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# Some Aspects of Buddhism.

Ashin Dhammadhara.



Some Aspects of Buddhism

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Dhamma Dāna

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(Second Edition)  
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To

My Upajjhāya Sayadaw U Janaka,  
Chan Myay Yeiktha, Rangoon and  
my cousin, U Ko Lay, who both set  
me on the Path.

14593

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Ashin Dhammedhara, BBOA New Civil Lines, Mandalay East, Burma.



Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa

Some Aspects of Buddhism

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## Preface

Some of my friends who had read my book, "Some Aspects of Buddhism" have expressed their appreciation of the manner of my presentation and this has encouraged me to bring out this second edition. Frankly speaking, I have been a very negligent Buddhist and my religious revival, if it may be called that, came rather late in life. It began with my search for Self on May 28, 1979. This brought me to a realization of the Buddha Dhamma and as a result, I entered the Chan Myay Yeiktha, Rangoon as a yogi in June 1979 to practise satipatthāna vipassanā meditation under the guidance of the Reverend Sayadaw U Janaka. As I progressed, a metamorphosis in my hitherto negligent life gradually took shape and the urge to devote more time to the study and practice of Buddhism grew stronger and finally resulted in my ordination as a monk in May 1980.

Life as a bhikkhu opened my mind to more of the sublime truths of the Buddha's teachings. While residing at the Nga-soat monastery, (BBOA) Mandalay, my religious studies were directed by the Reverend Sayadaw U Pawara, whom I had known since I was a boy. I read all I could of the Burmese and English translations of the Pāli texts. I also read expositions of the Dhamma by learned Western bhikkhus and lay scholars. I found

their approach and presentation more direct, simple and lucid and therefore free of the repetitiousness which in translations of the original Pāli texts cannot be avoided. Their expositions presented in such manner fulfilled the spiritual needs of modern scholars of Buddhism and as a humble neophyte, I gratefully acknowledge my great debt to them.

A continuing interest in my writings has produced a few essays of a simple nature which formed the basis of my first book, "Some Aspects of Buddhism." In this second edition, a few more have been added, some existing ones revised to include more of the knowledge I have gained from continuous readings and from conversations with learned monks and laymen. They are again presented for the easier understanding of English readers, who like me, have been negligent or ignorant of the Buddha Dhamma and who have just become aware of the need and a desire to know more of the Buddha's teachings, as a practical way of life for the spiritual and material wellbeing of mankind.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

November 24, 1983

BBOA, Mandalay.



## The Sāsana

Sabbapapassa akāraṇaṃ  
 Kuṣeḷassa upasampāda  
 Sacitta pariyodāpanaṃ  
 Etam Buddhāna Sāsanaṃ

Not to do evil  
 To be full of good.  
 To completely purify one's mind.  
 This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

Dhammapada V. 183

This indeed is the Sāsana, the teaching of all the Buddhas. The term Sāsana is perhaps the nearest equivalent to the modern expression Buddhism. In Burma we use the term Buddha Sāsana to express our religious system. It is a non-aggressive moral and philosophical system expounded by the Buddha who did not demand blind faith from those who sought to live by it.

To the seekers of the truth, the Buddha said: "Do not accept everything in good faith. Do not accept anything on mere hearsay. Do not accept anything because of mere tradition."

The freedom of thought and tolerance allowed by the Buddha is unique in the history of religions. Its stimulating influence has had a great impact on the minds of mankind. There are now over 500 million Buddhists all over the world and though Buddhism is recognized as a major religion, it is not a religion in the same sense by which the word is commonly understood. It is not a system of worship with rituals and ceremonies and owing an



allegiance to a supernatural being. There are no petitionary or intercessory prayers in Buddhism. Flowers are offered and prayers are said by Buddhists before images of the Buddha to affirm their devotion to his teachings. They feel they are in the presence of the living Buddha and gain inspiration and courage from their devotions. Buddhism is a living religion; it is a way of life for the Buddhists. They do not just worship images.

The Buddha's teachings place more emphasis on man's inner life and on a system of ethical conduct based on a doctrine of morality by which means his inner life could be purified and its powers cultivated, so that it would be immune from all the sorrows of life in this world. The Buddha shows the way and we ourselves are responsible for our own purification. One can neither purify nor defile another. But morality is only the beginning and not the end of Buddhism.

