point of view of cessation involves the same eleven steps. When any one of the steps ceases, then the next step ceases as well:

> Through the entire cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease.
>
> Through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness ceases. . . .

and so on to the cessation of the whole mass of suffering.

Now the first step, ignorance (Avijjā), is not to be understood as a first beginning. It is impossible to conceive of a first beginning. The origin of suffering can only be known as an on-going process which we can understand through observing it as it works. No one, not even a Buddha, can trace this process back to a first beginning.

Let us look at the various steps in a little more detail. In past lives we have done good and bad volitional acts with mind, word, and deed because we were ignorant of the true reality of conditioned states. So our ignorance (Avijjā) led us to set loose these mental forces (Saṅkhāra) which have led to our present existence.

In our present lives, because of our past deeds, we have consciousness, a life continuum (Viññāṇa) which is continually supporting this mind-body phenomenon (Nāma-rūpa) which we call "I, mine." This mind-body phenomenon has six senses (Saḷāyatana)—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, thinking, and imagining—which make it possible for there to be contact with the objects that stimulate those senses (Phassa). This contact will give rise to sensations, feelings (Vedana). We will react to these sensations which we find to be either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, and thus craving (Taṇhā) will arise. We crave to prolong the agreeable sensations. We crave to get rid of the disagreeable sensations. So this craving will lead to attachment, clinging (Upādāna). Our clinging will result in conditioned existence (Bhava) and during our new existence we will commit innumerable volitional acts that will be either good or bad. In this way we will go to a new birth (Jāti) that will only bring once more old age,

death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (Jarā-maraṇaṃ sokapari-deva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsa).

This is the vicious circle of cause and effect. And we are responsible for the whole process. It is our desire and clinging that leads us to do good and bad actions that will bind us to this whole process of suffering.

But it can all be stopped. If any one link in this chain is broken, the whole process will stop. And we are working here in order to be able to do just that. There is one link in the chain that is particularly appropriate for laymen to work on—the link between sensations and the craving that arises because of the reaction to the sensations.

As we sit here with our eyes closed, watching our sensations, the whole process is happening an innumerable number of times each second. Each sensation is the result of some volitional act done through ignorance in the past. If we can become engrossed in the knowing of Anicca—the change taking place in a sensation—we will be developing automatically that balanced attitude, that equanimity, which will enable us one day to cut through the link to the next step. We will be working towards cutting off the craving that we normally allow to arise. We will not be able to break the link until we are able to attain liberation, and this takes much preparation.

Much more could be said about Dependent Origination (Paṭ-icca-samuppāda), but I think this much will help you appreciate the importance of your meditation and why you are working the way you are. If you can know sensations as they are, Anicca, changing, you will understand the truth of the origin of suffering; you will lose your craving for sensations and discover the truth of the cessation of suffering. Ignorance will go and this entire process of Dependent Origination will end.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in rising order (Anuloma), this verse occurred to the Buddha:[9]

> When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, his doubts all vanish, for he knows that each thing has to have its cause.

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9. The next three stanzas are from *The Book of the Discipline*, IV 2f. and *Verses of Uplift*, pp. 2f.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in the order of cessation (Paṭiloma), this verse occurred to the Buddha:

> When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, his doubts all end, for he perceives how the conditions come to an end.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in both rising order and in the order of cessation, this verse occurred to the Buddha:

> When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, there, like the sun that lights the sky, he stands, repelling the hosts of Māra.

And the first words spoken aloud by the Buddha after attaining full Awakening were these:

> I have run through countless births in journeying on,
> seeking, but not finding, the builder of the house.
> Being born again and again is suffering.
>
> You are seen, housebuilder. You will not build a house again.
> All your rafters are broken. Your ridge-pole is torn asunder.
> The mind has arrived at the extinction of conditioned phenomena. The complete destruction of cravings has been experienced.

Dhammapada vv 153-154

DAY SEVEN: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Danger in Wrong Action

Idha tappati, pecca tappati,
pāpakārī ubhayattha tappati,
"Pāpaṃ me katan" ti tappati,
bhiyyo tappati duggatiṃ gato.

The evil doer burns in this world, he burns in the next world. He burns in both worlds.
He burns, thinking, "I have done evil." How much more he burns when he goes to the lower states of woe.

Dhammapada v 17

This verse was spoken by the Buddha in reference to his cousin Devadatta.[1] In the commentary to the verse, Devadatta's story is preceded by a short account of six members of the warrior caste (Khattiya) that the Buddha came from. They were the only young men out of eighty thousand of his clan who had not ordained in the Buddha's Saṅgha. They were King Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadatta.

The Story of Anuruddha

Anuruddha was a delicate youth who had always been provided with all kinds of luxury. The expression "Isn't any" had never been heard by him. One day, he was playing marbles with the other Sakyan princes we just mentioned. His mother prepared cakes and sent them to the boys and they ate them and continued

1. *Buddhist Legends,* I 230-242 (Dhammapada Commentary, I 53-59). On Devadatta's attacks on the Buddha, see also *The Book of the Discipline.* V 259ff. On his death, see also the introduction to Jātaka No. 466.

to play. Anuruddha was losing and he sent for more cakes three times. But when he asked a fourth time, his mother thought, "I should teach him the meaning of the words 'Isn't any.' " So she sent word, saying, "There isn't any cake." Anuruddha thought this was the name of a kind of cake, so he sent word to his mother, "Please send the 'Isn't any' cakes." His mother decided to send an empty golden bowl covered by another bowl, to show him the meaning of "Isn't any."

The guardian deities of the city knew that Anuruddha in a past life had given his own share of food to a Pacceka Buddha with the aspiration that he would never have to hear the words "Isn't any" again. If they allowed this to happen now, they would not be able to attend the assemblies of the Devas and their heads would split into seven pieces. So they filled the bowls with celestial cakes. When the covering bowl was lifted, the smell of cakes spread all over the city, and when the boys tasted them, the seven thousand taste buds in the mouth were delighted. When Anuruddha went home, he asked his mother if she loved him. "Son, you are as dear to me as a one-eyed man's eye is dear to him." "Then why have you never prepared 'Isn't any' cakes for me before?" The mother looked into what had happened and understood that the cakes must have come from the Devas. After that, as long as Anuruddha remained at home, she sent him an empty bowl whenever he asked for cakes and the deities filled it with celestial sweets.

One day, Anuruddha's brother, Mahānāma, said that either Anuruddha or he should become a bhikkhu so that one son in the family would lead the higher life. Anuruddha asked what was involved. Mahānāma said that bhikkhus live with their hair and beard shaved off, wearing yellow robes, sleeping in beds of meshed twigs and that they went about in search of alms. Anuruddha decided he was too delicate for that. So he asked what the life of a layman required. He knew so little about these matters, he thought food was produced in a jewel-studded golden bowl, just as it was served to him. When he learned about all that was involved in farming and that it was necessary to start everything over every year—that was too much. He decided to become a bhikkhu and so, was one of the six princes who ordained together.

Of the six, the Venerable Bhaddiya attained Full Awakening (Arahatship) the very first rainy season, when the bhikkhus were in retreat. Next, Anuruddha attained the goal. Ānanda, who was

later to be the Buddha's attendant, was established in the first fruition state (Sotāpanna). The Elders Bhagu and Kimbila became Arahats. But Devadatta attained only the mundane psychic powers and no higher. These are the powers that can be developed through concentration.

The Story of Devadatta

In due time, when the Buddha was residing at Kosambī, he and his bhikkhus were highly honoured and revered. Many people came with robes, medicines, and other offerings. And they asked where the Buddha was, where the chief disciples were—Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna. They asked about the eighty leading disciples such as Mahā-Kassapa, and these included five of the princes. But no one asked about the sixth, Devadatta.

Devadatta thought to himself, "I joined the Order along with these people. They are from the same social class as I am. But people give them offerings and none to me. There must be somebody I can associate with, somebody I can impress and obtain offerings from." He knew that it was useless to try to ally himself with the king of Kosala and that King Bimbisāra was a Sotāpanna, well established in the Dhamma. Their faith in the Buddha was too great for him to approach them. So he thought to himself, "Ajātasattu, Bimbisāra's son, doesn't understand who is virtuous and who is not. I will ally myself with him."

Using his powers he impressed Ajātasattu and won him over and gained offerings from him. He became so absorbed in the gain and fame which he received that he decided he should lead the Order of Bhikkhus. As soon as this thought arose in him, his supernormal powers vanished.

He went to the Buddha and said, "Lord, now that you are old, advanced in years, may you live free from care, may you live in happiness in this existence. I will look after the Order of Bhikkhus. Please entrust the Order to my care." The Buddha refused and rebuked Devadatta, using the strong term "spittle swallower" (Khelasakavada) in referring to him. So we can see that the Buddha, even though he was full of love and compassion for all beings at all times, would speak very directly, not mincing his words. Love and compassion call for firmness at times.

Devadatta, as you can imagine, was very unhappy about being spoken to in such firm language, and he developed his first grudge against the Buddha. After he left, the Buddha imposed an act of proclamation concerning him in Rājagaha. The act stated that

Devadatta had formerly been of one kind but was now of another kind. From that time on, none of his words or actions should be considered to be consistent with the Buddha, the Teachings, or the Order of Bhikkhus, but all he did was to be considered his own personal responsibility. In other words, Devadatta was no longer under the protection and guidance of the Buddha. And it is important to understand that this was not a decision the Buddha had to make himself. Devadatta had put himself in that position by his thoughts, words, and deeds. The proclamation was made in the interest of the lay disciples and in the interest of the Order of Bhikkhus. Lay disciples would be able to see clearly what was actually taught by the Buddha and what Devadatta was adding or changing himself. Bhikkhus, too, would be able to see more clearly, and the Order would be strengthened rather than weakened.

Devadatta seems to have seen the act as a declaration of war, for he now thought to himself, "The bhikkhu Gotama has disowned me. Now I'll work against him." As so often happens when a person wants to have an excuse to justify their wrong acts, Devadatta set up a situation where he could say to himself he had been wronged. So he went to Prince Ajātasattu and said, "Prince, people do not live as long today as they used to. You might die as a prince and never rule as king. Kill your father and become king. I'll kill the bhikkhu Gotama and become the Buddha." We can see how little Devadatta understood concerning what Buddhahood entails.

Ajātasattu did as he was told, and Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha. He hired men to kill the Buddha, but they made the fortunate mistake of listening to what the Buddha had to say and became Sotāpannas. So Devadatta climbed the hill named Vulture's Peak and threw down a large rock. But it burst before reaching the Buddha and only a splinter of rock drew blood from his foot. In fact, the Buddha's past perfections are so great, it is not possible to kill him. But one can draw blood, and it is one of the five heinous crimes that mean suffering in the lowest hell in the immediate next existence.

Next, Devadatta set a wild elephant, Nālāgiri, against the Buddha. The Buddha's attendant, Ānanda, courageously jumped in front of the Buddha, risking his own life. But the Buddha was able to subdue the elephant on his own.

This last act was the first one to come to the attention of the lay disciples. All the other attempts and the killing of the king they had not heard about. But now that they knew, they stopped serving Devadatta food and offering him alms. Even Ajātasattu no longer dared associate himself with Devadatta.

Still Devadatta kept trying. He went to the Buddha and asked for five special ascetic rules to be added to the other rules for the Bhikkhus: they should live in the forest throughout their lives; live only on alms and not accept invitations to eat; wear robes made only from rags found on rubbish heaps and not accept robes given by laymen; they should live under trees and never in buildings; and they should be strictly vegetarian, never accepting fish and meat to eat.

The Buddha answered that any bhikkhu who wished to follow the five additional ascetic practices was free to do so, as long as he resided in a monastery during the rainy season, but no rule would be made obliging all bhikkhus to do that. If the Buddha had imposed these rules, it would have been an obstacle for lay disciples who wished to make merit through gifts of robes, food, etc.

Devadatta knew a refusal was coming. His real motive in asking was obvious immediately, for he said to a group of newly ordained bhikkhus, "Whose words are better, the Buddha's or mine? . . . Let those who wish to be released from suffering come with me." Five hundred bhikkhus sided with him.

Then Devadatta committed another of the heinous acts. He began actively to create a schism in the Order of Bhikkhus. The Buddha warned him that this was very serious, but one day Devadatta told Venerable Ānanda, "Starting today, I will observe the monthly recitation of the rules of the Order, as well as all other duties of the Order, on my own, no longer in association with the Buddha and his Order of Bhikkhus."

The Buddha thought to himself, "Devadatta is committing an act which will make him suffer in the lowest hell" (Avīci), and he spoke this verse:

> It is easy to do unwholesome deeds which are not beneficial for oneself.
> But it is extremely difficult to do what is beneficial and good.

And later, in the same connection, he gave these verses:

It is easy for a good man to do good. But it is difficult for an evil man to do good.
It is easy for an evil man to do evil. But it is difficult for a noble man to do evil.

So Devadatta carried out his plan and created a schism in the Order of Bhikkhus. But the Buddha sent his chief disciples to him, and Devadatta thought they came to join him, so he was delighted. In the evening, when he was tired, Devadatta asked Venerable Sāriputta to give the discourse while he rested. Sāriputta opened the eyes of the bhikkhus who had sided with Devadatta and led them back to the Buddha.

Devadatta fell ill and in his last moments had a change of heart. He longed to see the Buddha and asked to be taken to him. When it was pointed out to him that he had behaved like an enemy to the Buddha and therefore should not be taken to see him, Devadatta said, "Do not ruin me. I have acted very wrongly against the Buddha, but he was not offended with me, not even to the extent of the tip of a hair." And he begged them over and over. Finally they agreed. But from the moment Devadatta asked for the five additional rules, it was impossible for him to return to the Buddha. So on the way, when he stopped near a pond to take a bath, the earth swallowed him up as soon as he stepped off the litter on which he was being carried. As he sank he said this stanza:

With these bones, with my life,
I take refuge in the Buddha—
The best of men, the Deity of deities,
The guide of men fit to be trained,
The All-seeing One,
He who is endowed with many auspicious marks.

The Buddha had realized when he admitted Devadatta to the Order what would happen, but he thought to himself, "If Devadatta remains a layman, he will commit a grievous offence and will not be able to do anything to reach Nibbāna in future lives. But if he becomes a bhikkhu, his good action will result in future lives during which he will be able to work properly. Indeed, at the end of a hundred world-cycles, he will become a Pacceka Buddha."

So we can see that far from being pessimistic, Buddhism shows that there is hope even for those who have committed the most heinous crimes.

When the events of Devadatta's death were told to the Buddha, he said that this had not been the first life during which Devadatta had been his enemy, and he related a Jātaka story concerning one of his past lives, with the stanza:

> Even if one should give the whole earth to an ungrateful person who is always looking for a loophole, one can never satisfy him.

And later, he told the stories of many other lives during which Devadatta had opposed him. When the bhikkhus asked the Buddha whether someone who has suffered in this world has to be reborn in a lower plane, the Buddha answered yes, that those who are negligent in this life, whether bhikkhus or laymen, have to suffer both now and later. And he gave the verse with which we started.

The Simile of the Cloth

Tonight I want to discuss the Discourse on the Simile of the Cloth.[2] This discourse was given by the Buddha when he was staying in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery near Sāvatthi.

"Bhikkhus," the Buddha said, "a cloth that is stained and dirty, when dipped in some dye or other by a dyer—no matter what colour dye is used—dark green or yellow or red—that cloth will be dyed a bad colour, it will not be clear. Similarly, a mind that is stained, impure, will lead to an existence full of suffering. But a cloth that is very clean, quite pure, if the dyer dips it into a dye—whether green or yellow or red or crimson—that cloth will be dyed a good colour; it will be clear in colour. Similarly, the mind that is not stained—a pure mind—will lead to a happy existence.

"Now, what stains the mind? What are the impurities of the mind?" And here, the Buddha gave sixteen impurities of the mind: greed or covetousness, ill-will or hatred, anger, hostility, contempt, spite, envy, stinginess, hypocrisy or deceit, treachery, obstinacy, impetuosity, arrogance, pride, conceit, and indolence. And he told them that when an impurity such as greed or covetousness was considered as a defilement, understood to be a defilement, then it should be abandoned; one will have unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Awakened One. One will know, "Thus indeed is the Lord, perfected, wholly self-awakened,

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2. *The Middle Length Sayings,* I 45-51.

endowed with knowledge and right conduct, well-farer, the knower of worlds, incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed, teacher of Devas and men, the Awakened One, the Lord." And he will have unwavering confidence in the Dhamma, knowing, "The Dhamma is well taught by the Lord, to be realized by oneself, giving immediate results, inviting investigation, leading onwards to Nibbāna, to be understood by the wise, each person for himself." And one will have unwavering confidence in the Saṅgha, the Order, knowing, "The Teacher's Order of Disciples is of good conduct, upright, of wise conduct, of dutiful conduct; that is, the four pairs of men and the eight individuals (that is, those who have attained the four levels of Awakening with their paths and fruition states). This Order is worthy of alms, hospitality, offerings, reverence. It is a matchless field of merit for the world."

At this stage there is giving up, renouncing, rejecting, getting rid of, forsaking. (By this, we can understand that one would be at the third stage of Awakening, Anāgāmī.) Knowing that he has unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, that there is renunciation, one then acquires knowledge of the goal, knowledge of the Dhamma, the delight that is connected with the Dhamma. Rapture is born from that delight. Being rapturous, the body is tranquil, and joy is felt, and because of joy, the mind is well concentrated.

A bhikkhu who is of such moral habits, of such a realization, of such wisdom, will be able to eat the finest food and it will not be a stumbling block for him. Just as a dirty cloth becomes clean when it is washed in clean water or as gold put into a smelting pot becomes pure and clean, such a bhikkhu will not find the finest foods a stumbling block.

He will live suffusing one quarter of the globe with loving kindness. He will suffuse the world in all directions with loving kindness that is far reaching, wide-spread, immeasurable; without enmity, without malevolence. Likewise, he will suffuse the world with compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

He will understand that there is the attainment of Arahatship, that there is suffering and its uprising, that there is the means of eliminating suffering, and that there is escape through the elimination of suffering. He who knows this, sees this, his mind is free from the defilement of future lives, of ignorance. With freedom comes the knowledge that he is free and he understands,

"Birth is destroyed, the higher life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, there is no more becoming for me."

And the Buddha concluded his discourse by saying, "Bhikkhus, this is called a bhikkhu who is washed with an inner cleansing."

There was a layman named Sundarika-Bhāradvāja who was sitting not far from the Buddha. He asked, "Does the Venerable Gotama wash in the river Bāhukā?" "Of what use is the river Bāhukā?" the Buddha asked.

"Many people consider the river Bāhukā a means of purification. Many people wash away their evil deeds in the river Bāhukā."

In answer, the Buddha gave the following verses:

> The fool may constantly enter rivers and fords, Bāhukā,
> Adhikakkā, Gāyā, Sundarikā, Sarassati, Payāga and Bāhumatī, but this will not cleanse him of evil deeds.
>
> What can the Sundarikā do? Or the Payāga or Bāhukā?
> They do not cleanse the hostile, guilty man intent on evil deeds.
>
> Every day is auspicious for the pure, every day is holy for the pure.
> Those who are pure in action follow good customs. Bathe in this teaching of mine, Brahman, and make all creatures secure.
>
> If you do not speak a lie, if you harm no living being,
> If you do not take what is not given, if you have confidence, if you are not stingy,
> Then what can going to Gāyā do for you when Gāyā is only a river?

The Brahman Sundarika-Bhāradvāja then said to the Buddha, "It is excellent, good Gotama, it is excellent, good Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways, as though one might set upright what had been overthrown or show the way to one who is lost or uncover what had been hidden or bring a lamp into the darkness, so that those with vision could see material shapes. I go to the Venerable Gotama for refuge. May I receive the first ordination of going forth from Gotama, may I receive the full ordination."

And so, Sundarika-Bhāradvāja received the going forth and ordination. And soon after he was ordained, Venerable Bhāradvāja, living alone, aloof, diligent, ardent, self-resolute,

through his own realization, understood and attained, here and now, that supreme goal of the holy life. He knew: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, the task is done, there is no more of this to come." And he became one of the Arahats.

When one reaches the first stage of Awakening, there is no longer any belief in rites and rituals as giving purification and leading to Awakening. A Sotāpanna has travelled along the Path and knows the way. He knows that he has not used any ritual baths or other such rites. The verses by the Buddha to Bhāradvāja emphasize again what we have been saying in these Dhamma talks and what we have been practising through Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā. We are working to cleanse our minds through Right Concentration so that they will be like the clean, clear cloth in the Buddha's simile. Just as we can dip a clean cloth into dye and get a clear colour, developing insight with a pure mind will make the mind shine brightly.

The Two Truths

I have already mentioned the two types of truth: (1) Conventional truth (Sammuti-sacca) and (2) Ultimate truth (Paramattha-sacca), but I would like to give a few more details concerning them, as it is important to understand them correctly in connection with erroneous ways of observing and erroneous thought.

Conventional truth covers the type of speech we use in everyday life, and to a large extent even the language used by modern-day scientists. Now if we use Right Speech, we speak the truth and we can overcome what is not true. It is possible to convey the truth with ordinary speech. Thus, if we are clear about the context in which something is said, we will be able to understand correctly. If someone asks whether earthenware pots or iron pots or silver cups or gold cups exist, if it is in the context of ordinary speech, then the answer is yes. But if the same question is asked in the context of Ultimate Truth, we would answer no, the pot is merely a temporary shape made by a specific material. The material, such as earth or gold, is longer lasting.

Similarly, if we speak in the context of ordinary speech, we can talk of a person. We can say, "I am" or "I have." But in terms of ultimate reality, there is only the coming together for one brief moment of the aggregates. As Ashin Buddhaghosa says in *The Path of Purifiation:*[3]

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3. Chapter VIII, ¶39; XX, ¶72.

> In the ultimate sense, the life-moment of living beings is extremely short, being only as much as the occurrence of a single conscious moment. Just as a chariot wheel, when it is rolling, touches the ground at only one point of the circumference of its wheel, and when it is at rest it rests on only one point, so too the life of living beings lasts only for a single conscious moment. When that consciousness has ceased, the being is said to have ceased.

And he quotes from the Mahā-Niddesa:

> In a past conscious moment he lived, but does not live in the present and will not live in the future. In a future conscious moment he will live, not he did live, not he lives now. In the present conscious moment he lives, not he lived, not he will live.
>
> Life, person, pleasure, pain—just these alone join in one conscious moment that flicks by.
> The aggregates that have ceased of those who are dead or alive are all alike; gone, never to return.
> No world is born if consciousness is not produced; when that is present then it lives; when consciousness dissolves, the world is dead.
> This is the ultimate sense of this concept.
>
> There is no store of broken states, no future stock.
> Those who are born are balanced like seeds on needle-points.
> The breaking up of states is determined at their birth.
> Those who are present decay, unmingled with those who are gone.
> They come from nowhere, they break up, they go nowhere.
>
> They flash on and off, as lightning in the sky.

And the same quotation says, "Even though Devas may live for eighty-four thousand aeons, they are not the same for two thought moments."

Understanding this Ultimate Truth is our goal. It should be obvious to us that it is no easy matter, experiencing the reality of such profound truth. But we have taken a significant step in simply sitting here day after day, hour after hour, watching our breath and observing correctly our sensations. To an outsider we might seem to be doing next to nothing. And how could we explain to somone who has not tried? But I am sure you all

appreciate what hard work is involved. We may remember to watch the breath but forget the spot. We may observe a sensation but forget to combine the appreciation of Anicca with that observation.

But probably everyone here has had at least a moment or two during which the mind grew calm, tranquil, was well concentrated. And all of us probably have suddenly realized the change inherent in this or that sensation. And these moments, no matter how short, are worth all the experiences we have had during all our lives.

DAY EIGHT: MORNING DISCOURSE

Being One's Own Refuge

Attā hi attano nātho
ko hi nātho paro siyā?
Attanā hi sudantena nāthaṃ
labhati dullabhaṃ.

Self is the refuge of self, for how can one man be another man's refuge?
Through being well controlled oneself, one becomes a refuge for oneself; and this refuge is difficult to obtain.

Dhammapada v 160

The word in this Dhammapada verse which we translate as "refuge" is "Nātha," which can also mean protector, saviour, lord, or master. There are ten actions which enable a man to become his own refuge: moral actions, learning the Teachings, being a virtuous companion to others, being humble and patient, cheerfully performing one's day-to-day duties, delighting in the Dhamma, being satisfied with the four necessities of clothing, food, bedding, and medicine, putting forth energy in right effort, being thoughtful and circumspect—or, in terms of meditation, Right Concentration—and, finally, attaining wisdom in its highest sense—Insight-knowledge which gives liberation.

The Story of Kumāra-Kassapa and His Mother[1]

This verse was given in reference to the mother of Kumāra-Kassapa. Decline and fall are inevitable for all things; even the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sāsana) is not an exception. We have already given the stories of some of the group of seven bhikkhus who climbed to the top of a high rock during the period

1. *Buddhist Legends,* II 356-359.

when the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa had begun to decline. Two of them attained their goal, but the other five had to wait until they met the Buddha Gotama. Dabba-Mallaputta was one of the eighty leading disciples among the bhikkhus and was foremost in preparing seats. The ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya became an Arahat in the least time. He grasped the Dhamma through a single phrase. Sabhiya was a skilful debator. Pukkusāti was a Brahman who reached the first fruition stage through a sermon preached by the Buddha. The bhikkhu whose story we will give here was Kumāra-Kassapa, who was foremost for the brilliant imagery in his discourses.

Kumāra-Kassapa's mother was the daughter of a treasurer in the city of Rājagaha. She had begged her parents to let her become a bhikkhunī, but they refused. They married her to a suitable husband when she was of age, but she managed to persuade him to allow her to become a bhikkhunī. She did not realize when she ordained that she was pregnant.

She ordained in the group of bhikkhunīs that belonged to the faction of Devadatta, who had broken ties with the Buddha. When it became obvious she was pregnant, the bhikkhunīs wondered what to do. Devadatta, who was afraid of being criticized, told them to expel her. But she had faith in the Buddha and asked to be taken to him. The Buddha realized that she had conceived before being ordained and was therefore above reproach. But in order to dispel any doubts in others, he summoned four leading lay disciples—King Pasenadi of Kosala, Mahā-Anāthapiṇḍika, Culla-Anāthapiṇḍika, and Visākhā—and gave the order to Elder Upali, who was foremost in the rules of the Order, that he should clear the young woman of the charge against her. The lay woman, Mother Visākhā, was able to determine that the nun had conceived before joining the Order. She was able to remain a bhikkhunī, and in due course she gave birth to a boy.

One day, the king passed by the community of bhikkhunīs and heard the baby crying. He enquired about it and was told that a bhikkhunī had had a boy. He adopted the boy and named him Kumāra-Kassapa. Later, a day came when Kumāra-Kassapa's playmates made fun of him because he had no mother or father. He enquired of the king what this meant. Who was his mother? The king pointed to his daughters, who had raised the boy, and said, "These are your mothers." But the boy knew that he should

have only one mother. Finally, the king told him the whole story. No sooner did he learn the truth than he wished to retire from the world and become a bhikkhu.

Kumāra-Kassapa was ordained and given a meditation subject. One night, as he was meditating, a deity appeared in the grove where he was, illuminating the entire area. This was the bhikkhu he had worked alongside during the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, the bhikkhu who had attained the state of Anāgāmī. The deity presented Kumāra-Kassapa with an allegory, saying that he should ask the Buddha to explain the meaning. He said that in all the various planes of existence, he could only see the Buddha as being capable of explaining the meaning.

The Allegory of the Anthill[2]

And so he gave the allegory of the anthill. There is an anthill that smokes by night and blazes up by day. A Brahman says to his helper, "Bring a tool and dig up the anthill, clever man." The clever man digs. As he digs he uncovers various objects: (1) a bolt, (2) a frog, (3) a sign-post marking two directions, (4) a strainer, (5) a tortoise, (6) a butcher's knife, (7) a piece of flesh, and finally (8) the serpent living in the anthill.

Kumāra-Kassapa went to the Buddha and asked him to explain the meaning. The anthill, the Buddha said, is a synonym for the body, which is made up of the four great elements, which originates from a mother and father, is nourished on food, and which is constantly being rubbed away, pounded away, broken up, and scattered. Whatever one thinks about and ponders over during the night concerning the day's affairs, this is the smoking by night. Whatever affairs one sets about doing by day—whether through bodily actions, speech or thought—after having pondered and reflected on them during the night, this is the blazing up by day.

The Brahman is the synonym for the Buddha, the Perfected One, the Fully Self-awakened One. He can show the way to his helper, the clever man.

The clever man is a symbol for the learner. And this term, "learner," was used by the Buddha to refer to one who was established in the Dhamma, who had made progress, and who was on the path to final liberation.

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2. *The Middle Length Sayings,* I 183-186.

The tool used for digging is a symbol for insight-wisdom, Vipassanā. Digging means putting forth energy, Right Concentration. The bolt is a symbol of ignorance. So one should get rid of ignorance, dig, become a learner, and use insight.

The frog is a symbol for hate or wrath and the turbulence that comes with it. The sign-post showing two directions is a symbol of being perplexed. The strainer is the symbol for the five hindrances: sense pleasures, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and sceptical doubt. The tortoise is a symbol for the five groups of clinging: material shapes, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The butcher's knife stands for the five types of sensual pleasures connected with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. They are agreeable, pleasant, liked, enticing, connected with sensual pleasures, alluring. The piece of flesh stands for the passion of delight.

The clever man, guided by the Teacher, digs inside himself, making a great effort, using Right Concentration and insight-knowledge, and he gets rid of ignorance, ill will, confusion, the five hindrances, the five groups of clinging, the five types of sensual pleasure, the passion of delight, and reaches his goal—symbolized in the allegory by the serpent who lives in the anthill. He reaches Nibbāna.

Kumāra-Kassapa finally reached the goal which he had been working towards for a hundred thousand world cycles. The vivid images of the allegory were in keeping with his aspiration, which was to be skilled in the use of brilliant images in giving discourses.

Now his mother went about crying for twelve years, so great was her attachment to her son. One day, after he became an Arahat, she saw him in the street. She ran up to him, crying, "My son! My son!" She fell down at his feet and milk flowed from her breast. Kumāra-Kassapa thought to himself, "If I speak kind words to her, it will be her undoing. I must speak to her very firmly." So he said to her, "What are you doing? Can you not get rid of sentimental human affection?" This gave her the jolt she needed, and she thought to herself, "Because of him, I have not been able to restrain my tears for twelve years. But he has hardened his heart towards me. Why should I have anything more to do with him?" And through uprooting affection for her son, she was able to put forth effort and attain Arahatship.

Some time afterwards, the bhikkhus were discussing this incident. They said, "Because of Devadatta, Kumāra-Kassapa, who

had made all the preparations for attaining Awakening, almost went to destruction. And the same was true for his mother. But the Teacher became their refuge. How great is the compassion of the Buddhas for the world!" The Buddha explained to the bhikkhus that this was not the first time he had been a refuge to Kumāra-Kassapa and his mother. And praising her for uprooting her affection for her son and for establishing herself as a refuge for herself, he spoke the verses found in the Dhammapada.

The Seven Factors of Awakening

Now let us examine the seven factors of awakening. The Pāḷi word for "factor of awakening" is Bojjhaṅga. It comes from the word Bodhi, which means awakened, being enlightened, and from the word Aṅga, which means limb or factor. In the Pāḷi canon we find three very similar occasions on which the seven factors of awakening are given. As we will see, the reciting of these factors was used as a protection (Paritta) against pain, sickness, disease, and adversity, and they continue to be used in that way in Buddhist countries today.

On three different occasions Mahā-Kassapa, Mahā-Moggallāna, and the Buddha himself were seriously ill. By hearing the factors of awakening recited, each of them recovered from their afflictions and illness.[3]

Here is the example of Mahā-Kassapa. At a time when the Buddha was living at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the feeding ground of squirrels, Mahā-Kassapa was living in Pipphali Cave, afflicted with disease, sick, stricken, and seriously ill. The Lord visited him, took the seat that was prepared for him, and spoke to Mahā-Kassapa.

"Well, Kassapa, how is it with you? Are you bearing up, are you enduring? Do your pains lessen or increase? Are there signs of your pains lessening and not increasing?"

Mahā-Kassapa answered, "No, Lord, I am not bearing up. I am not enduring. The pain is very great. There is a sign of the pains not lessening but rather increasing."

Then the Buddha said to him, "Kassapa, the seven factors of awakening are well expounded by me, cultivated, and much developed by me. When they are cultivated and much developed, they conduce to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna."

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3. *The Kindred Sayings,* V 66-68.

The Buddha goes on to give the seven factors: (1) mindfulness (Sati), that is, being aware and mindful in all activities and movements, both physical and mental; (2) investigation of Dhamma (Dhamma-vicaya), that is, examining the true nature of all phenomena through one's own wisdom;[4] (3) energy (Viriya), or working with determination till the end; (4) rapture or joy (Pīti), the quality which is quite contrary to a pessimistic, gloomy, or melancholic attitude of mind; (5) tranquillity (Passaddhi) of both mind and body; (6) concentration (Samādhi); and (7) equanimity (Upekkhā), or attaining the stage which no longer demands great physical and mental effort.

When the Buddha finished giving the seven factors of awakening, Mahā-Kassapa said, "Truly, Lord, they are the factors of awakening!" Rejoicing, he welcomed the words of the Blessed One, and he rose from that illness. Then and there his illness vanished.

On another occasion, the Buddha was staying at the same place at Rājagaha. At that time, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna was living on the Gijjhakuṭa Hill, the Vulture's Peak, and he was sick, stricken with severe illness. So the Lord visited him and gave the same discourse on the seven factors of awakening. The Elder Mahā-Moggallāna listened with due respect to the doctrine, and he too recovered from his illness.

On a third occasion, while the Buddha was residing at the same city, staying in the Bamboo Grove, he himself was afflicted with a disease and suffered gravely. The Elder Cunda approached the Lord, paid respects to him and attended on him. The Buddha requested Elder Cunda to recite the seven factors of awakening as he had taught them, and Elder Cunda did so. At the end of the recitation, the Buddha approved and recovered from his illness.

With Ānāpāna and Vipassanā meditation we are developing these seven factors of awakening in ourselves. We strive for mindfulness and concentration, using energy or determination in our work, doing our best to maintain equanimity towards everything that arises. At times, when we are working properly, there

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4. This term is translated either as referring to the Buddha's Doctrine or to phenomena (e.g., states, mental objects). Ledi Sayadaw (*The Requisites of Enlightenment*, p. 97; *The Manuals of Buddhsim*, p. 202) says this refers to mental factors associated with wisdom. He says, "Just as cotton seeds are milled, carded, etc., so as to produce cotton wool, the process of repeatedly viewing the five *khandas* with the function of *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* is called *Dhamma-vicaya.*"

is joy and tranquillity. And all this work we are doing ourselves, investigating these Teachings of the Buddha, the truth concerning reality. So we too, on hearing these seven factors of awakening, can give our approval.

The Seven Stages of Purification[5]

There is another list of seven things that are necessary on this path: the Seven Stages of Purification (Satta-visuddhi). These are (1) purity of your moral conduct (Sīla-visuddhi), (2) purity of your mind (Citta-visuddhi), (3) purity of (right) view or belief (Diṭṭhi-visuddhi), (4) purity of overcoming doubts (about the method and about the Dhamma) (Kaṅkhā-vitaraṇa-visuddhi), (5) purity of the knowledge of what is the path and what is not the path (Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi), (6) purity by knowledge and vision of progress on the path (Paṭipādā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi)—this stage corresponds to the ten stages of Vipassanā knowledge, and, finally, (7) purity of knowledge and vision (Ñāṇadassana-visuddhi)—that is, the stage of Awakening or Enlightenment.

The first two stages of purity of moral conduct and of the mind are achieved in Ānāpāna meditation. So we can begin directly with the third stage. Now, what do we mean by purity of belief? Purity of belief is the same thing as Discriminating Knowledge of Mind and Body (Nāma-rūpa-paricchedañāṇa). This is the ability to understand and appreciate what mind (Nāma) is and what the body (Rūpa) is. It is knowing that there is nothing in a sentient being aside from Nāma and Rūpa. The ability to realize that and appreciate it is called Diṭṭhi-visuddhi. The purpose in knowing this is the removal of the concept of self, the mistaken idea that there is a separate self. There is no separate self; there are only the aggregates that make up Nāma and Rūpa.

Purity of belief is the first stage in insight meditation, Vipassanā. That is why it is necessary to know about Nāma and Rūpa before starting the practice of insight meditation. You should be able to differentiate between conventional truth and absolute truth. At first, you understand this in theory, but when you actually meditate, then you find that the physical properties arise, the mind and the mental factors arise, but you cannot find anything else. Only when you reach this stage through your own experience do you truly appreciate this knowledge of Nāma and Rūpa.

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5. This discussion of the Seven Stages of Purification is a talk given by Saya U Tint Yee at the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon.

You must develop this appreciation of the knowledge of mind and body in order to remove the wrong view that there is something permanent in them, that there is such a thing as an ego or self. This wrong belief in a permanent self is known in Pāḷi as Sakkāya-diṭṭhi.

The next stage is the removal of doubts. It is commonly believed that there is no previous cause to our existence. This wrong view that there is no cause (Ahetuka-diṭṭhi) is the belief that this is our first existence and that we come into being because of our parents and for no other reason. This view, of course, must be removed.

What is the cause of our being here? There are two causes: (1) the remote cause and (2) the immediate cause. The remote cause is ignorance of the Four Noble Truths and of craving (Taṇhā). Ignorance of these is the cause of the arising of Saṅkhāras—the conditioned states which we are a part of. The immediate cause is the food we take in to sustain ourselves as far as the physical properties are concerned. The immediate cause for the mind and mental properties is contact (Phassa). There is always contact between the senses and the objects associated with them. Because of that contact, consciousness arises. These, then, are the causes of our present existence. It is only after actually understanding these that we come to Vipassanā knowledge.

In Vipassanā meditation, the object of our meditation is either Rūpa or Nāma—we meditate on either the physical properties or on the mind and mental properties. There are four ways of establishing mindfulness: (1) mindfulness of the physical properties (Kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna), (2) mindfulness of sensations (Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna), (3) contemplation of the mind (Cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna), and (4) mindfulness of mental objects (Dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna).

We practise mindfulness of the physical properties through Ānāpāna meditation. The air that we are breathing in and out is a physical property. It arises because of our mental actions, because we want to breathe in, because we want to breathe out.

Then, when we do Vipassanā meditation, we become aware of the sensations, and that is the second type of mindfulness. We observe the sensations. We watch them. What we are doing in reality is to observe the characteristic (Lakkhaṇa) of each sensation. The object of our mindfulness is the characteristic of the sensations—their behaviour. We observe whether they are permanent or whether they are *not* permanent, whether they are

controllable or whether they are *not* controllable. If they are not permanent, then we know that they are Anicca. If they are not controllable, then we know they are Anattā. And if they are painful, unpleasant, we know they are Dukkha. Watching the characteristics of these sensations is the purpose of Vipassanā. These are the last two factors in the Eightfold Noble Path: Right Contemplation and Right Knowledge.