The Tipitaka, the traditional canonized texts of the Buddha's teachings is divided into three parts. As the name implies, it is also known as the Three Baskets of learning. They are the Basket of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), the Basket of Discourses (Sutta Pitaka) and the Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (Abhidhamma Pitaka). The Vinaya Pitaka, which is regarded as the foundation of the oldest, historic order, the Sangha, mainly deals with the rules and regulations which the Buddha laid down as occasion arose for the future discipline of the order of monks.



These rules were prescribed only in the twentieth year of his ministry. There are now 227 Vinaya rules.

The Sutta Pitaka consists chiefly of discourses delivered by the Buddha on various occasions and also includes a few discourses by some of his distinguished disciples. The sermons embodied therein were expounded to suit different occasions and temperaments of various persons. Most of the sermons were intended for the benefit of the bhikkhus and they dealt with the holy life and the exposition of the doctrines. There are also several other discourses which deal with both the material and moral progress of his lay disciples. The suttas were delivered by the Buddha, beginning with his first sermon 'Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta' soon after his Enlightenment. These suttas were always directed at a certain individual to serve a purpose and the Buddha made each discourse achieve its object.

The Abhidhamma Pitaka is the most important and the most interesting of the three, containing as it does the profound philosophy of the Buddha's teachings in contrast to the illuminating and simpler discourses in the Sutta Pitaka. The Abhidhamma was expounded by the Buddha in the seventh year after his Enlightenment.

The Buddha founded the Sangha which is the oldest democratically constituted historic celibate order. It was at that time, just a sect in the wanderers' community, 'gone from the home into the homeless' who became the custodians of the Dhamma-Vinaya



and in whose hands lay its initial development. The Saṅgha and the Dhamma-Vinaya developed together.

At one period in ancient times, the Sāsana extended westwards from the Gantara country, known now as Pakistan to Afghanistan, Turkistan, Turkey and Greece. The Sāsana flourished from the Ganges in India to the Volga in Russia. To the north it spread to Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Russia and Siberia. Towards the east it extended to Indonesia, (then known by its ancient name Suvannadīpa) Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. The Sāsana still flourishes in some of those countries. The Theravāda form of Buddhism is considered to be the orthodox and original form of Buddhism. According to tradition, the name is derived from the fact that soon after the parinibbāna of the Buddha, 500 Mahā Theras led by Shin Mahākassapa held the first synod under the sponsorship of King Ajātasatt and the doctrines of the Buddha were canonized by oral recitation. Shin Anandā, who as the faithful, personal attendant of the Buddha, enjoyed the special privilege of hearing all the discourses delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime, recited the Dhammas and Shin Upali, who was well versed in the rules for the monks recited the Vinaya. Theravāda, literally means the 'Doctrine of the Elders'. It is synonymous with Hinayana Buddhism or the 'Small Vehicle' as distinguished from the Mahāyana form of Buddhism, the 'Great Vehicle' which is a later development and is followed now, mainly in China, Tibet, Japan and Korea. The Theravāda flourishes in Sri Lanka,



Burma, Thailand and until the recent changes in the political situation, Laos and Cambodia. There are certain differences, namely with regard to some beliefs and practices between the two schools, but on most important doctrines, both the Mahāyana and the Theravāda are unanimously agreed.

The Buddha Sāsana is reckoned from the year of the Buddha's parinibbana in the year 543 B.C. He was 80 years old and his teachings flourished and spread during the 45 years of his ministry. The Sāsana is now 2527 years old, but the truth of the Buddha's teachings is ever fresh in its pristine purity.

\*Of the Buddha, H.G. Wells writes in 'The Three Greatest Men in History'. "In the Buddha you see clearly a man, simple, devout, lonely, battling for light, a vivid human personality, not a myth. He too gave a message to mankind universal in character. Many of our best modern ideas are in closest harmony with it. All the miseries and discontents are due, he taught, to selfishness. Before a man can become serene, he must cease to live for his senses or himself. Then he merges into a great being. Buddha in a different language called men to self-forgetfulness 500 years before Christ. In some ways he is nearer to us and our needs. He was more lucid upon our individual importance and service than Christ and less ambiguous upon the question of personal immortality."

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\* Narada Thera. "Buddhism in a Nutshell."