Before you come to the first stage of Vipassanā knowledge, the Udayabbaya stage of observing arising and vanishing, the knowledge comes to you that for a new sensation to arise, the old sensation has to go. No two sensations can arise together at the same place. You realize in a general way that nothing seems to be permanent. Everything seems to be changing. And sometimes, when you have too much pain, you realize that these sensations do not come according to your desire. They come of their own accord. In that way, you know that they are not controllable. They come and go of their own accord. In a general way, you start realizing the meaning of impermanence, Anicca. Then, as you go on observing sensations, and when you feel the sensations properly throughout your body, then as you watch them, you find them arising and vanishing, and you realize this process of becoming and dissolution. That is what is known as the Udayabbaya stage.

"Udaya" means "becoming," whereas "-bbaya" (or "Vyaya") means "cessation" or "dissolution." This is the first stage in the realization of Vipassanā knowledge. This knowledge is useful in attaining right belief.

Two beliefs are prevalent. One is that there is no life after this one. After this life, it is finished. But when you know that these physical properties and mental properties which constitute all the conditioned states throughout the universe are dying every moment and that there is always a renewal process going on, when you have seen for yourself these two properties combined, then you can, to a certain extent, come to the conclusion that just as this is happening now, it will also happen in the future. These are momentary births and momentary deaths. Each becoming process is a process of birth, and as soon as there is birth, then there is death. Every moment these properties come into being and go away, and yet, they never cease. Why is that? It is because of Kamma (volitional actions) and because of the nutrient value which sustains the physical properties.

In this way, we can know to a certain extent that there will be some kind of life after death. The same phenomena will continue. Thus, we can begin to eliminate the wrong view that life ceases with death.

The other view is that there is something permanent. Even though we die, according to this wrong view, something permanent goes on. Here again we can observe that what has gone has gone. There is no such thing as a permanent element. The old physical properties have nothing to do with the new properties. They are different things. Now, what is it that causes the new physical properties to arise? They arise because of Kamma. Observing this, we can conclude that there is nothing permanent transferred after death. We can make some progress in knowing this to be true. What is actually left after death is this force of Kamma which gives rise to rebirth. It is not we who are reborn. But how are we connected with that other one? We are connected by the means of Kamma. As soon as the mind moment ceases at the time of death, the law governing conditioned states is such that there is no gap in between death and rebirth. The next consciousness after death is the new consciousness, the rebirth consciousness. This is the way in which you might say it is not we who are reborn, but rather, it is just a reflection of our past deeds that gives rise to a new existence.

A long time ago, during Sayagyi's time, someone asked, "If that other person is not my self, then why should I worry about that person?" All we need to do to find the answer is to look back in the past, and we will find that it is because of the deeds of that so-called "other person" in previous lives that we are here now, and because of those deeds we are suffering. In this way we can come out of our wrong views to some extent.

Most of us are struggling at this stage of observing the becoming and dissolution aspect of our existence, the Udayabbaya stage. This stage is a sort of base on which further progress can be founded. First, there is the preliminary understanding—that is to say, theoretical knowledge. And then, the higher understanding within the same field. It is during this process of understanding rise and fall that it is possible for the ten hindrances to come. These hindrances are called Upakkilesas, and they are a very mild form of defilement. They are not gross or intense types of defilements. Lights may come, for example, or joy comes, or pleasurable feelings. Sometimes knowledge comes. Your intelligence seems to be very sharp. As a result, effort increases. You

just want to go on sitting and sitting. Sometimes equanimity comes also. It seems there are no more attachments. Sometimes, there are people who get so equanimous they think they have reached the goal.

This is when you need a teacher who understands and who can tell you that this is just a hindrance to further progress, that you should disregard these things and go on observing Anicca and contemplating all these hindrances also, to see whether they are permanent or not. It is very simple—when you come to that stage, you just try to think of Anicca. If you can think of Anicca, then it is not the final stage yet! When you eventually come to the final stage, then the object of contemplation will no longer be on the conditioned; it will be on the unconditioned state, where you can never think of Anicca or Dukkha. That type of consciousness will not arise. So you can make the test very easily.

When this Udayabbaya stage grows, you come to a higher understanding of arising and vanishing than usual. You come to the understanding of the underlying physical properties of sensations—hardness and softness, for example. The physical properties of hardness and softness are not known to the particles that are combining momentarily and manifesting these properties. It is consciousness that knows them as sensations. Touch-consciousness arises as resultant Kamma. It is a consciousness without any roots. When you concentrate on a certain spot, your mind door goes there by means of concentration. Because of that concentration, touch-consciousness arises as the resultant. You must contemplate that, observe the behaviour of that sensation. When your Udayabbaya knowledge has developed to a high degree, then you find these sensations smoothly and evenly. There seem to be no obstructions, and you lose the concept of the conventional aspect of the sensations. You see only in terms of absolutes: not in terms of hands and feet but in terms of hardness or movement.

At first, the sensations are very slow, but at this stage they become very quick, because you are seeing them in a more concentrated way. This becoming-and-dissolution process quickens. You can go through the body quite easily. As you go on with this, you see more clearly the dissolution aspect. But even if you do not see that aspect, you should not worry. Go on seeing the becoming aspect, for the dissolution aspect is inherent in the becoming aspect. Death is inherent in birth. Eventually, the time will come when your concentration will be good and you still see

more of the dissolution process; wherever you probe, sensations seem to disappear.

At times this is the way you observe your sensations: you look at a sensation, you think in terms of Anicca, it has gone. You look again, it has gone. In that way, you observe and know your sensations repeatedly. These tingling sensations, for example, you may think of as very tiny little particles fluctuating. There may come a time when you actually experience them as they disappear; they are breaking off, breaking away, just like sand falling down from a cliff. Everything seems to be dissolving. If you see in this way, then you know that you have come to the stage of Bhaṅga-ñāṇa.

The stage of knowledge of dissolution (Bhaṅga-ñāṇa) is simply the emphasis on the fact that nothing is permanent. It proves how wrong this view is that there is something permanent. When this state is seen clearly, and when you see that all things are dissolving, then it does not take you long to see that these things are a sort of danger and that these aggregates are not nice—there is danger inherent in them because you cannot depend on them.

At this stage also, fear sometimes arises. Not the fear of death, but the fear that the aggregates are not dependable. This knowledge removes the idea of non-danger, that there can be any safety in the aggregates. We do not think that there is any danger because we feel that our body is quite strong. We are very attached to our body. We do not realize that at every moment dying takes place. Normally we do not see that, but at this stage we see that everything is constantly falling apart.

Once we realize the danger inherent in these phenomena, these five aggregates, then the attachment to them—thinking of them as something desirable—goes away. There is a change of attitude. Now, the attitude is that these phenomena are not desirable. At this stage we have developed the attitude that these phenomena which we call ourselves, are in reality undesirable. They cannot be depended on. They are always subject to change. And that is why they are not desirable.

Slowly, you are cutting off the attachment to self and trying to see the suffering (Dukkha) inherent in the aggregates —the subtle Dukkha, not the painful aspects of Dukkha (Dukkha-dukkhatā, known in Burma as "double Dukkha"). Everyone knows that painful feelings are undesirable. But the Dukkha we are trying to understand is called Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā, which means Dukkha because of constant change.

Then you continue to contemplate these things from the point of view of change (Anicca), suffering (Dukkha), or no-self (Anattā). You use whichever of these three is the most perceptible to you. Usually, it is Anicca that is most perceptible to us. At this stage, it is like someone who cannot swim whose boat capsizes near the shore and who sees a dead body floating there in the ocean. He will hold on to that dead body even though it is undesirable. He knows it is a dead body, but he cannot let go or he will sink and drown.

This is this stage. You know it is undesirable, but *you* cannot let go either. You cannot stop. If you stop, you sink. So you must go on contemplating the changing nature of the aggregates, again and again. Try your best to reach the shore. Once you are there, you will be able to disregard that body and let go of it. Even though you see the undesirable aspect, you must keep on contemplating with the aid of Anicca.

Then comes a state of boredom, being sort of fed up. Usually, there is not much physical Dukkha at this stage, so boredom sets in. The students must make more effort, develop more concentration at this stage. In that way, it will be possible to overcome this boredom. The desire to escape from the undesirable will come. You want to escape from all this. When that urge arises, you have to continue contemplating the five aggregates—actually, *one* aggregate will do. Any one of the five. You can concentrate on the physical aspect or you can concentrate on the aspect of sensations or on perceptions. For the most part, we concentrate on the sensations. So keep knowing Anicca.

Then comes the stage where you make an additional effort. The desire to escape has arisen. Not to escape from the pain, but from these phenomena you are experiencing. So you put in further effort. Then the Anicca aspect becomes clearer.

Next comes the ability to view all conditioned states (Saṅkhāras) with an equanimous attitude. With neither attachment nor with displeasure. At this stage (Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa) you do not have to make any special effort in order to experience these Saṅkhāras. It is almost automatic, and you can view them, observe and contemplate them, for quite a long time without any change in your mental attitude. This stage is free from all obstacles to attaining the stage of entering the Path (Magga). Once you have come to this stage of Equanimity-Knowledge Regarding Conditioned States, if you have not aspired in the past for some special attainment, there is no barrier to going on to the

higher states, because the stage of Adaptation-Knowledge (Anuloma-ñāṇa) will follow. This is the stage supporting the attainment of the Path stage.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin used to give the example of a person hanging on a rope attached to the branch of a tree.[6] He is swinging and trying to get across a stream. So he is swinging and trying to gain enough momentum to be able to let go of the rope and reach the other side. When he has gained enough momentum and he feels sure that he can reach the other side, then he lets go of the rope. This is when one comes to the Gotrabhū stage where the object of contemplation changes. Up to this point, the object of contemplation is conditioned states (Saṅkhāras). At the Gotrabhū stage, the object of contemplation is directed towards the unconditioned state, the stage of the Path (Magga).

This, then, is how we can understand theoretically the way in which Vipassanā enables us to realize this Truth of Suffering.

Types of Buddhists

We mentioned earlier, in connection with Kumāra-Kassapa, that he had to prepare for his final release over a very long period of time. Sayagyi U Ba Khin gives a few more details in his booklet *The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation,*[7] and these can help us understand what is involved in this process.

Sayagyi defined a Buddhist as a person who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—the Triple Gem. And there are four types of Buddhists: someone may become a Buddhist because of danger, because of a need for gratification, through birth, or through faith.

Another way of distinguishing Buddhists is by dividing them into two types: (1) those who intend to make a bid for release in this very life and (2) those who are just accumulating virtues (Pāramīs) with a view to attaining Awakening in a future life.

Those who intend to make a bid for release in their present lifetime are of four types.[8] There is the individual who encounters a Buddha in person and who is capable of attaining Awakening through the hearing of a short discourse. As we have seen, this was the case of Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable

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6. Cf. *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XXII, ¶6.
7. Printed in *Dhamma Texts* (The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K.), pp. 53-55.
8. See *The Gradual Sayings*, II 138, and *Designation of Human Types*, p. 58. They are discussed by Ledi Sayadaw in *The Requisites of Enlightenment*, pp. 1-10 (*The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 165-169).

Mahā-Moggallāna. Then there is the individual who can attain the Path and Fruits only when a discourse is expounded to him at some considerable length. Such was the case for Venerable Koṇḍañña, who was awakened after the first sermon.

The third type of person is an individual who must make a study of the teachings and practise the provisions made in them for days, months, and years, in order to attain the Path and Fruits. In answer to a question raised by Bodhi-Rājakumāra, the Buddha explained, "I cannot say what exactly should be the time for the complete realization of the Truth. Even assuming that you renounce the world and join the order of the Saṅgha, it might take you seven years." And he explained that it might take less time, down to a week, a day, or even a fraction of a day. It depends on so many factors.[9]

The fourth type of person working for release in his present life is one who, even though he encounters a Buddha's dispensation (Buddha-sāsana) and puts forth the utmost possible effort—both in the study and the practice of the Dhamma—he cannot attain the Paths and Fruits in this lifetime. All he can do is accumulate habits and potential. He cannot obtain release from continued existence (Saṃsāra) in his lifetime. If he dies practising the development of calm (Samatha)—and that means what we have been practising in Ānāpāna—or Vipassanā for insight, he will secure rebirth either as a human being or as a Deva in his next existence. He will be able to attain the Paths and Fruits in that existence, within the present Buddha-sāsana, which is to last five thousand years from the passing away of the Buddha into Mahā-parinibbāna.

We can assume that only those quite mature in the accumulation of virtues (Pāramīs), such as these four types of individuals, will be inclined to make a bid for release and take seriously to courses of Buddhist meditation. "As a corollary," Sayagyi said, "we have no doubt that whoever is determined to follow strictly and diligently the Noble Eightfold Path through a course of Buddhist meditation under the guidance of a qualified teacher is an individual either of the type to attain Arahatship after much study and practice, or of the type to work during this lifetime and attain the goal in his next existence."

Now there are also those we mentioned who are accumulating the perfections in order to become one of the following: a Buddha

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9. *The Middle Length Sayings,* II 279-284.

who will lead others to Awakening, a Buddha who will not teach (Pacceka Buddha), one of the two chief disciples, and one of the eighty leading disciples, or simply an Arahat.

For a teaching Buddha, there are three types, depending on the predominating factor in their efforts, and each factor requires different lengths of time.[10] A Buddha such as Buddha Gotama, who has wisdom as the predominating factor, must work for four Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand world cycles. One Asaṅkheyya is a unit followed by 140 ciphers. A Buddha with faith as the predominating factor, must work for eight Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand world cycles. The coming Buddha, Metteya, is of the last type, one who has effort as the predominating factor. This type works for sixteen Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand world cycles.

A non-teaching Buddha (Pacceka Buddha) must work for two Asaṅkheyyas and one hundred thousand world cycles. Eventually, Devadatta and the Māra of the time of Buddha Gotama will reach the stage of a Pacceka Buddha.

The chief disciples (Agga-sāvaka) must work for one Asaṅkheyya and one hundred thousand world cycles. Each of the eighty leading disciples (Mahā-sāvaka) have to work for one hundred thousand world cycles. Those who become Arahats work for between one hundred and one thousand world cycles, approximately.

So we can see why the Buddha said, "It is difficult to shoot from a distance arrow after arrow through a narrow hole and not miss once. It is more difficult to shoot and penetrate with a tip of hair split a hundred times another piece of hair similarly split. It is more difficult to penetrate to the fact that 'All this is suffering.' "[11]

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10. On the length of time for Buddhas, see *The All-Embracing Net of Views*, p. 325. The time required for others is based on their recollection of past lives given in *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XIII, ¶16.
11. *The Kindred Sayings*, V 381f.

DAY EIGHT: EVENING DISCOURSE

Insight Leads to the Supramundane, Understanding Impermanence Leads to Nibbāna

Suññāgāraṃ paviṭṭhassa
santacittassa bhikkhuno
Amānusī rati hoti
sammā dhammaṃ vipassato.
Yato yato sammasati
khandhānaṃ udayabbayaṃ
Labhatī pīti-pāmojjaṃ
amataṃ taṃ vijānataṃ.

The bhikkhu who goes to a place of solitude, who has a tranquil mind, and who correctly attains insight into the Teaching, enjoys superhuman bliss.
As soon as he grasps the rise and fall of the aggregates, he attains joy and rapture: that knowledge is the Deathless State (of Nibbāna).

Dhammapada vv 373, 374

The Wrong View of Bhikkhu Ariṭṭha[1]

During the time of the Buddha there was a bhikkhu named Ariṭṭha who in lay life had been a vulture killer. He held the wrong view that although there were things called "obstructions" by the Buddha, even so, the Buddha did not teach that they were necessarily obstructions for everyone. Fellow bhikkhus tried to persuade him to change his attitude. "Do not say this, Ariṭṭha,"

1. This is based on the translation by Venerable Nyanaponika of the Alagaddûpama-sutta in *The Wheel*, Nos. 48/49 (also in *The Middle Length Sayings*, I 167-182).

they said. "Do not misrepresent the Buddha. It is not right. The Buddha would never say this. In many ways he has said that the obstructions do indeed hinder one, they inevitably obstruct anyone who pursues them. Sense desires, he has said, bring little enjoyment; they bring much suffering and disappointment. The perils in sense desires are great. They are like bare bones, a lump of flesh, a torch of burning straw, a pit of burning coals. They are like a dream, borrowed goods, the fruits of a tree, a slaughter-house, an impaling stake, a snake's head. These are the parallels given by the Buddha for the obstructions."

The first seven similies were explained by the Buddha in a discourse to Potaliya[2] and the other three are explained in the Pāḷi commentary.[3] (1) The sense pleasures are like bare bones because no matter how many bones are thrown to a dog overcome with hunger and exhaustion, they will not satisfy it. (2) They are like a lump of flesh because birds of prey, when they find a lump of flesh, will fight each other for it, and a bird that hangs on to a piece of flesh can be killed by the other birds who are trying to get it away. (3) They are like a torch of straw because a person who carries one against the wind may be severely burned or even burned to death. (4) They are like a pit of burning coals towards which a man is dragged by others. If he cannot free himself, he will be thrown into the pit and burned to death. (5) They are like a dream of beautiful landscapes that vanish when we wake up. (6) They are like borrowed goods that the borrower foolishly uses to pretend he is wealthy, but the owners take the goods away when they see the boasting man. (7) They are like a fruit tree because a man who climbs a tree when he is greedy for the fruits will be killed or severely hurt if another greedy man comes along and cuts down the tree in order to get the fruit. (8) They are like a slaughter-house because sense desires are like the butcher's block. (9) They are like a stake of swords because they pierce and penetrate very deep, causing wounds where there were none before. (10) They are like a snake's head because they are a grave risk and peril to our present and future welfare.

But Bhikkhu Ariṭṭha would not change his mind. So the Buddha sent for him and asked him if it was true that he considered the obstructions not necessarily to be obstacles.

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2. *The Middle Length Sayings*, II, 25-32.
3. *The Wheel*, Nos. 48-49, p. 33.

Ariṭṭha affirmed that such was his belief. So the Buddha said to him, "Foolish man! Whom do you know that I taught such a view to? Have I not in many ways said that obstructions hinder one?" And he asked the bhikkhus, "Has that bhikkhu, Ariṭṭha, produced any spark of understanding in this teaching and discipline?" And the bhikkhus answered, "Certainly not."

At these words, Ariṭṭha sat silent and confused, his shoulders drooping and his head bent, brooding and incapable of making a reply. The Buddha told Ariṭṭha that he would be known for his pernicious view. Then the Buddha gave a discourse to all the bhikkhus.

He reaffirmed what the bhikkhus had told Ariṭṭha in trying to get him to change his mind and concluded, "Ariṭṭha misrepresents us by his personal opinion. He undermines his own future and creates much demerit. This will bring to this foolish man much harm and suffering for a long time." It is not specified in the Pāḷi text, but we can surmise that even the Buddha's reasoning with Ariṭṭha did not help him to see more clearly. This shows us how strong wrong beliefs can be.

"Bhikkhus," the Buddha continued, "it is impossible that one could pursue gratifications of the senses without sensual desire being present, without there being perceptions of sensual desire, without thoughts of sensual desire.

"There are some foolish men who study the Doctrine, but do not examine the purpose of the Teachings wisely. In such cases, these Teachings will not give insight. Such people study the Doctrine only to use it for criticizing or for refuting others in disputation. They do not experience the true purpose for which they ought to study the Doctrine. For them, who wrongly grasp the Teachings, there will be harm and suffering for a long time.

The Snake Simile

"Suppose a man who wants a snake goes in search of a snake, and that when he sees a big snake, he grasps it by its body or by the tail. The snake will turn back on him and bite him. Because of that, he will suffer death or deadly pain. All because he grasped the snake incorrectly. In the same manner, those who wrongly grasp the Teaching will suffer for a long time due to their wrong understanding of the Teaching.

"But there are those of good families who study the Dhamma, and having studied it, they examine wisely the purpose of the Teachings. To them, the Teachings will bring insight. To them,

the Teachings will bring welfare and happiness for a long time because they grasp them correctly.

"Suppose a man who wants a snake goes in search of a snake. And then, when he sees a big snake, he holds it firmly down with a forked stick. Then he catches it firmly by the neck. The snake may wrap its coils around his arm or hand, but he will not suffer death or deadly pain, all because of his right grasp of the snake. Those who grasp the Teachings correctly are like that man.

"Therefore, bhikkhus, if you understand what I have said, you should keep it in mind. But if you do not understand, you should ask me about it or ask those bhikkhus who are wise."

The Simile of the Raft

Next, the Buddha gave the simile of the raft.

"Suppose there is a man travelling on a road," he said, "and he sees a wide stretch of water. The side he is standing on is full of perils, frightening, while the opposite shore is safe and free from danger. But there is no boat to cross over in, there is no bridge. Then the man decides to gather reeds, sticks, branches, and leaves to bind them into a raft. After he builds the raft, it carries him across the water to the opposite shore. Then he thinks, 'This raft has indeed been very helpful to me. Why not put it on my head or shoulders and go on?'

"Is this doing what should be done with the raft? No. The man should think, 'This raft has been helpful. Now I will pull it up on dry land or let it float in the water and then go on.' This would be doing what should be done with the raft.

"This is how the Dhamma is like a raft: It has the purpose of crossing over, not the purpose of being clung to. So, you who have understood this simile of the raft should let go even of good mental objects. How much more so should you let go of false ones!"

The commentary to the Pāḷi text explains that the Buddha said one must let go the absorption states (Jhānas), even though they are good mental states for the time that they are in existence, because they too are subject to change and will not give us true freedom from suffering.

The Six Grounds for False Views

Next, the Buddha explained the six grounds for false views: "There are uninstructed ordinary persons who have no regard for Noble Ones or worthy men and are ignorant of their teaching

and untrained in it. A person such as this thinks, 'Material shape is mine, I am this, this is my self.' He considers feeling, perception, mental formations as his, as being him, as his self. And he considers whatever is seen, heard, sensed (by smell, taste, and touch), or encountered, looked for, pondered by the mind in the same way— 'This is mine, I am this, this is my self.' Or, he holds the view that the universe and the self are one and the same, that he will continue after death in a condition that is permanent, stable, eternal, unchanging, eternally the same. This too he considers to be his, to be him, to be his self.

"But there are also instructed disciples of the Noble Ones and worthy men who know their teaching, are well instructed in it, who do not consider material form, feeling, perception, and mental formations as theirs. A person like this thinks, 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.' And it is the same with regard to what is encountered by the six senses and with regard to erroneous views concerning the universe and life after death. Seeing in this way, such a person is not anxious about what does not exist."

At this point, a bhikkhu asked if it was possible to be anxious about external things that do not exist.

The Buddha answered yes, and explained that someone who thinks, "Oh, I had it, but I have it no more. Oh, may I have it again, but alas I can't get it!" He will grieve, be depressed and lament. He will beat his breast, weep, and be dejected. Absence of anxiety concerning what is eternal will exist for the one who does not think in this manner.

The bhikkhu asked the same question concerning internal things that do not exist. And the Buddha answered that there will be anxiety in someone who identifies the universe with the self, thinking he will gain eternal life after death, "for when he hears a Buddha expound the Teaching for the removal of all grounds for false views, all prejudices, obsessions, dogmas, and biases, when he hears the Teaching for stilling all volitional activies, for the relinquishing of all attachment, for the elimination of craving, for dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna—then he will think, 'I'll be annihilated! I'll be destroyed! I'll no longer exist!' And anxiety will arise in him."

There will be no anxiety for someone who does not hold such false beliefs. When such a person hears the Buddha's Teachings, there is no fear of being annihilated and destroyed.

Then the Buddha told the bhikkhus that it would be possible to hold on to something that is permanent, stable, eternal, unchanging, that remains eternally the same. But, he said, he had not seen any such thing. It would be possible to accept a theory of self if in doing so no sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, or despair would arise. But he had not seen any such theory. Nor had he seen any beliefs that one could depend on and avoid these. Since there is no self and no property owned by a self, then any belief that the universe is the self or that one can be eternal after death is complete folly.

And through questions and answers, the Buddha showed the bhikkhus that material shape, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness are impermanent and, as a result, painful. Whatever is impermanent, painful, and subject to change cannot be considered as, "This is mine, I am this, this is my self." All five aggregates, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all of these should be seen with wisdom, "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self."

When this understanding comes, the noble disciple is repelled by the five aggregates, he becomes dispassionate, he is freed, and there is the knowledge of freedom: "Rebirth is ended, the higher life is fulfilled, the task is done, there is no more of this to come." He becomes an Arahat, one who has abandoned ignorance, cut it off at the root, uprooted it like a palm tree, brought it to utter extinction.

When the mind is freed, neither the Devas with Sakka (Inda) nor the deities with Brahmā, nor the Devas with Māra (Pajāpati), when searching, will find the base of consciousness for one thus gone. It is no longer possible to trace one who is freed.

The Buddha then pointed out that some ascetics and Brahmans falsely accused him of being a nihilist who preached the annihilation, the destruction of an existing individual. "What I teach now," the Buddha said, "as before, is suffering and the end of suffering. If because of that, others revile, abuse, scold, and insult the Perfect One, he will not feel annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in his heart. And if because of that, others respect, revere, honour, and venerate the Perfect One, he will not feel delight, joy, or elation in his heart. He will think, 'It is towards this mind-body aggregate which has understood in the past that they perform such acts.' " And he counselled the bhikkhus to strive to react in the same way.

"Therefore, bhikkhus," the Buddha said, "give up whatever is not yours. Your giving it up will bring happiness and work for your welfare for a long time." And he enumerated the five groups of clinging, the five aggregates, as the things to be given up. He pointed out that if people were to carry away grass, sticks, branches, and leaves and burn them, one would not think, "They are burning me." Similarly, we should not consider the five groups of clinging as ourselves.

Those Who Are Assured of Liberation

"This Teaching, so well proclaimed by me," the Buddha continued, "is plain, open, explicit, not a patching together. . . . For those who are Arahats . . . there is no future round of existence. Those who have reached the third stage of Awakening (Anāgāmī) will all be reborn spontaneously in the Pure Abodes, and there they will pass away, never returning from that world. . . . Those who attain the second stage of Awakening (Sakadāgāmī) will return only once to this world, and then make an end of suffering. . . . Those who reach the first stage (Sotāpanna) are not liable to downfall, they are assured of and headed for full Awakening. . . . Those who are mature in the Dhamma, mature in faith, are all headed for full Awakening. . . . And those who simply have faith in me, simply have love for me, are destined for the higher realms."

The commentary explains that those who simply have faith or confidence in the Buddha are those who are devoted to the practice of insight meditation (Vipassaka-puggala). A meditator who is seated after having obtained a firm footing in Vipassanā will develop confidence in and love for the Buddha because through his insight he has proof that the Dhamma is well-proclaimed. It is said that through his confidence and love, it is as if he is taken by the hand and transported to heaven. Such individuals are said to be of assured destiny; in other words, they are said to be assured of Nibbāna.

The Lessons to be Drawn From This Discourse[4]

As we have seen, the Buddha stressed that his Teachings should not be accepted before due investigation and that we should not be influenced by praise or blame coming from others. But we also see that he was quite firm, and even stern, when the Teachings were misrepresented by the bhikkhus who were there in order to

4. This discussion is based on Ven. Nyanaponika's introduction to the above discourse.

practise the Teachings. In several discourses, the Buddha gives a strong rebuke to bhikkhus who misinterpret essential parts of the Teaching. The Buddha was moved to do this through concern that the unique Path of Deliverance should not lose any of its effectiveness. His Teachings should not be undermined from within. The purity of conduct and wisdom must not be tarnished. If this should happen, the raft of the Teaching would not be able to carry across those who placed their confidence in it. It would be forever chained to the near shore, the one full of dangers.

Two examples of obstacles are given: the belief in sense-gratification and the belief in an ego. If they are misrepresented as being part of the Teaching, all efforts for attaining final liberation will be in vain. No matter how well disguised or how weakly diluted, these obstacles will halt the raft's progress. They may begin very weakly, and grow slowly in the beginning, but soon they will gather strength and dominate all other aspects of the truth.

It is not specifically stated which of the obstacles taught by the Buddha were maintained by the bhikkhu Ariṭṭha not to be necessarily obstructions. But the reference to sense-desires makes it clear that he was speaking of condoning the indulgence in sex by the bhikkhus.

The bhikkhus' rules make it clear that any expression of sexual desire, any sexual act, is wrong for a bhikkhu. In joining the Order of Bhikkhus, they have made a conscious decision to make a maximum effort to attain liberation, and many of the rules, as well as the organization of the Order, help the bhikkhus to avoid unnecessary stimulation of sensual desires and in particular sexual desires. A man who was incapable of restraint was encouraged to leave the Order and become a layman again, with no stigma attached, and he was also free to return. The Buddha did not expect laymen to practise sexual abstinence. To them, he advised restraint and mindfulness and avoidance of giving excessive nourishment to sexual desire.

The Buddha used the occasion of Ariṭṭha's mistake as an opportunity to warn against any other wrong approach to the Teaching and any other misuse of it. Such misuse harms the individual and gets in the way of his progress on the Path. It leads to lives in the lower planes or in a state in which one is incapable of practising the Dhamma.

Ariṭṭha made a direct attack on the Teaching. But the Buddha warns against more subtle ones, too, such as debating about the

Teachings. Debating allows the mind to shirk the duty of practising, while at the same time seeming to serve the Dhamma. And also, while one is seemingly defending the Dhamma, one is actually reinforcing the attachment to "I" and "mine." We may be like a dog jealously and angrily defending a morsel of food without wanting to eat it himself. Excessive concern with defending the Dhamma strengthens the deeply engrained impulses and may become one of the starting points for false views. In the heat of argument, we may misrepresent the Teachings and through pride refuse to acknowledge our mistake. And a war of words can lead to feelings of partisanship, intolerance, fanaticism, and hostility, as well as pride in our ability to explain things well.

A person who is too preoccupied with controversy over the Dhamma is a fitting illustration of someone carrying the raft on his head or shoulders—instead of using it to cross the stream.

There are others who wrongly believe that this parable justifies them in throwing away the raft before they have used it. They think they are justified in letting go of good teachings along with false ones.

This discourse is one of the most important concerning the teaching on no-self (Anattā). This teaching is the core of the Buddhist doctrine and so revolutionary that it is not easily absorbed by the human mind. The discourse gives the sources from which the notion of a self is derived and formed. In the first place it is identifying with any or all of the five aggregates (Khandas) which constitute what is conventionally known as the personality. Identification with the body is the basis for materialism. Feeling is seen as the "I" and the "mine" as long as the soul is regarded as pure divine bliss or divine love. Perception is considered as a self when the personality is regarded as "nothing but" a bundle of sensations. Mental formations reinforce the ego-belief; for example, the will is regarded as the ultimate essence of self. Consciousness is included in this discourse as a possible support of a mistaken belief in a self in such conceptions as super-consciousness or cosmic consciousness, an oversoul, imagined to exist "beyond the five aggregates."

The stern warning of the Buddha in this discourse is followed by an encouraging note at the conclusion. He speaks of the fruits and results that await him who follows the Teaching: from the highest peak, Arahatship, through the three stages of Awakening leading to that last stage, the access stage of the mind's growing maturity for Awakening, down to those aspirants who have won

deep faith in the Buddha and sublime love for him through direct experience of the truth by means of insight meditation.

So you see, we who are practising Vipassanā have no reason to be downcast and sorrowful. Every effort we make will make the next step easier, and so we put forth our maximum effort and, at the same time, we can reassure ourselves whenever we have difficulty in our practice. So much of what has been taught is true, why not this prediction of Nibbāna? There will be some doubts, of course, before we reach the first stage of Awakening—but all in all we have proven to ourselves the truth and the effectiveness of Vipassanā. We can look forward to true happiness and true freedom.

We are still on the shore full of dangers, but we have the raft to take us across the water to the safe shore. All along the way we will need to learn to leave behind things that serve their purpose for a time, but which would get in the way if we continued to carry them with us. It is a little like having a series of streams to cross and a series of rafts.

We establish ourselves in morality. We must make a conscious effort to refrain from immoral acts, up until the time moral actions are second nature to us. But when we are sitting, practising Ānāpāna, we do not need to think about making an effort to avoid immoral acts. The very act of sitting and observing the breath and the spot is a moral action. And when we have enough concentration and tranquillity of mind to move on to observing sensations in the body, knowing them to be Anicca, we leave behind observing the breath.

"When you have cleansed your system of impurities, you are to that extent relieved of the suffering which is dependent upon those impurities," Sayagyi U Ba Khin said in a talk to an American student. "If in the stock of Kamma there are hundreds of kinds of impurities, and if you have got rid of twenty-five per cent of the impurities, you are saved from trouble to the extent of that twenty-five per cent, not one hundred per cent. In that way, you go on with the process of elimination. When you have removed all the causes of suffering, there is no suffering left. Nibbāna is the case where there is no suffering whatsoever because it ceases to exist. Because the Saṅkhāra also ceases to exist. So you do away with the Saṅkhāra."

So we can see from what Sayagyi says that we do not want to lose sight of the fact that morality is a means to an end, concentration is a means to an end, and knowing Anicca is a means to an end.

It is important that we know the right time for making an effort on each step of the path. That is why a competent teacher is so important, and why such a teacher is called the best of friends. At times the work will seem easy, but there are dangers all along the way.

The Importance of Restraining the Senses, Mahākāḷa and Cullakāḷa[5]

Subhānupassiṃ viharantaṃ
indriyesu asaṃvutaṃ
Bhojanamhi cāmattaññuṃ
kusītaṃ hīnavīriyaṃ
Taṃ ve pasahati Māro
vāto rukkhaṃ va dubbalaṃ.
Asubhānuppassiṃ viharantaṃ
indriyesu susaṃvutaṃ
Bhojanamhi ca mattaññuṃ
saddhaṃ āraddhavīriyaṃ
Taṃ ve nappasahati Māro
vāto selaṃ va pabbataṃ.

Just as the wind throws down a weak tree, similarly, Māra indeed overcomes one who lives looking for what is pleasant, who is unrestrained in his senses, immoderate in eating, indolent and devoid of energy.
Just as the wind cannot throw down a rocky mountain, similarly, Māra indeed cannot overcome one who lives looking for that which is not pleasing, who is restrained in his senses, moderate in eating, possessed of devotion and full of energy.

Dhammapada vv 7, 8

These verses were given by the Buddha in connection with Cullakāḷa and Mahākāḷa. These two brothers, when travelling on business, saw disciples going to hear a discourse given by the Buddha. Mahākāḷa said to his younger brother, "Take care of the carts. I'll go and listen to the discourse." He went and sat at the extreme edge of the gathering.

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5. See *Buddhist Legends*, I 184-189.

The Buddha gave a discourse in gradual order suited to his mental disposition. He spoke in various ways of the dangers of sensual desires. It is said that when the Buddha gave a discourse, his voice was clear to all, no matter how far back they were seated, and that each person felt the talk was addressed to him personally.

Mahākāḷa was inspired by the talk and decided to become a bhikkhu. So he asked permission of his brother, who begged him not to ordain. But he could not dissuade him, so Mahākāḷa became a bhikkhu. Then Cullakāḷa decided to ordain as well, thinking he would be able to get his brother to leave the Order.

Later, Mahākāḷa received the higher ordination and asked the Buddha how many ways there were of practising the Dhamma. The Buddha explained that one could study the texts of the Teachings and one could practise insight meditation. So Mahākāḷa said, "Lord, I took orders in my old age and I will not be able to become accomplished in the study of the texts. I will practise insight meditation."

He was given one of the forty techniques especially appropriate for bhikkhus. He was to practise the ascetic practices in a cemetery. He would go to the cemetery after everyone had gone to sleep and come back each morning before anyone got up.

There was a woman named Kāḷī whose job was to cremate the dead bodies. She noticed that someone had been sitting and walking up and down at one spot in the cemetery. So she kept watch one night to find out who came. Seeing Mahākāḷa come in the middle of the night, she went to him and paid respects. "Sir," she told him, "Those who reside in the cemetery should acquaint themselves with the rules." Venerable Mahākāḷa did not answer, "Who am I to follow your rules?" for he was a very humble person. "Devotee," he asked instead, "what must I do?" She explained that he should inform the senior elder of the monastery, the head man of the village, and the keepers of the cemetery. Otherwise, if thieves should dump stolen goods in the cemetery and the people chasing the thieves should find the goods, there would be trouble for the bhikkhu. If it were known he was residing there, no one would suspect him of being a thief.

"What else am I expected to do?" Mahākāḷa asked. She told him to avoid fish, meat, flour, oil, molasses, and so on—for the smell of these foods might attract the hungry ghosts (Petas). He should not sleep in the daytime or be lazy. He should be strenuous in his effort, should not have any fraudulent and deceitful motives; he should stay with good intentions, leave the monastery

when all were asleep and go back before anyone was awake. And she said she would let him know when there was a dead body for him to observe to help him in his meditation, for that is part of the cemetery practice.

One day, a young woman died and was taken to be cremated. Kāḷī informed Mahākāḷa who looked at the young woman who had just died and whose body still retained its golden complexion. He told Kāḷī to tell him when the body was on fire. And so he watched the disagreeable changes that occur as a body is cremated, and using this as his object, he developed insight and attained Arahatship. And he spoke this verse:

> Component things are indeed impermanent.
> They come into being and they are destroyed.
> Having come into being, they are dissolved.
> The cessation of mental volitions (Saṅkhāra) is happiness.

After he attained Arahatship, he and his brother accompanied the Buddha when he went to their home town, Siṃsapā. The two wives of the younger brother, Cullakāḷa, invited the Buddha and bhikkhus for a meal. Now the Buddha sends ahead a bhikkhu to prepare seats when he goes to a place he has not frequented before. A seat was prepared in the middle for the Buddha, to the right for Sāriputta and on the left for Moggallāna, and the seats for the other bhikkhus are prepared on either side. Mahākāḷa sent his younger brother. The people in the house made fun of him and went out of their way to prepare the seats incorrectly. They prepared low seats on the side for the senior elders and high seats on the side for the junior elders. The women pretended not to hear when Cullakāḷa protested.

They pulled off his robes, dressed him in white, put a wreath of flowers on his head and sent him off, saying, "Go fetch the Teacher. We'll prepare the seats." Those who have not been a bhikkhu for a very long time or who leave the Order of Bhikkhus before a year is over have no sense of shame. So Cullakāḷa went dressed like that, without any fear of being ridiculed.

Mahākāḷa's wives decided that there was no reason why they should not persuade their husband to become a layman as his brother had done. They asked for the Buddha to leave Mahakāla behind to express appreciation for the meal. The Buddha said, "Very well," and went ahead.

When they arrived at the village gate, some of the bhikkhus began grumbling. "What has the teacher done? Did he do it

consciously or unconsciously?" So we can see that even bhikkhus working directly with the Buddha had their doubts, and that they would sometimes concern themselves with things that were not their affair. This is a good example to remember when we think we know better than the teacher.

The Buddha asked the bhikkhus if they thought Mahākāḷa was like his brother Cullakāḷa. They answered, "Yes, Lord. Cullakāḷa has two wives. Mahākāḷa had eight wives. If they get hold of him, what will he be able to do?"

The Buddha explained to the bhikkhus that Cullakāḷa, after he meditated, indulged in thoughts of sensual pleasures whereas Mahākāḷa dwelt on thoughts of unpleasant objects. "He is immovable, like a solid mountain of rock," the Buddha told them. And he pronounced the verses given at the beginning of the story.

The former wives of Mahākāḷa surrounded him and said to him, "Who gave you permission to become a bhikkhu? Now you will become a layman again." And they tried to pull off his robes. But Mahākāḷa rose in the air using his powers, broke through a corner of the house and went through the sky just as the Buddha was concluding the verses. And he came down and paid respects to the Teacher.

Knowing How to Practise in Everyday Life

When we are working to overcome obstacles, we want to be clear about what is really an obstacle. Sometimes in our daily lives we may be so intent on doing an hour of meditation that we neglect our duties to others.

Webu Sayadaw gave some advice to a layman at the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon once when he was visiting there. The man said that his wife scowled at him when he went home and complained that he meditated for his own good and was selfish. "Now when you go home," Webu Sayadaw told him, "if you have experienced joy arising from the full observance of the practice, you would have Mettā (loving kindness) for your wife at home and you would, accordingly, greet her with such feelings. But since you do not greet her in this way, she scowls at you. That is why, when you return from here this time, you must greet her, talk to her, and treat her in a manner which will be agreeable to her in accordance with Sīla. Even before reaching your house there should be loving kindness in you for her and the wish that she might also enjoy the peace that you yourself have achieved.

When you reach home it should be you who greets her pleasantly and with loving kindness.

"Now, when you first greet her, if your intention is that she should also enjoy the fruits of the Dhamma that you have experienced, if you have loving kindness for her, merit has already accrued to you for that action. So you are, in a way, the gainer. If your greeting meets with success, so much the better. But suppose it is not successful and you have to try again. In that case, have you lost or gained anything by your first action? You know you have lost nothing. In fact, by having to try again you will be gaining more merit and so you should be happy for it.

"So you must try again and again, making changes in yourself until you succeed. But the change must come from you. Do not be angry, do not be short-tempered if there is no success. You must regard yourself as still wanting in this respect.

"Now, suppose I tell you that there is a big water pot which is used by many and that you should fill this pot with water. You know that the more water there is in the pot the greater will be the number of people who can use it. So you will no doubt fill it to the brim. So it will not be necessary for me to tell you whether it is full or not. You will know it yourself. So you see, if your wife smiles when you greet her, then you will know that the water pot is full."

DAY NINE: MORNING DISCOURSE

Right Veneration, Right Protection, Right Concentration

Attadattham paratthena
bahunā pi na hāpaye
Attadattham abiññāya
sadatthapasuto siyā.

Let a man not neglect his own good for the good of another, however important. A man should learn what is good for himself and apply himself thereto with diligence.

Dhammapada v 166

The Story of Attadattha[1]

This verse was given by the Buddha in connection with the bhikkhu Attadattha whose name means "Own Good" or "Own Welfare." At the end of his life, the Buddha informed the bhikkhus that in three months he would pass into Nibbāna. Seven hundred bhikkhus that were not yet fully Awakened were deeply moved. They stayed near the Buddha and whispered to one another, "What are we to do?"

Attadattha, however, thought to himself, "I am not yet free from the passions. I will strive with all my might to attain Arahatship while the Buddha is still alive." The other bhikkhus noticed that Attadattha was no longer with them and asked him, "Why do you avoid our company and no longer talk with us?" And they took him to the Buddha and laid the matter before him. The Buddha asked Attadattha why he was acting the way he was. Attadattha explained, and the Buddha praised him saying, "Bhikkhus, whoever sincerely loves me should be like the Elder Attadattha. Only those who fulfil the higher and lower Dhamma

1. See *Buddhist Legends,* II 366.

honour me, not those who honour me with perfumes and garlands. You should follow the example of the Elder Attadattha."

The Buddha's Advice to Ānanda

There is another incident in the life of the Buddha concerning right veneration.[2] At the end of his life, when the Buddha was on his death bed, there were many marvels. He lay on a couch between two Sāl trees which broke out in full bloom even though it was not the season. And the blossoms rained down on the Buddha in worship of him. Celestial coral flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder rained down from the sky; there was the sound of heavenly voices, and heavenly instruments made music, all in worship of the Buddha. But the Buddha said to Ānanda, "It is not in this manner, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped and honoured in the highest degree. It is rather when a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī, a layman or lay woman abides by the Teaching, lives uprightly in the Teaching, walks in the way of the Teaching, then is the Tathāgata respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, abide by the Teaching, live uprightly in the Teaching, walk in the way of the Teaching—thus you should train yourselves."

When Sayagyi was alive, we used to go to pay respects to him before and after the period of the rains' retreat and on important days such as his birthday. And we would take various offerings. Sayagyi liked to tell the story of Attadattha and point out that practising the Teaching was the best way to pay respects. "I praise only this resolution to sit for one hour, the Adhiṭṭhāna," he would say to us. So we would meditate with him for one hour, and only after the sitting would he give his blessings.

The Tittira Jātaka[3]

This is not to say that proper respect towards our teachers and elders is unimportant, however. If we are practising the Dhamma correctly, then we will naturally have respect for our teachers and elders and will follow their advice. There is a story in the Jātakas, the stories of the past lives of the Buddha, which illustrates this

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2. *Dialogues of the Buddha,* II 150f.
3. This story is also given in *The Book of the Discipline,* V 224-227.

point. Here is the verse given by the Buddha in connection with the Tittira Jātaka (No. 37):

> Those who honour age are versed in Truth.
> They are praised in this life, and earn bliss hereafter.

This religious discourse was given by the Buddha to a Community of Bhikkhus headed by Sāriputta, the First Chief Disciple. It was after a period that the Buddha had spent at Vesālī when he was going by stages to Sāvatthi. Now at that time, the followers of the bhikkhus belonging to a certain clique of six (Sabaggi) went ahead of the Community of Bhikkhus headed by the Buddha. And they took over lodgings and beds, saying, "This will be for our preceptor, this will be for our teacher, this will be for us."

When the Venerable Sāriputta arrived later on, the lodgings and beds had all been taken over. As his followers could not find a bed for him, he spent the night at the foot of a tree near the Buddha's lodging. The Buddha got up just before dawn, and as he came out he coughed. Venerable Sāriputta coughed also. "Who is there?" asked the Buddha. "It is I, Sāriputta, Lord," was the answer.

"Why are you sitting here, Sāriputta?" asked the Buddha. Then Sāriputta explained what had happened. So the Buddha called the bhikkhus together and asked them if what he heard was true, and they confirmed it. So he rebuked them, saying, "Bhikkhus, this does not rouse faith in the faithless or increase faith in the faithful; rather it confirms those who do not have faith in their lack of faith and harms some of the faithful."

After he had administered the rebuke and given a talk on the Dhamma, he addressed the bhikkhus again, "Bhikkhus, who is worthy of the best seat, the best water, the best alms food?" Some bhikkhus said that it was one who came from a warrior-noble family. Others said that it was one from a Brahman family or from a householder family. Others said it was one who was versed in the Abhidhamma. Still others said it should be one who had attained the absorption states (Jhānas), or a Sotāpanna, or a Once-returner, or a Non-returner, or an Arahat.

After all the bhikkhus had given their opinion, the Buddha said that none of these should be taken into consideration. He said that it was only seniority which determined who should be shown respect, who should enjoy the best lodging, water, and food. This

rule was laid down by the Buddha and is still respected by the Saṅgha today.

To make his point clear, the Buddha pointed out that Sāriputta, one of his Chief Disciples, who had set rolling the Wheel of Minor Truth, who deserved a lodging next to the Buddha's, had had to spend the night without lodging. And the Buddha said that in former days, even animals had known better than to show such disrespect. And he told the story of the three friends.

There was once a large banyan tree in the Himalayas with three friends who lived under it. One was a partridge, one a monkey, and one an elephant. They were often rude and disrespectful, and they lived without consideration for one another.

Then they thought, "If only we could find out which of us is the oldest, then we could honour, respect, revere, and venerate him and follow his advice."

So the partridge and the monkey asked the elephant, "How far back can you remember?" "When I was a calf," the elephant replied, "I used to walk over this banyan tree and its topmost branch scratched my stomach."

Then the partridge and elephant asked the monkey, "What about you?" "When I was a baby," answered the monkey, "I used to sit on the ground and nibble the topmost shoots of this banyan tree."

Finally, the monkey and elephant asked the partridge, "How far back can you remember?" And the partridge said, "In a certain place, there was a big banyan tree. I ate one of its seeds and voided it in this place, and this banyan tree grew from that seed. So I am older than you."

Then the monkey and elephant said to the partridge, "You are older than us. We will honour, respect, revere, and venerate you and follow your advice." The partridge had the monkey and elephant take the five precepts for moral conduct and took them himself. Then, they were courteous and respectful to one another and lived in mutual consideration. When they died, they were reborn in a happy destination, a heavenly world.

At the end of the story, the Buddha said that this came to be known as "The Partridge's Life Divine," and he quoted the verse we started with. "Now, bhikkhus," the Buddha concluded, "these animals could be courteous and respectful to one another and live with mutual consideration. Try and copy them."

Stories such as these are often told in Buddhist countries. Young people in Burma, for example, learn them at school, and through them, they learn right conduct.

After concluding this story, the Buddha identified the three friends. The monkey was now Sāriputta, the elephant was now the other Chief Disciple, Moggallāna, and the partridge was now the Buddha himself.

In the verse pronounced by the Buddha, he speaks of the results of right conduct for the individual. But we are told that when Sāriputta told him why he had spent the night outside, the Buddha thought to himself, "Even now, when I am still alive, the bhikkhus lack courtesy and discipline. What will they not do when I am dead and gone?" So we can see that he was also concerned for the sake of the Dhamma. When moral conduct is missing, not only is it harmful to individuals, it is also harmful to the Teachings.

Protecting Oneself and Protecting Others[4]

Elsewhere, the Buddha spoke of what we can expect if there is no respect for right action. Because "people are infatuated with unlawful lusts, overwhelmed by depraved longings and overcome by wrong doctrines," they encounter three destroyers: war, famine, and pestilence.[5] It does not matter during which period of history we live, or under what system of government, the same thing holds true. War, famine, and pestilence will result from immoral lusts, depraved longings and obsession with wrong doctrines.

If we look at the modern world, the twentieth century has seen many kinds of wars: two world wars, small wars, civil wars, cold wars, hot wars, and every year there are more to add to the list. Famine occurs with regularity, due to lack of rain, crop failures, over-population, etc. And pestilence can be seen in the form of new diseases, and more resistant forms of old diseases. No sooner do we seem to find a cure than something else menaces our health.

The best answer to these problems as taught by the Buddha is for us to develop in morality, in concentration, and insight. This includes developing the four Divine Abidings, the Brahmā-

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4. This discussion is from "What Leads Them On They Know Not" by Myanaung U Tin (*Light of the Dhamma*, VI 3, pp. 14-16).
5. *The Gradual Sayings*, I 141-143.

vihāra: loving kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā). As the Buddha said in the Mettā Sutta, "Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, and loving kindness towards all the world."[6]

If enough people felt this kind of unselfish love, we can well imagine that the wealth and energy of the world would be better directed to serving the needs of mankind. But only after the minds and hearts of many people have been changed can much progress be expected. And how would we be able to help others change if we have not developed in the right direction ourselves?

The attitude that we should develop was illustrated by the Buddha in another story which he told concerning the right attitude to be developed. The Buddha told this story at the time the bhikkhus of Kosambī caused a schism in the Order of Bhikkhus.

A certain bhikkhu was accused by another of having committed a minor offence. The accused bhikkhu did not consider what he had done to be an offence. But the other bhikkhu insisted that it was, and, gaining support from his comrades and intimates, he had the bhikkhu suspended. The supporters of the suspended bhikkkhu sided with him. Twice the Buddha tried to reason with the two factions in order to prevent a schism, but to no avail. Then he told the story of Dīghāvu.

The Story of Dīghāvu[7]

At a time when Brahmadatta was king of Banaras, he annexed the kingdom of Kosala to his empire and put the king and queen of Kosala to death. On the way to the place of execution, the king of Kosala saw his son, Prince Dīghāvu in the crowd, in disguise. Seeing his son, the king said, "Do not you, dear Dīghāvu, look at the long or look at the short, for wrathful moods are allayed by non-wrath." The people thought he had gone mad and was speaking nonsense.

Later, Prince Dīghāvu managed to get a place in the service of King Brahmadatta. One day, while hunting in the forest, the king lost his way. The only person still with him was Prince Dīghāvu.

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6. *The Group of Discourses,* verses 149f.
7. *The Book of the Discipline,* IV 489-498. Cf. Jātaka Nos. 371, 428, and *Buddhist Legends,* I 177.

The king felt tired and went to sleep, resting his head on the prince's lap. The prince wanted to avenge his parents' death and twice drew his sword from its sheath. But each time, his father's words came back to him and he put away his sword.

Then King Brahmadatta dreamed that the son of the king of Kosala attacked him with a sword, and frightened and agitated he woke up. He related his dream to his servant. Then the prince said to him, "I am Prince Dīghāvu, the son of the king of Kosala. You have done us much wrong. You annexed our kingdom. You killed my parents. I could show you my wrath now." King Brahmadatta said, "Grant me my life, dear Dīghāvu." And the prince complied with the king's request. In turn, the king promised not to harm him.

When they returned to the palace, the king asked the prince to explain his father's words. Prince Dīghāvu said, " 'Do not look at the long' means, do not prolong enmity. 'Do not look at the short' means, do not hastily break with a friend. 'Wrathful moods are allayed by non-wrath' means, my parents were killed by a king, but if I were to deprive the king of his life, those who desired his welfare would deprive me of my life. But now that I grant you your life, you, in turn, grant me my life: thus is wrath settled by non-wrath."

King Brahmadatta was so pleased that he gave back the kingdom of Kosala to Prince Dīghāvu and his own daughter into the bargain. Concluding the story, the Buddha said, "Now, bhikkhus, if such is the forbearance and gentleness of kings who wield the sceptre, who wield the sword, let your light shine forth so that you who have gone forth in this Doctrine and discipline which are well taught, may be equally forbearing and gentle." And for the third time the Buddha said to the factions of bhikkhus, "Enough, bhikkhus; no strife, no quarrels, no contention, no disputing." But the bhikkhus would not listen to the Buddha. So the Buddha thought to himself, "These foolish men are as though infatuated; it is not easy to persuade them." And he left.

The next day, the Buddha spoke the following verses to the Order of Bhikkhus:[8]

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8. *The Book of the Discipline,* IV 499f.; *Jātaka Stories,* III 290; *The Middle Length Sayings,* III 198f.

No one considers the many voices of the ordinary people to be foolish. When the Order is divided, no one considers it divided.

Through confusing the speech of wise men, the reciters live off (their) words. While they crave with their mouths wide open, they do not know where they are led.

"He abused me, he struck me, he conquered me, he robbed me." Those who bear grudges like this do not calm their hatred.

"He abused me, he struck me, he conquered me, he robbed me." Those who do not bear grudges like this calm their hatred.

For (thoughts of) hatred are never calmed through hatred in this world. They are calmed rather through freedom from hatred. This is the age-old teaching.

Others, too, do not know that we come to an end here, but those who have knowledge in this respect, thereby their quarrels cease.

Those who break the bones of others, who take life, who steal cows, horses, and wealth, who plunder kingdoms—even they are united. Why can you not be so too?

If you can obtain a zealous companion, an associate of good disposition, (who is) resolute, overcoming all dangers, one should wander with him, with elated mind, mindful.

If you cannot obtain a zealous companion, an associate of good disposition, (who is) resolute, (then) like a king quitting the kingdom (which he has) conquered, one should wander solitary like an elephant in the elephant forest.

It is better to live alone. There is no companionship with the foolish. One should live alone, doing no evil, unconcerned, like an elephant in the elephant forest.

After saying these verses to the Order of Bhikkhus, the Buddha went away to stay alone in the Pārileyya forest, for he realized there was nothing he could do to reconcile those bhikkhus. The dissension between the bhikkhus spread to their lay followers, dividing the whole of Kosambī into two camps and causing great misery to the bhikkhus and the laymen. Eventually, however, the two parties realized their folly and resolved their differences and

lived in peace and harmony. Then the Buddha came back to them.

The world today is full of quarrelling factions. Some see the world as divided between two powerful blocs with small countries caught helplessly in between. The Burmese proverb compares them to tufts of grass caught between two fighting buffaloes.

How can we help to make the world a better place to live in? If we look at the example of the Buddha, we can see that he tried his best to help the bhikkhus to see the error of their ways. But he did not use his position to force them to change. When it became clear that there was nothing more the Buddha could do, he did not stay there, but went his own way, waiting until such time as the bhikkhus would listen to him again.

We too should realize our own limitations. And until such time as we reach full Awakening, we should endeavour to rise above selfish considerations. And we can make an effort to prevent, as far as lies in our power, the coming of the three traditional destroyers: war, famine, and pestilence.

Now what is the best way for us to do this? Of course we will want to apply the Teachings of the Buddha in our everyday life. We will want to practise generosity, keep the moral precepts, and treat all men as our brothers. But in order to do all this, we will need to make progress in our concentration and insight. If we remain ignorant ourselves, we will never be able to help our fellow man.

The Buddha gave us a guideline for this in the Discourse on Establishing Mindfulness.[9] His advice can be summarized in two lines of verse:[10]

Attanaṃ rakkhanto paraṃ rakkhati,
Paraṃ rakkhanto attanaṃ rakkhati.

By protecting oneself, one protects others.
By protecting others, one protects oneself.

The Story of the Two Acrobats[11]

The Buddha told the bhikkhus the following story: once there were two acrobats who did their act using a bamboo pole. One day, the master said to his apprentice Medakathālika, "Now get

9. *The Middle Length Sayings,* I 70-82.
10. Based on the Buddha's concluding words in the discourse about the two acrobats (*The Kindred Sayings,* V 148f.).
11. This section is based on "The Story of Two Acrobats" by Venerable Nyanaponika Thera (*Light of the Dhamma,* II 1, pp. 15-18).

on my shoulders and climb up the bamboo pole." When the apprentice had done as he was told, the master said, "Now protect me well and I'll protect you. By protecting and watching each other in that way, we'll be able to show our skill, make a good profit, and you'll get down from the pole safely."

But Medakathālika said, "Not so, master. You should protect yourself, and I too will protect myself. By keeping myself secure, I'll be protecting you. Self-protected and self-guarded in this way, we'll protect each other by protecting ourselves and will safely perform our feats."

This discourse deals with the relations between ourselves and our fellow beings, between individuals and society. It sums up in an admirable way the Buddhist attitude to the problems of individual and social ethics, of egoism and altruism. The two sentences which summarize the teaching supplement each other and should not be taken separately: "By protecting oneself, one protects others. By protecting others, one protects oneself."

Today, social activity is greatly stressed, so people may be tempted to quote, in support of their ideas, only the second phrase: "By protecting others, one protects oneself." A one-sided quotation such as this would misrepresent the Buddha's teaching, however. The Buddha expressly recommended the apprentice's method. One must first carefully watch one's own steps if one wishes to protect others from harm. He who is sunk in the mire himself cannot help others out of it. In that sense, self-protection forms the indispensable basis for the protection and help given to others. But self-protection is not selfish protection. It is self-control, ethical and spiritual self-development.

Certain great truths have an increasing range of significance and are applicable on various levels of understanding and reality. They are valid on various planes of existence. After reaching the first or second level, one will be surprised that again and again new vistas open themselves to our understanding and are illumined by that truth. This is the case of these two phrases.

"By protecting oneself, one protects others." The truth of this statement begins at a very simple and practical level. It is obvious that on the material level, protecting your health will go far in protecting the health of our environment. Caution and circumspection in all our actions and movements will protect others from any harm that could come to them through our carelessness or negligence.

On another level, moral self-protection will safeguard other individuals and society against our own unrestrained passions. If the three roots of all unwholesome acts—greed (Lobha), hatred (Dosa), and delusion (Moha)—take root in our hearts, what grows from these roots will spread far and wide, like a jungle creeper and suffocate the healthy growth all around.

On the other hand, if we protect ourselves from these three roots of unwholesome acts, our fellow men will be safe from our greed for possessions or power, our unrestrained lust and sensuality, from envy and jealousy; they will be safe from the destructive or even murderous consequences of our hate and enmity—from our outbursts of anger, from an atmosphere of bad humour and quarrelsomeness which can make life unbearable for those around us.

Greed and hate also have infectious power. If we think only of getting more, we will rouse or strengthen these possessive instincts in others too. Our bad example may become the standard for our environment—our children, the younger generation, for example. We may also persuade others to join us in satisfying the desire to own more and more. If we are full of sensual desires, we may kindle that fire of lust in others too. If we act with hatred, we will make others hate in return. Greed and hate are like contagious diseases. We will protect ourselves and others as well if we make ourselves as immune as possible.

As for the third root of unwholesome acts, we all know how through delusion or ignorance much harm can be done to others through the stupidity, thoughtlessness, illusions, and delusions of a single person.

Without wisdom and knowledge, attempts at protecting oneself and others will mostly fail. One will see the danger after it is too late. One will not make provision for the future. One will not know the right, effective means for protecting and helping. Therefore, self-protection through wisdom and knowledge is of the greatest importance.

History has shown us that great mass delusions of a very destructive nature have often been started or kindled by a single person or a small group of people.

If we leave untouched the actual or potential sources of social evil within ourselves, any external social activity of ours will be either futile or glaringly incomplete. So if we are motivitated by a spirit of social responsibility, we cannot shirk the hard task of self-

protection, and that means we must work for moral and spiritual self-development. He who earnestly devotes himself to moral self-protection and spiritual self-development will be a strong force for good in the world, even without engaging in any external social activity. His quiet example alone will give help and encouragement to many by showing that the ideals of a selfless and harmless life can be actually lived and are not only subjects of sermons and Dhamma talks.

Now we come to the next level in the interpretation of our text. It is expressed in the following words of the Sutta: "And how does one, by protecting oneself, protect others? By repeated practice, by meditative development, by frequent practice of it."

Moral self-protection will lack reliability as long as it starts to function only after a struggle with motives or if it has to be enforced against conflicting habits. The outcome of the struggle may sometimes go against our good intentions, or we may fail to enforce them on deep-rooted habits within. Only when moral self-protection becomes a spontaneous function will it give real safety to ourselves and to others. This naturalness is not a gift from heaven. It has to be acquired, in this life or in previous existences, by repeated practice. So the Sutta says that it is repeated practice that strengthens self-protection till it is strong enough to protect others too.

Practice on the practical emotional and intellectual level will not be enough, however. The roots will not be firm and deep enough unless the practice includes meditation as well. By meditation, the practical, emotional, and intellectual motives of self-protection will become a mental property which cannot be easily lost again.

So the text uses the word Bhāvanā, which means meditative development of the mind in its widest sense. Until we reach full Awakening, it is the highest form of protection in the world. A man who meditates, lives at peace with himself and with the world. No harm or violence will be done by him. The peace and purity he radiates will have conquering power and be a blessing to the world. He will be a positive factor in society, even if he lives in seclusion and silence. When there is no longer an appreciation of the social value of this sort of self-protection, it will be the first sign of spiritual death in a society.

Now let us consider the second phrase: "By protecting others, one protects oneself." The Buddha explained what this means.

"Through patience, through a non-violent and harmless life, through loving kindness, and pity."

A man who governs his relationships with others by these four principles will protect himself better than weapons and physical strength could. Patience or forbearance will help him to avoid many conflicts and quarrels. It will be easy to make many friends, those for whom he has shown patient understanding. Through not using force or coercion, he will rarely become an object of violence himself, since he does not provoke it. If he should meet with violence, he will end it earlier and not extend it through vengeance. A person who is loving and kind to all beings, without enmity, will conquer the ill will of others and disarm those who are violent and brutal. A person who feels pity will be the friend and refuge of the whole world.

So moral self-protection is the basis. But it is only possible if it does not conflict with the protection of others. Otherwise, it will defile as well as endanger the individual. And protection of others must not conflict with the four principles of patience, non-violence, love, and pity. It must not interfere with the spiritual development of the individual.

Self-protection and the protection of others correspond to the two virtues of wisdom and pity. Right self-protection is the expression of wisdom and right protection of others is the result of pity. Wisdom and pity are characteristics of Bodhi, Awakening, and find their highest perfection in the Awakened One, the Buddha. The insistence on their harmonious development is a characteristic feature of the entire Dhamma. They are found in the four Divine Abidings, the Brahma-vihāra, where equanimity corresponds to wisdom and self-protection, whereas love, compassion, and sympathetic joy correspond to pity and protection of others.

These two principles of self-protection and protection of others are equally important in individual and social ethics and provide harmony between them both. They lead the individual on to the highest realization of the Dhamma and provide at the same time a firm foundation for society.

"I will protect myself," thus should we establish our mindfulness. That is how we should practise Ānāpāna and Vipassanā. "I will protect others," thus should we establish our mindfulness. In that sense we practise Ānāpāna and Vipassanā for the sake of our own liberation as well as for the welfare and happiness of many.

The Four Applications of Mindfulness

The four types of mindfulness are explained by Venerable Ledi Sayadaw in his *Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment* (Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī.)[12] He defines "application of mindfulness" (Satipaṭṭhāna) as meaning mindfulness or heedfulness which is firmly established. There are four applications of mindfulness:

1. Kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna
2. Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna
3. Cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna
4. Dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna

In the Suttas which give a detailed treatment of this subject, it is stated that, "The practice of the application of mindfulness is the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and sorrow, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbāna." So let us look more closely at these four applications of mindfulness.

1. Kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna means mindfulness which is firmly established on physical phenomena: "Mindfully let him inhale, mindfully let him exhale. If he inhales a long breath, let him be conscious of it; or if he exhales a long breath, let him be conscious of it, and so on." You have been practising this for the last ten days.

2. Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna means mindfulness which is firmly established on sensations. This includes agreeable sensations or disagreeable sensations or indifferent sensations throughout the body—going from head to foot and from foot to head, moving part by part so that one is able to comprehend each part. This, too, you have been doing ever since you learned Vipassanā meditation on the fourth day.

3. Cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna means mindfulness which is firmly established on thought or mental processes, such as thoughts associated with the passions or dissociated from the passions. Sayagyi U Ba Khin pointed out how this is done in Vipassanā meditation:[13] "In Vipassanā meditation one contemplates not only upon the changing nature of Rūpa or matter, but also upon the changing nature of Nāma, thought-elements of attention projected towards the process of change of Rūpa or

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12. *The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 176-180; *The Wheel* Nos. 171/174, pp. 28-40.
13. *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 93f.

matter. At times, the attention may be on the Anicca of Rūpa or matter only. At times the attention will be on the Anicca of thought-elements (Nāma). When one is contemplating on Anicca of Rūpa or matter, one realizes also that the thought-elements arising simultaneously with the awareness of the Anicca of Rūpa or matter are also in a state of transition or change. In that case, you are knowing the Anicca of both Rūpa and Nāma together." So you have also been practising this, and you should always remember to keep this in mind whenever you practise, either here or at your home.

4. Dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna means mindfulness which is firmly established on phenomena such as the hindrances (Nivaraṇas) and so forth. These have been explained in detail in earlier talks. With regard to observing mental states, you should know when one of the five hindrances is present and when it is not. You should know how they arise, how they are overcome, and how in the future they will no longer arise. You should know the nature of the five aggregates (Khandas), how they arise, and how they are dissolved. You should know the twelve bases of all mental activity (Āyatana): the eye and visual objects, the ear and audible objects, etc. You have been practising this all day long, also.

So we have seen the importance of right veneration, right protection, and right mindfulness and how these three work together. Let us resolve to protect ourselves through establishing our mindfulness and to protect others—again through establishing our mindfulness.

DAY NINE: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Message Taught by All the Buddhas

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ,
kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacittapariyodapanaṃ,
etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ
Khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā,
nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti Buddhā.
Na hi pabbajito parūpaghātī
na samaṇo hoti paraṃ viheṭhayanto,
Anūpavādo anūpaghāto,
pātimokkhe ca saṃvaro,
Mattaññutā ca bhattasmiṃ,
pantañ ca sayanāsanaṃ,
Adhicitte ca āyogo,
etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

To abstain from evil deeds.
To cultivate wholesome actions,
To purify the mind:
This is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

Forbearing patience is the highest austerity.
"Nibbāna is supreme," the Buddhas say.
He who harms another is not a true recluse, nor is he a true ascetic.

Not insulting others, not harming others, restraint according to the fundmental moral code, moderation in eating, living in seclusion, being intent on higher thoughts: this is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

Dhammapada vv 183-185

These verses teach us that we should do good and be good, that non-violence is the characteristic of the true ascetic, and that we should lead a pure and noble life.

These verses were spoken by the Buddha to Venerable Ānanda when he asked how previous Buddhas had observed the Uposatha Days—days corresponding to the four phases of the moon, when a special effort, such as observing additional precepts, was to be made.[1] The Buddha replied that all the Buddhas had recited these three verses in reference to the Uposatha Days.

We have seen that we are very fortunate to be able to put into practice these teachings of the Buddhas. First of all, we are fortunate to be born as humans. Out of all the thirty-one planes of existence, the human plane is the best for getting an appreciation of the inherent change in all conditioned things and of the suffering or unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned existence. If we had been born in the lower planes, we would not have had the intelligence to understand, or we would suffer so much and so constantly, it would be impossible to have wholesome thoughts and do wholesome deeds. If we were born in the higher planes we would either be so preoccupied by the pleasures there, we would not believe that suffering could exist, or we would live so long the fact of death would escape us. And in certain of the Brahmā planes, it would be impossible even to think.

The Perfections (Pāramīs)

We have also seen that it takes an incredibly long time, an unbelievable number of lives, to develop the required perfections. These perfections can be developed on three levels. First there is the ordinary level which will lead to rebirth in happy planes. On the next level, they are developed more and can result in our encountering the teachings of a Buddha and attaining true happiness, Arahatship, or we might become one of the eighty leading disciples or one of the two chief disciples of a Buddha. The highest level in accomplishing the perfections leads to becoming Self-Awakened: either a non-teaching Buddha or one of the three types of teaching Buddhas.

As we said, there are ten of these perfections (Pāramīs): generosity (Dāna), morality (Sīla), renunciation (Nekkhamma), wisdom (Paññā), effort or perseverance (Viriya), patience or forbearance (Khanti), truthfulness (Sacca), determination

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1. *Buddhist Legends,* III 60f.

(Addhiṭṭhāna), loving kindness (Mettā), and equanimity (Upekkhā).

As we can see, many of these have a direct relationship to what we have been doing here. We are practising morality by keeping the precepts, and in developing concentration and insight, we have had to use a lot of effort, patience, determination, and equanimity. When we share our merits, we practise loving kindness and generosity. All our wholesome actions in life will combine two or more of these perfections. The more we develop them, the better will be our meditation. The better we meditate, the better we will be able to fulfil these perfections.

If we have a mind that is concentrated, we will see more clearly the pain involved in greed, anger, and ignorance. When we are angry and shouting there are disagreeable emotions accompanying our anger. Now we will see this more clearly. We will want to avoid such negative emotions. And through avoiding thoughts, deeds, and actions which result in pain, we will begin to put our effort into developing thoughts, words, and actions that make us happier, and make others happier as well.

The Graduated Teaching

Even if we are primarily interested in worldly happiness we will want to make an effort to develop these perfections. When the Buddha gave a discourse it would be a graduated teaching. He would begin with the first of the Pāramīs, generosity. This is because we can sum up wholesome actions in the domain of morality with the word generosity. And it is generosity that leads to rebirth in the higher planes. You have heard many of the stories referring to the examples of people such as Pukkusāti and Bāhīya Dārucīriya. These two, because they had not given Dāna in their former lives—such as the eight requisites of the bhikkhus, including robes, begging bowls, etc.—when they encountered the Buddha, could not obtain the eight requisites for themselves, and thus could not become bhikkhus. On the contrary, they were both killed by a mad cow, the same cow, it is said, killing both these Ariyas.[2] Thus, the Buddha started with establishing people in generosity. Without this base, it would be impossible to go further.

Next, he would teach his audience concerning morality, for the mind is more pliable when we are generous. We are well-disposed

2. *Buddhist Legends,* II 120.

to seeing the wisdom in avoiding wrong actions and cultivating right action.

Then the Buddha would establish his listeners in the four Divine Abidings. Finally, if he saw that the potential was there, he would teach concentration and insight. This is why, in Buddhist countries, bhikkhus teach Dāna, Sīla, and Bhāvanā to lay disciples. Sīla will lead to long life, and Dāna will lead to material gains. You will notice how Dāna could play a great role in the rounds of existence as in the examples of Anurrodha, Visākhā, Anāthapiṇḍika, and many others.

The Discourse to the Villagers of Veḷudvāra[3]

The discourse given by the Buddha to the villagers of Veḷudvāra illustrates how he suited his teachings to his listeners. This can be called "The Discourse on the Dhamma-way of Comparing Oneself with Another." The villagers told the Buddha that they wanted to have many children, pleasant things such as perfumes, flowers, gold and silver in this life, and after death they wanted to be reborn in the Deva worlds. How could they accomplish this?

The Buddha did not tell them they should not desire such transient pleasures. He knew that men are motivated by their own self-interest, and that it serves no purpose to tell a man to be perfectly disinterested in his actions. It is impossible before one becomes an Arahat. There will always be some ego involved in our actions before that.

So he taught them how to compare themselves with others. He told them to reflect in the following manner: "I want to live. I do not want to die. I am fond of pleasure and dislike pain and suffering. Now if someone were to kill me, it would not be pleasing and delightful. If I kill someone else, it will not be pleasing and delightful to him. A condition that is not pleasing to me is not pleasing to others, so how can I impose a condition that is not pleasing and delightful to me on others?"

In the same way, one should reflect on stealing, sexual misconduct, lies which can destroy our good fortune, dissension between friends, harsh words, foolish and useless talk. Seeing that they are all unpleasant, one will abstain from such actions, one will encourage others to abstain from them, and one will speak in praise of such actions.

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3. *The Kindred Sayings,* V 307-311.

Finally, one will develop unshaken faith and confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, realizing their qualities. We have already given these qualities and an explanation of the deeper levels of meaning in having confidence.

The Buddha ends his discourse to the people of Veḷudvāra by saying that through morality they will be able to attain concentration which will lead to becoming a Sotāpanna. And once established in the first stage of Awakening there is no more rebirth in the lower worlds.

This discourse, then, would be for those who are developing the perfections at the second level. The Buddha himself is one who has developed them to the highest degree. In the Pāḷi texts, there is one collection, called the Jātakas, which gives approximately 550 stories of the past lives of the Buddha, when he was the Boddhisatta, and they help us appreciate all the preparations he had to make. They are only a small number of his many past lives, of course.

The Story of Vessantara

The story of his last life in the human world before becoming the Buddha is one of the best known of these Jātaka stories in Buddhist countries.[4] His name in that life was Vessantara, and he developed the Pāramī of generosity to the highest degree during that lifetime. He was a prince, but his generosity was such that he gave away everything he could. He gave away the royal elephant that had the power to cause good rainfall in the country where it lives. Because of this, he was banished from his kingdom. His wife and children insisted on following him, and, as he could not refuse any request, he eventually gave away his children and wife too. Sakka, the king of the Devas, disguised himself as a man and asked for the wife, for he wished to aid the Bodhisatta in his perfecting of the Pāramīs, and made sure no harm came to his wife. The children were asked for by a Brahman who wanted servants for his wife. But Vessantara's father, the king, paid the Brahman to return the children to him.

Now we may not be working at that high level in developing the Pāramīs, and so should not feel obliged to give away everything we own and everyone near and dear to us. But we can work for more spontaneous generosity, remembering that the Buddha advised laymen to wisely use their wealth, not only giving to people

4. Jātaka No. 547.

outside one's own family circle, but also being responsible husbands and wives, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers.

The Buddha's Last Life

In his next to last life, the Bodhisatta is Setaketu Deva, on the Tusita celestial plane.[5] There, he awaits for all the right conditions to come together. When the right conditions prevail in the human realm which are conducive to his work, he considers who would be the right parents living in the right part of the world, and then he enters the mother's womb.

In Buddha Gotama's case, the parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Māyādevī of Kapilavatthu, a place near modern Nepal. At his birth, there were thirty-two marvels as the natural order of things in the cosmos was revolutionized in many respects. When this happened, Kāḷa-Devala, an ascetic at the court of King Suddhodana, was talking with celestial beings in the Tāvatiṃsa Deva world. When he was told that the king had a son and that there was rejoicing in the world, he went to the palace and asked for the baby to be brought to him. As the king was about to place the baby before his teacher, the baby rose into the air and rested his feet on the head of the ascetic. The ascetic understood at once that the baby was the future Buddha. He smiled at that thought. Then, with his supernormal powers, he foresaw that he would not live to hear the teachings of the future Buddha and would be reborn in the immaterial plane of the Brahmās. On those planes, it is not possible to have any contact with the material planes, and so he cried.

Five days later, the baby was named Siddhattha, and the king's astrologers read the marks on his body and predicted that he would either become a Universal Monarch or an Enlightened Being. One astrologer, however, held up one finger only, to indicate that there was only one possibility, that he would be a Buddha. And his name was Koṇḍañña.

The king wanted his son to be a Universal Monarch and rule over all the world. So he gave him a life of luxury. Three palaces were built to suit the three seasons of the year. Everything was done to make the prince sink into sensuality. The king ordered that nobody serving him or in association with him should ever speak a single word about such things as old age, sickness, and death. They were to act as if there were no unpleasant things in the world. Servants and attendants who showed the least sign of

5. See Samantapasadika, I 161.

getting old, weak, or sickly were replaced. On the other hand, there was dancing, music, and enjoyable parties.

With time, however, the monotony of the sensual surroundings made them gradually lose their hold on the mind of Prince Siddhatta. The mental energies of virtue conserved in all his innumerable lives for the great goal of Buddhahood were automatically aroused. At times, when the world of sensuality lost control over his mind, his inner self worked its way up and raised his mind to a state of purity and tranquillity with the strength of Samādhi such as had raised him when a baby above the head of the ascetic Kāḷa-Devala.

The Great Renunciation

The war of nerves began. He wanted to know what existed outside the walls of the palace. He decided to go to the Royal Park for his first visit outside, his first attempt to see nature as it is and not as man has made it. On the way to the park, in spite of all the precautions taken by the king to clear the road of unpleasant sights, Siddhattha saw an old man. Next, he saw a sick person with a fatal illness. Then he encountered a corpse. Finally, he saw a bhikkhu. This set him to thinking. His mental attitude was changed. His mind was cleared of impurities and tuned up with the forces of his own virtues conserved in the plane of mental forces (Saṅkhāra-loka). By then, his mind was freed from hindrances, was tranquil, pure, and strong. He had seen the reality of old age, sickness, and death, and he had an indication, through the calm expression on the bhikkhu's face, that there might be an alternative to all this suffering.

His change of mental attitude happened on the night his wife had a son. He was immune, however, to anything which would tend to upset the equilibrium of his mind. The virtues of determination worked their way through to enable him to have strong resolve, and he made up his mind to seek the way of escape from birth, old age, suffering, and death.

This solemn determination was made at midnight. He had his attendant Channa get his horse Khandhika ready. He went to take one look at his son, whom he called Rāhula, "impediment," as he realized that a son would be a temptation to him to remain as a prince. When he went into his wife's room, her arm hid the baby, but he went out again, thinking that if he touched her in order to see his son, she might wake up, speak to him and trouble his resolve. So he broke with all ties of family life and of the world and made the great renunciation. He rode out of the town to the

river Anomā. He crossed the river never to return until his mission had been accomplished.

He lived as an ascetic with a begging bowl in his hand. And his first step was to place himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned Brahman teachers, Āḷāra and Uddaka. Āḷāra laid stress on the belief in a soul (Atman) and taught that the soul attains perfect release when freed from material limitations. This did not satisfy the Bodhisatta. Next he went to Uddaka, who emphasized too much the effect of Kamma and the transmigration of the soul. Neither could go beyond the conception of "soul" and the Bodhisatta felt there was something else to learn. He refused when each of his two teachers offered to place him on the same level as themselves and went to work out the way for emancipation on his own.

By this time, he had learned the eight absorptions of the fine-material and immaterial spheres (Samāpatti) and was adept in the supernormal powers, including the ability to read events of many world cycles of the past and future. But they were still in the mundane field and did not satisfy the Bodhisatta whose ambition was to escape from this mundane world of birth, suffering, and death.

The Ascetic Practices

The Bodhisatta was joined by five ascetics, and one of them was Koṇḍañña who had predicted he would attain Awakening. For six years, the Bodhisatta tried many ascetic practices in his search for the end to suffering. The five ascetics served him well during all this time. He fasted and subjected himself to various forms of rigorous austerities and discipline till he was reduced almost to a skeleton. In fact one day he fell down in a faint through exhaustion. When he regained consciousness he realized that extreme austerity was not the path. He changed his method and followed a middle course and found that the way to his Awakening was clearer. The five ascetics who just assumed that the more severe the practice the better, decided that he had given up working seriously. Disappointed, they left him.

The Awakening

On the evening of Vesākha (the full-moon of Kason in the Burmese calendar) over 2,500 years ago, the Bodhisatta Siddhattha sat cross-legged beneath a Bodhi tree on the bank of the river Nerañjarā in the forest of Uruvela, near present-day Bodh Gaya. He made the strongest of determinations—that he would

not rise from that posture on any account until he gained the truth and Awakening, Buddhahood, even if the attempt meant the loss of his life.

As he called up all his strength of mind to secure that one-pointedness of mind that is so essential for the discovery of truth, he found that on this occasion the balancing of the mind was not as easy as before. There was more than the mental forces of the lower planes in combination with those of the higher planes all around him, there were also interferences strong enough to upset the balance of his mind and so on. There was unusual resistance coming from the impenetrable masses of forces against the radiation of light normally secured by him. Perhaps because it was a final bid for Buddhahood, so Māra, the supreme controller of evil forces, was behind the scene. And it is interesting to note here that Māra is on the plane of the Devas who enjoy others' creations—he has the mistaken belief that all conditioned things belong to him. The Bodhisatta, however, worked his way through, slowly but surely, backed up by the mental forces of virtues which must inevitably come back to him at the right moment. He made a vow and called on all the Brahmās and Devas who had witnessed the fulfilment of his ten great perfections to join hands with him in the struggle for supremacy. You may have noticed that the statues of the Buddha from Burma show the Buddha touching the ground with one hand. This is the representation of his calling the earth as a witness to all his past work on the perfections.

This done, the association with the transcendingly pure mental forces of the Brahmās and Devas had a good effect. The thick masses of forces, which seemed impenetrable for a time, broke away and with steady improvement in the control over the mind, they were wiped out once and for all. All the hindrances were overcome and he was then able to raise his power of concentration and put his mind in a state of complete purity, tranquillity, and equanimity. Gradually the consciousness of true insight possessed him. The solution to the vital problems which confronted him made its appearance in his consciousness as an inspiration.

Through introspective meditation on the realities of nature in his own self it came vividly to him that there is no substantiality in the human body as seems to be the case. It is nothing but the sum total of innumerable millions of Kalāpas— the smallest units of existence that we have already explained. On further investigation, he realized that these Kalāpas are also matter in constant

change or flux. The same is true of the mind, which is a representation of the mental forces going out, the creative forces, and the mental forces coming in—the created forces which come into the system of an individual continually and throughout the countless rounds of existence.

The Buddha then proclaimed that the eye of wisdom had arisen in him when he overcame the wrong view of the substantiality of his own self; for he saw through the lens of concentration (Samādhi) the Kalāpas to which he then applied the law of impermanence (Anicca) and reduced them to nonentity or behaviour. He did away with what we call in Buddhism Paññatti, meaning concept, idea, designation. When he did away with this conceptualizing, this designating, he came to the state of truth (Paramattha), the truth of the nature of forces—in other words, Ultimate Reality.

Realizing the perpetual change of mind and matter in himself (Anicca), he realized as a sequel, the Truth of Suffering (Dukkha). It was then that egocentricity broke down in him, leaving the void, and he got over to a stage beyond suffering (Dukkha-nirodha) where no more trace of Atta or attachment to self were left behind. Mind and matter were empty phenomena to him, rolling on for all time, coming within the range of the law of cause and effect and the law of Dependent Origination. The Truth was realized. The inherent qualities of Embryo Buddha then developed and complete Awakening came to him by the dawn of the day of Vesākha.

Truly Siddhattha attained Perfect Awakening, Sammāsambodhi, and became the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the All-Knowing One. He was awake in a way compared to which all others were asleep and dreaming. He was enlightened in a way compared with which all other men were stumbling and groping in the dark. He knew with the knowledge compared with which all that other men knew was but a kind of ignorance.

We have taken this account of the life of the Buddha from Sayagyi U Ba Khin's booklet *What Buddhism Is.*[6] He preceded his account with a description of the Buddhist concept of the universe, to help explain the significance of Buddhahood and the difficulties in attaining Awakening. Since we have mentioned the

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6. See *Dhamma Texts*, pp 5-12.

thirty-one planes of existence frequently in these talks, let us look at them a little more closely.

The Thirty-One Planes of Existence

Sayagyi explained that there are three universes which are interwoven and interpenetrating:[7] The Universe of Space (Okāsa-loka), the Universe of Mental Forces (Saṅkhāra-loka), and the Universe of Sentient Beings (Satta-loka). The universe of space accommodates the mundane world. The universe of sentient beings is the domain of the visible or invisible beings which are the products of mental forces. These mental forces are in turn creative or created in the universe of mental forces. Mind and matter (Nāma-rūpa) are under the influence of the law of cause and effect. These three universes cannot be separated one from the other.

Within this three-in-one universe there are millions and millions of world systems (Cakkavāḷas). It would be impossible to count them. We live in only one of these world-systems. The ten-thousand world-systems closest to us are called the field of origin (Jāti-khetta), for they are the field of origin of a Buddha. When the Buddha gave the discourse known as the Great Occasion (Mahā-Samaya) in the forest near the town of Kapilavatthu, Brahmās and Devas of all those ten-thousand world-systems were present in addition to the Brahmās and Devas of our own world-system.

The Buddha is so highly developed he can send his thought waves, charged with boundless love and compassion, to the sentient beings of a billion such world-systems, as they are within the field of influence (Āṇā-khetta). The remaining countless world-systems which are beyond the reach of the Buddha's effective thought waves are called infinite space (Visaya-khetta).

The material insignificance of our world in the universe of space is simply terrifying. The human world, as a whole, is just a speck in space.

Now let us look at the thirty-one planes of existence in our world-system. They are the same, of course, in all other world-systems. They can be divided into three categories: the highest types are the immaterial planes of the Brahmās (Arūpa-loka), followed by the fine material planes of the Brahmās (Rūpa-loka), and below those come the sensuous planes including the Deva planes, mankind and lower beings (Kāma-loka). The immaterial

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7. See *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 3-5, and *The Path of Purificaiton*, Chapter VII, ¶¶ 37-45.

planes of the Bramhās are four in number, and beings in these planes cannot interact with lower planes. That is why the hermit teacher was upset when he realized he was destined for these planes because he knew this meant he would miss the Buddha's Teachings. On those planes, he would be in the highest of the states possible in terms of concentration, but he would miss the opportunity to go beyond the cycle of birth and death.

There are sixteen planes in the fine-material planes of the Brahmās. This is where the Brahmā is reborn who thinks himself eternal—because he lives so long—and the creator—because when he realizes he would like to have other beings on the same plane with him, there may chance to be other Brahmās who take rebirth at that moment.

These Brahmā planes are reached through the absorption states. These non-sensual planes are in space, as it were, and there is no taint of sensuality, no taint of impurity. It is radiance, so to say. There, one enjoys a perfect, transcendental peace. So when we try to develop our minds to a perfect state of purity, we try to transport our minds to be in tune with the nature of the first absorption state. We try at least to get out of the lower magnetic field of the subhuman planes and the upper magnetic field of the sensual planes.

Below the Brahmā planes, all the beings are in sensual planes. The six Deva planes have celestial beings who enjoy sensuality of the greatest height. One goes to these planes through leading moral lives and doing good deeds. While enjoying life there, the balance of credits of good deeds is consumed, and when the span of life is over, rebirth can occur on any plane.

We live in the human plane, in between the Deva planes and the lower worlds. There are four lower worlds: a demon world of earth spirits (Asura), the ghost world (Peta), the animal world (Tiricchāna), and the hells (Niraya).

All the thirty-one planes of existence are pure or impure, cool or hot, luminous or dark, light or heavy, pleasant or wretched depending on the character of the mental forces generated by the mind, by the series of volitional thoughts, words, and deeds. The mental forces generated by us settle down in these planes depending on whether they are good or bad—and it is as if a place were being reserved for us in a future life. If we make best use of the place we have now, if we work as we should, have the necessary background, and can cut through this three-in-one universe and reach Nibbāna—then no mental force, good or bad, will be able to bind us to the cycle of birth and death.

DAY TEN: MORNING DISCOURSE

Overcoming Opposition

Kumbhūpamaṃ kāyam imaṃ viditvā,
Nagarūpamaṃ cittam idaṃ ṭhapetvā
Yodhetha Māraṃ paññāvudhena,
Jitañ ca rakkhe anivesano siyā.

Realizing that this body is fragile like an earthen pot and establishing this mind firm like a fortress, One should fight Māra with the weapon of knowledge, one should keep up the conquest and be free from attachment.

Dhammapada v 40

The Practice of Loving Kindness

This verse was given by the Buddha in connection with five hundred bhikkhus who went to meditate in the forest when the Buddha was residing in Sāvatthi.[1]

The Buddha gave the five hundred bhikkhus a meditation subject so that they could work for Arahatship, and the bhikkhus went a hundred leagues to a large village. The people in the village fed them and then asked, "Reverend sirs, where are you going?"

The bhikkhus replied, "To some pleasant place." Then the villagers said, "Reverend sirs, reside here during these three months. Under your direction we will abide steadfast in the Refuges and will keep the precepts." When the bhikkhus consented, the villagers pointed out a forest nearby and told them, "Take up your residence there."

Virtuous spirits lived in that forest, and seeing the bhikkhus come, they thought, "A company of bhikkhus has come to our

1. See *Buddhist Legends,* II 17-19, and *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning,* pp. 265-294.

forest. If they live here, it will be improper for us to continue to take our son and wife, climb in the trees and live there." So they came down from the trees and sat on the ground, thinking, "The bhikkhus will only stay the night. Tomorrow morning they will surely leave." But the next day, the bhikkhus went on their alms round in the village and returned to the forest. So the spirits thought, "Someone must have invited the company of bhikkhus for tomorrow. That is why they have returned. They will not go away today, but tomorrow they will surely leave." And it went on like that for two weeks.

Finally, the spirits concluded, "These bhikkhus intend to stay here for three months. And we will not be able to go up in the trees with our families. It will be very tiresome to remain here on the ground. How can we drive these bhikkhus away?"

After that, the bhikkhus saw bodiless heads and headless trunks and heard the voices of demons in their sleeping quarters and in their daytime quarters. These visions were sent by the spirits. In addition, the bhikkhus were afflicted with sneezing and coughing and other ailments. Because of all this, the bhikkhus decided to go to the Buddha. So they left the forest, made their way back to Sāvatthi, paid their respects to the Buddha and sat down to one side.

The Buddha asked them if they were able to live where they had gone. "Venerable sir," they answered, "while we were living there, fearful objects presented themselves to our sight. It was so unpleasant for us that we decided we must leave. So we abandoned that place and have returned to you." Then the Buddha said to them, "Bhikkhus, you ought to return to that place." But they told him, "Venerable sir, we cannot do that."

"Bhikkhus," the Buddha said, "when you went there the first time, you went without a weapon. Now you must take a weapon with you when you go." And the bhikkhus asked, "What kind of weapon, venerable sir?"

"I will give you a weapon," the Buddha replied, "and the weapon which I give you, you are to take with you when you go." And the Buddha taught them the Discourse on Loving Kindness.[2]

> This is what is to be done by one who is skilful in respect of the good, having attained the peaceful state. He should be

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2. This translation is based on K.R. Norman's in *The Group of Discourses*, p. 24.

capable, straight, and very upright, easy to speak to, gentle and not proud,

contented and easy to support, having few duties and of a frugal way of life, with his sense-faculties calmed, zealous, not impudent, (and) not greedy (when going on alms rounds) among families.

And he should not do any mean thing, on account of which other wise men would criticize him. Let all creatures indeed be happy (and) secure; let them be happy-minded.

Whatever living creatures there are, moving or still without exception, whichever are long or large, or middle-sized or short, small or great,

whichever are seen or unseen, whichever live far or near, whether they already exist or are going to be, let all creatures be happy-minded.

One man should not humiliate another; one should not despise anyone anywhere. One should not wish another misery because of anger or from the notion of repugnance.

Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings,

and loving-kindness towards all the world. One should cultivate an unbounded mind, above and below and across, without obstruction, without enmity, without rivalry.

Standing, or going, or seated, or lying down, as long as one is free from drowsiness, one should practise this mindfulness. This, they say, is the holy state here.

Not subscribing to wrong views, virtuous, endowed with insight, having overcome greed for sensual pleasures, a creature assuredly does not come to lie again in a womb.

Sutta-nipāta, vv 143-152

After giving this discourse, the Buddha said to the bhikkhus, "Recite this Sutta in the forest, around your lodgings, and then you may go back to your lodgings." And he sent them back.

They paid their respects to the Buddha and went back to the forest. Now that they were armed with the Mettā Sutta, the attitude of the spirits was very different. After they recited it, the spirits felt friendly feelings towards the bhikkhus. They went out

to meet them, asked to take their robes and bowls, offered to rub their hands and feet, posted strong guards on all sides, and sat down together with the bhikkhus. Not a demon's voice was heard. The minds of the bhikkhus became tranquil, and they were able to strive night and day through Vipassanā meditation. They were using a technique especially adapted for bhikkhus which involves reflecting on the decay and death inherent in their bodies. The Buddha saw that they had begun to develop insight, so he sent forth a luminous image of himself and appeared as if he were seated in front of them, radiating rays of light of six colours. And he pronounced the verse we quoted at the beginning.

This story shows us that loving kindness was first taught not just for the well-being of others, but also as a sort of self-protection. And before we can send thoughts of loving kindness, we must prepare ourselves through moral living and through being easily contented. You will note that at the very beginning, the motivation behind giving loving kindness for a person who has not attained full Awakening is the attaining of Nibbāna. It is only after one is fully Awakened that Mettā can be sent devoid of any self-interest.

The Buddha, who was Self-Awakened, was able to send loving kindness to all, better than anyone else. And throughout the stories that come down to us of his life, we can see how his every thought, word, and deed was full of loving kindness, patience, compassion, and equanimity. Let us look at two examples.

The Story of the Weaver's Daughter

Andhabhūto ayaṃ loko
tanuk' ettha vipassati.
Sakuṇo jālamutto va
appo saggāya gacchati.

This world is blind. Few are they who see clearly.
As few as the birds that escape from a net are they
who go to a blissful state.

Dhammapada v 174

This verse was spoken by the Buddha when he was in residence at the Aggāḷava Shrine with reference to a certain weaver's daughter.[3] One day, the Buddha was invited by the residents of

3. See *Buddhist Legends,* III 14-18.

Āḷavī for a meal. When he returned thanks at the end of the meal, he instructed them, saying:

> Practice meditation on death. Say to yourselves, "My life is uncertain. My death is certain. I shall surely die. Death will be the termination of my life. Life is unstable. Death is sure." For those who have not practised meditation on death will tremble and fear when their last hour comes, and they will die screaming with terror, like a man who sees a snake and has no stick to protect himself; he will be stricken with fear. But those who practise meditation on death will have no fear when they die. They will be like a steadfast man who sees a snake from afar, takes up his stick, and tosses the snake aside. So practise meditation on death.

All the people of Āḷavī except one remained absorbed in their worldly affairs just as before. Only one weaver's daughter, sixteen years old, said to herself, "The speech of the Buddhas is marvellous indeed. I should practise meditation on death." And for three years, day and night, she practised this meditation. The Buddha left Āḷavī and went to reside in the Jetavana in Sāvatthi.

One day, when the Buddha surveyed the world at early dawn, he saw that this girl had entered the Net of his Knowledge. He saw that she had meditated for three years on death and that she would be able to answer four questions that he would ask her. He would congratulate her on her answers and then pronounce the verse beginning "Blind is this world . . ." and at the conclusion of the verse, the girl would be established in the first stage of Awakening. And many others would profit by his discourse.

So the Buddha went again to the Aggāḷava Monastery together with five hundred bhikkhus, a distance of thirty leagues. And the people of Āḷavī invited him again. When the girl heard that the Buddha had come, her heart was filled with joy. "They say that he has come, he who is my father, my master, my teacher, whose face is like the full moon, the mighty Buddha Gotama." Then she thought to herself, "Now, for the first time in three years, I will see the Teacher and hear him teach the Dhamma which is sublime, full of sweetness."

But her father, on his way to his workshop, said to her, "Daughter, a garment for a customer is on the loom and is incomplete. I must finish it today. Replenish the shuttle and bring it to me." The girl hesitated, but then she thought, "If I

don't bring my father the shuttle, he will strike me and beat me. So I will do as he says and wait until afterwards to hear the Dhamma."

The people of Āḷavī provided the Teacher and the Order of Bhikkhus with food, and when the meal was over, they took his bowl and stood to one side, waiting for him to return thanks.

But the Buddha said to them, "I came here, a journey of thirty leagues, for the sake of a certain weaver's daughter. I shall wait for her to come, and when she finds an opportunity to be present, I will return thanks."

When the girl had replenished the shuttle, she put it in her basket and headed for her father's workshop. On the way, she stopped on the outer circle of the people and gazed at the Teacher. He lifted up his head and looked at her. "He wants me to come," she thought and drew near.

The Buddha looked at her because he knew that if he did not, she would not approach him. There was no way for her to escape death that day, but if she heard him teach, she would be established as a Sotāpanna and be reborn in the Tusita celestial plane.

At the mere hint of his look, the girl approached the Buddha, paid her respects to him, and stood respectfully to one side. Then the Buddha addressed her with four questions:

"Maiden, where do you come from?" he asked.

"Venerable sir, I do not know," she replied.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied.

"You do not know?" he asked.

"I know, venerable sir," she answered.

"You know?" he asked.

"I do not know, venerable sir," she answered.

The people were offended and said, "Just look, this weaver's daughter says whatever she pleases to the Awakened One. When he asked, 'Where do you come from?' she should have answered, 'From the weaver's house.' When he asked, 'Where are you going?' she should have said, 'To the weaver's workshop.' "

Then the Buddha asked her, "Maiden, when I asked you, 'Where do you come from?' why did you say, 'I do not know'?" And the girl said, "Venerable sir, you know I come from my father's house. So when you asked me where I came from, I knew

you meant where did I come from when I was born here. I do not know the answer to that."

The Buddha congratulated her on understanding correctly his question and asked her, "When I asked you where you were going, why did you answer that you did not know?" And the girl said, "Venerable sir, you know I was going to the weaver's workshop with the shuttle-basket in my hand. So when you asked me where I was going, I knew very well that the meaning was, where will I go from here when I am reborn. But I don't know where I'll be reborn after this existence."

The Buddha congratulated her again and asked, "When I asked you, 'Do you know?' why did you answer, 'I know.'?" And she answered, "Venerable sir, this much I know, I shall surely die. So I said so."

The Buddha congratulated her a third time. Then he asked her, "When I asked you 'You know?' why did you say, 'I know not'?" And she said, "I only know that I shall die, venerable sir. When I shall die, whether it will be at night, in the daytime, in the morning, or any other time, that I do not know. So I said so." And again the Teacher congratulated her for understanding the question correctly.

Then the Buddha spoke to the people, saying, "So many of you failed to understand her answers. You were offended. For those who do not have the Eye of Understanding are blind. Only those who possess the Eye of Understanding can see." And he pronounced the verse that we gave at the beginning of the story. At the end of the verse, the girl was established in the first fruition state of Awakening; she became a Sotāpanna.

Then she took her shuttle-basket and went to her father. He was asleep, sitting at his loom. She did not notice he was asleep and gave him the basket. It hit the tip of the loom and fell with a clatter. Her father woke up, and taking hold of the loom, gave it a pull. The end of the loom accidently swung around and struck the girl in the chest. She died immediately and was reborn in the plane of the Tusita Devas. When the father realized what had happened he was grief stricken. He went to the Buddha and told him about the death of his daughter. "Venerable sir," he requested, "make an end to my grief."

"Do not grieve," the Buddha told him. "In the round of existences without a knowable beginning, you have shed more tears in grieving over the death of your daughter than there is

water in the four oceans." The man's grief was ended and he asked to be admitted to the Order of Bhikkhus. And in no long time he attained Arahatship.

The Story of The Hungry Farmer

Jighacchā paramā rogā
saṅkhāraparamā dukhā
Etaṃ ñatvā yathābhūtaṃ
nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ.

Hunger is the worst disease. Conditioned
phenomena cause the worst suffering.
Knowing this as it really is, one attains Nibbāna,
the supreme happiness.

Dhammapada v 203

The verse was spoken by the Buddha when he was in residence in Āḷavī with reference to a certain lay disciple, a poor farmer.[4]

One day, seated in the Perfumed Chamber at Jetavana, the Buddha surveyed the world at dawn, and he saw a poor farmer in Āḷavī and he realized that the farmer possessed the requisites for becoming a Sotāpanna. So the Buddha went there with a group of five hundred bhikkhus, and the people of Aḷavī invited them for a meal. When the poor man heard that the Buddha had come, he decided to go to hear the Buddha teach. But that same day, an ox of his strayed off. He thought to himself, "Now what shall I do? Shall I look for the ox or go to hear the Dhamma?" And he decided, "I'll first look for the ox and then go to hear the Dhamma." And he set out to find his ox.

The people of Āḷavī prepared seats for the Buddha and the five hundred bhikkhus and served the meal. After the meal they took the Teacher's bowl so that he could give thanks. But he said, "The man I came thirty leagues to teach has gone into the forest to look for what he lost. When he returns, I will give the discourse."

Before nightfall, the man found his ox and drove it back to the herd. And then he thought, "Even if I can do nothing else, at least I can pay respects to the Teacher." And although he was very hungry, he decided not to return home but to go straight to the Buddha. When he arrived, he paid respects and sat down to one side. Then the Buddha asked the man responsible for serving the meal, "Is there any food remaining from what was served to the

4. See *Buddhist Legends,* III 74-76.

Order of Bhikkhus?" "The food has not been touched, venerable sir," was the answer. "Well then, serve this poor man some food," the Buddha instructed.

So the steward served the poor farmer with food, and as soon as his physical suffering had been relieved, his mind became tranquil. Then the Buddha preached the Dhamma, giving a graduated discourse, expounding one after the other the Four Noble Truths. At the conclusion of the discourse, the man was established in the fruition state of a Sotāpanna. Then the Buddha gave the words of thanks and rose from his seat and left.

Now we are told that this is the only time that the Buddha ever enquired concerning the food. And as he was returning with the bhikkhus, some bhikkhus were highly indignant. "Just consider," they said. "Look what the Teacher did! Nothing like that has ever happened before. Seeing a poor man, the Teacher asked about the supply of food and gave orders for food to be given to him."

The Buddha stopped, turned around, and asked the bhikkhus what they were talking about. When they explained, he said to them, "Bhikkhus, when I came here, undertaking a long and difficult journey of thirty leagues, my sole purpose was to establish this man as a Sotāpanna. Early in the morning, already hungry, that man went to the forest and spent the day looking for his lost ox. Therefore, I thought to myself, 'If I teach this man while he is hungry, he will not be able to understand.' That is why I did what I did. Bhikkhus, there is no affliction like the affliction of hunger." And the Buddha gave the verse we quoted at the beginning of the story.

Developing the Divine Abidings[5]

From these stories, we can appreciate the need for us to develop loving kindness, and we can see what a perfect example the Buddha gave. He did not force his Teachings on others, but when he could see that a person was ready, he would go to great extremes to help that person. We can also see, in the case of the poor farmer, that there are more important things than a blind adherence to rules or traditions. As you can guess from the reaction of the bhikkhus, the fact that the Buddha inquired about food and asked for someone to be served was very unusual for

5. This discussion is mainly based on Ashin Buddhaghosa's description in *The Path of Purification,* Chapter IX.

someone who was not a layman. The bhikkhus had renounced the world and never begged for food. Buddhist bhikkhus to this day go on alms rounds, giving laymen the opportunity to serve them food, but never asking for food, or hinting at what they would like. The Buddha knew of course that it would be useless to tell the hungry man how virtuous it is to keep eight precepts and not eat after noon. After all his exertion, the farmer needed food. Otherwise, his mind would be too agitated for him to listen to and understand the Buddha's discourse.

Now, how can we work to develop such qualities as loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity? These are known as the Divine Abidings (Brahma-vihāra). They are also called the Four Boundless States or Four Illimitables (Appamaññā). The Buddha taught the bhikkhus to do the following:

> There, bhikkhus, the bhikkhus with a mind full of loving kindness pervades first one direction, then a second, then a third, then the fourth direction. Just as above, so too below and all around. And everywhere, he identifies himself with all. He pervades the whole world with his mind full of loving kindness, with his mind wide, developed, unbounded, free from hate and ill will.[6]

One develops the mind similarly with compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

In *The Path of Purification,*[7] Ashin Buddhaghosa says that one should go to a quiet place where one can sit in a comfortable position. Then one should consider the dangers in hate first and the benefits offered by forbearance. The purpose of this is to displace hate by forbearance. For we cannot avoid dangers if we have not seen them, nor can we cultivate benefits we do not know yet.

In the first stages there are certain types of individuals towards whom we should not develop loving kindness. It is tiring to try to regard a person we dislike as if they were dear to us. It is difficult to remain neutral with regards to those who are dear to us. And if the slightest mischance happens to a friend, we feel like weeping. If we think of an enemy, anger arises. It is tiring to put a person towards whom one is neutral in the position of a person who is

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6. *The Kindred Sayings,* IV 227; *The Gradual Sayings,* II 132, V 193.
7. Chapter IX, ¶¶ 1ff.

dear. If we direct our thoughts to members of the opposite sex, lust may arise. And if we try to develop loving kindness towards a person who is dead, we will not be able to reach either absorption or access concentration. That is to say, we will not make any headway at all.

Therefore, in the beginning, we should develop loving kindness towards ourselves, repeatedly saying: "May I keep myself free from enmity and trouble and live happily."

As one cultivates the thought, "May I be happy," with oneself as the example, then one can begin to be interested in the welfare and happiness of others. We can begin to feel to some extent that their happiness is like our own. We reflect, "Just as I want to live happily and not to die, so too do others wish to live happily and not to die." Once we have practised pervading ourselves with loving kindness, then we can choose someone who is liked, admired, and very respected. We can begin with the thought, "May he be happy," remembering his virtues.

When this thought towards a respected person is familiar, then we can practise loving kindness towards someone who is dear to us. Next we can direct our thoughts towards a neutral person as dear. Lastly, we can direct our thoughts to a foe, putting him in the stead of a person towards whom we are neutral.

Care should be taken when dealing with an enemy for anger can arise, and all means must be tried in order to get rid of it. When this is successful, we will be able to regard a foe without resentment and with loving kindness in the very same way we regard the admired person, the dearly loved one, and the neutral person.

At this stage, loving kindness can be effectively maintained towards all beings or to certain groups at a time: in one direction at a time towards all beings, or to certain groups in succession.

We can expect eleven blessings when we are able to maintain loving kindness, make much of it, use it as a vehicle, use it as a foundation, be established in it, and keep it consolidated and properly managed. In the Mettā Sutta, these blessings are expressed this way:[8]

> A man sleeps in peace and comfort, he wakes in peace and comfort, he dreams no evil dreams, he is dear to human beings, he is dear to non-human beings, the Devas guard him, no fire or poison or weapon harms him, his mind can

8. *The Gradual Sayings,* V 219.

> be quickly concentrated, the expression of his face is serene, he dies without falling into confusion, and even if he fails to penetrate any further, he will pass on to the world of High Divinity, to the Brahmā World.

In order to develop compassion (Karuṇā), we should begin by reviewing the danger of not having compassion and the advantage of possessing it. As with loving kindness, we should not begin by directing compassion towards a person towards whom we feel neutral, antipathetic or hostile, towards a member of the opposite sex or towards someone who is dead.

As it is said in the Vibhaṅga,[9] "How does one dwell pervading one direction with his heart endued with compassion? Just as one would feel compassion on seeing an unlucky, unfortunate person, so one pervades all beings with compassion."

Right from the start, the meditation of compassion should be developed with a wretched person as the object. We think of someone who is unlucky, unfortunate, in every way a fit object for compassion, unsightly, reduced to utter misery. We should think like this: "This person has indeed been reduced to misery. If only he could be freed from this suffering."

If we do not encounter a wretched person, then we can arouse compassion for an evil doer. Ashin Buddhaghosa expressed it like this:[10]

> Suppose a criminal is under orders of execution by the ruler. The executioners bind him and lead him off to the place of execution, flogging him a hundred times. Then the passers-by give him things to eat and he goes along eating and enjoying these things, but no one will think that he is really happy. Everyone will feel compassion for him, thinking: "This wretched person is going to die soon. Every step leads him nearer to the presence of death."

In this way we should arouse compassion for an evil doer.

Next, we should arouse compassion for a person who is dear to us, then towards a neutral person, and finally towards a hostile person. Care should be taken with regard to an enemy and if resentment arises one must try by all means to get rid of it in the same way used with loving kindness.

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9. *The Book of Analysis*, p. 359.
10. *The Path of Purification*, Chapter IX, ¶ 79.

The Buddha himself set us the example, through attending personally to the sick. He told his disciples, "He who ministers to the sick ministers unto me."

The Buddha showed great compassion towards persons such as the courtesan Ambapālī and towards the murderer Angulimāla. Both became his disciples and underwent a complete reformation in character.

In order to develop sympathetic joy, appreciative joy (Muditā), we should start with a very dear companion, one who in the commentaries is called a "boon companion." This will be someone who is always glad, who laughs first and speaks afterwards. The Vibhaṅga says it like this:[11] "How does a meditator dwell pervading one direction with his heart endued with sympathetic joy? Just as one may have sympathetic joy on seeing a lovely, pleasant person, so one pervades all beings with sympathetic joy."

Even if someone who is dear to us is unlucky and unfortunate at the present moment, sympathetic joy can still be aroused by remembering his happiness in the past. We should think to ourselves, "In the past he possessed great wealth and a great following and he was always happy." And sympathetic joy can be aroused by thinking into the future, like this, "In the future this person who is dear to me will again enjoy similar success with gold and silver, going about in gold palanquins with great followers, and so on."

Then we can direct sympathetic joy towards a neutral person and finally towards an enemy. But if we arouse resentment when dealing with an enemy, we should make it subside just as we did with loving kindness. Muditā is not mere gladness, but sympathetic joy that tends to destroy jealousy, its direct enemy. It embraces all prosperous persons and is the congratulatory attitude of a person, and the tendency is to eliminate any dislike towards successful persons.

The development of equanimity (Upekkhā) is the most difficult and the most essential of the four Divine Abidings. In his *Buddhist Dictionary,* Nyanatiloka says, "Equanimity is an ethical quality belonging to the group of fifty mental phenomena (Saṅkhārakkhandhha) and should not be confused with 'indifferent feeling' [that is to say, the 'neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant sensations']." At times the same word (Upekkhā) is used for both these senses.

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11. *The Book of Analysis,* p. 360.

Here, we are only concerned with equanimity as a pure state of consciousness (Sobhaṇa). It is in this sense that it is one of the four Divine Abidings and one of the Factors of Enlightenment. It means "impartially" or "rightly." One should discern rightly, viewing justly, or look on impartially—without attachment or aversion, without favour or disfavour.

Venerable Nārada Thera said, "Equanimity is essential, especially for laymen who have to live in an ill-balanced world amidst fluctuating circumstances. Slights and insults are the common lot of mankind. The world is so constituted that the good and the virtuous are very often subject to unjust criticism and attack. It is heroic to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

"Loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pain and happiness are eight worldly conditions that affect all humanity."[12]

In order to develop equanimity, we should first turn our thoughts towards a person to whom we are normally neutral. Then, towards a person dear to us, next, a hostile person, and then the rest. As it is stated in the Vibhaṅga,[13] "How does a meditator dwell pervading one direction with his mind endued with equanimity? Just as he would feel equanimity on seeing a person who was neither pleasant nor unpleasant, in the same way he pervades all beings with equanimity."

By thinking of a neutral person, we can break down the barriers which exist in the case of a person dear to us, an enemy, or in our own case. How are the barriers broken down? Suppose a man is with a person dear to him, a person towards whom he feels neutral, and a hostile person. Now suppose robbers seize them and say he has to choose one person who will have his throat cut as the robbers want to make an offering with the blood. If the man points to one of the other three, he has not broken down the barriers. If he offers himself, he still has not broken down the barriers. Why? Because in that case, he seeks the harm of himself and seeks the welfare of others. It is only when he does not see a single person among the four to give to the robbers and directs his mind impartially towards himself and the others that he has broken down the barriers.

These are the Four Divine Abidings. We will find them helpful in our everyday life. And the more we develop them, the better

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12. *The Buddha and His Teachings,* (Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 637.
13. *The Book of Analysis*, p. 362.

we will be able to work on our meditation. Developing equanimity will especially be useful to us during Vipassanā. But these four states are not our ultimate goal. If we limit ourselves to them, the most we can expect is to be reborn in the Brahmā planes where we will have a very happy existence—but not forever. Sooner or later, that life will end, and there is no way of knowing how much suffering may wait for us in future lives. Our goal is Nibbāna: the end of all suffering.

The development of the Four Divine Abidings (Brahma-vihāra Bhāvanā) will help us if we practise each of the virtues over and over again so that we accomplish mental impartiality towards ourselves, those dear to us, those towards whom we are neutral, and towards our enemies. With reference to loving kindness, Ashin Buddhaghosa points out that "the sign and access are obtained . . . simultaneously with the breaking down of the barriers. When breaking down of the barriers has been accomplished, one reaches absorption."[14]

Loving kindness embraces all sentient beings. Compassion embraces unfortunate beings. Sympathetic joy embraces the happy and prosperous. Equanimity embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

May you all progress in loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

May you grow in Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā.

May you be free from desire and clinging, free from hatred and aversion, free from ignorance and wrong view.

May you all be fully Awakened!

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14. *The Path of Purification,* Chapter IX, ¶ 43.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION CENTRE, U.K.

The International Meditation Centre, United Kingdom, located in Heddington, Wiltshire, was founded in 1979 by the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust. The purpose of the Centre is to promote the practice of true Buddhist meditation according to the teachings of the Lord Buddha. The Centre operates under the guidance of its resident teachers, Mother Sayama and Saya U Chit Tin, and with the assistance of a number of their students from around the world. Ten-day residential courses (Friday evening through Monday morning) begin on the first and third Friday of each month.

The teaching at the Centre is based on the Pāḷi texts of Theravāda Buddhism and follows strictly in the tradition of the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin, former Accountant General of Burma and the founder of the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon, Burma. The training is divided into the three disciplines of the Eightfold Noble Path, that is, Sīla or virtuous conduct, Samādhi or concentration, and Paññā or wisdom. For Sīla, students are required to observe either five (new students) or eight precepts (old students). For Samādhi, the students spend the first three and a half days practising Ānāpāna meditation, or concentration on the breath, with the aim of quietening the mind and working for one-pointedness. After a certain degree of Samādhi has been acquired, the students are taught Vipassanā or insight meditation whereby they can come to experience first hand the three essential elements of the Buddha's Teachings: Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Suffering), and Anattā (Egolessness).

One should come to the Centre with the intention of undergoing a ten-day retreat. The training, if followed diligently, will result in the gradual eradication of impurities and ultimately in the realization of "Nibbanic Peace Within." To achieve a state of mind perfectly attuned and in balance, it is essential to start with a stable and sound base of conduct. For the duration of the training, therefore, each student is asked to observe the five precepts as follows: 1) to refrain from killing; 2) to refrain from stealing; 3) to refrain from sexual misconduct (at the Centre, total celibacy); 4) to refrain from lying; 5) to refrain from the use of intoxicants and drugs. Other conventions observed at the Centre include the following:

1) During the course of training the students are asked to give up their previous practices, spiritual or otherwise, especially those concerning pseudo-science, low arts, wearing or adorning themselves with beads, strings, etc., or keeping the latter in their possession.

2) Students are asked to remain within the precincts of the Centre for the entire period of the course.

3) Students are asked to maintain Noble Silence during the period of training.

The goal in view at the Centre is "Magga, Phala, Nibbāna," that is, the Path and Fruition States and Full Awakening. Our aim is "Nibbanic Peace For All." So if students are seeking the "Lokiya" or mundane benefits, they cannot gain the Deathless and will not get out of the rounds of rebirth (Saṃsāra).

Students attending the course should keep an open mind and give a fair trial to the technique by having a certain amount of confidence and by working without entertaining any doubts, as otherwise they will not benefit. Success comes only with these four qualities: Concentration of Intention (Chanda-Samādhi), Concentration of Energy (Viriya-Samādhi), Concentration of Consciousness (Citta-Samādhi), and Concentration of Investigation (Vimaṃsa-Samādhi) accompanied by effort and will.

"For progress in meditation," noted one of Sayagyi U Ba Khin's close disciples, "the following are the essential requirements: 1) confidence in the teacher, 2) strict adherence to the instructions and rules of discipline, 3) the ability to work hard, and 4) the capacity to appreciate and understand the Buddha-Dhamma in practice."

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