### What Buddhism Is .

Buddhism, as it is commonly understood in the West, is not a religion in the strict sense of the word. It is not a system of faith and worship. It is also not akin to other isms such as socialism, communism, materialism, nihilism etc. But it has come to be regarded as one of the three major religions in the world. Buddhism today has become a stimulus for a widening range of thought in the West as its philosophical ideas have come to influence the minds of Western thinkers. It has satisfied the spiritual needs of more than a third of the world's peoples for over 2500 years. Buddhism is encompassed in The Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It is the Buddha Dhamms, the doctrines or teachings of the Buddha, which is the quintessence of Buddhism. The attributes of the Dhamma are incomparable in their clarity and challenge to human intellect. It is well expounded, verifiable here and now, with immediate fruit, inviting all to come and see. It is for the wise to discover, each for himself. Buddhism is not persuasive. The Buddhas only show the way. However, one is not expected to accept them blindly. The Buddha even advised his followers to examine his teachings, test them and accept them only when they are convinced of their veracity. Buddhism also is not a dogmatic creed. It is a philosophy and a way of life taught by the Buddha for those who would seek release from all the sufferings of this world and the misery



of successive rebirths in unending samsāra and who wish to find the peace and happiness of Nibbāna.....the end of all suffering. This can be achieved only in the way shown by the Buddha. Buddhism is an ethical and spiritual teaching of breadth and vision, of reason and logic. It will also stand scientific scrutiny because the Buddha's teachings are based on the universal laws of nature. It has been adopted and practised by non-Buddhists all over the world who seek release from the tensions and tribulations of the modern world and who wish to find the inner calm which alone is conducive to happiness. As the Buddha said: "Ehi passiko. Come and see."

The essence of the Buddha's teachings is based on Kamma, causality, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In his hour of Supreme Enlightenment, the Buddha through his own unaided efforts realized the universal truths which will lead mankind to salvation and the Ultimate Truth of Nibbana. These are the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths evolve round the truth of suffering, its origin, its cessation and the way to end it. The Noble Eightfold Path is the way to be followed and practised which will lead one to the end of suffering in new becomings and reach Nibbana. The Buddha taught us that life beginning with birth and ending with death is suffering. This does not mean that Buddhism is pessimistic in outlook. It only points out the reality of



things both animate and inanimate. All these are subject to decay and destruction and are therefore impermanent. Impermanency causes unsatisfactoriness and this state of feeling is also suffering. His teachings are to end all suffering here and now and for all time.

The Buddha stressed the need to eradicate the three roots of all evil which are the cause of suffering in this world and in the continuum of rebirths. These are Lobha (craving), Dosa (hatred) and Moha (delusion). One must avoid doing evil by thought, word and deed; to do good towards all living beings and to purify one's mind of all impurities and defilements. The Buddha said: "Pāpasmin ramate mano. The mind delights in evil." It is on this basis that we must begin our practice of the Buddha's teachings, because mind is the starting point and the mainspring of all evil volitions. To cleanse our minds of all impurities and defilements, we must observe and practise morality as taught us by the Buddha. Morality is the basis of our faith. But it is only the beginning and not the end of it nor is it its totality. The teachings of the Buddha go far beyond the practice of morality. They will lead us to the practice of vipassanā meditation which will gain us insight-knowledge of things as they really are and not as they appear in conventional form. What reality is can be found within ourselves in our own body. It is ever present there. It is nāma-rūpa. Mind and matter which composes



the being. Thus we come to know the reality of ourselves. The eventual result of this practice will be the eradication of the three roots of evil; lobha, dosa and mohā and lead us to the goal of Nibbāna.

Buddhism is also based on Kamma and the law of causality. This understanding is most essential. Kamma, which means action, any volitional action brings about its own resultant effects. If we do good we will receive good. If we do evil we will receive evil. It is a natural law that will stand the test of time and reason. In the Buddhist doctrines it is known as a niyama dhamma, an immutable law regarding all things in this world. In 1750 Voltaire<sup>1</sup> - amongst many other highly interesting sentences - said "Nothing can exist without a cause." We are the masters of our own fate, of our own destiny. We become what we are as a result of our own past deeds or of deeds done in the present and what we will be in the future will be determined by our deeds, good or bad in the present and of any residual effects of such past deeds. We are the heirs of our own Kamma. The differences in our personalities, status in life, rich or poor, high or low, the healthy and the sick are the result of our kamma, past and present, good and bad. If we do good we will receive good; if we do evil we will receive evil. A man may be endowed with good looks and wealth, but he may lose one or the other or even both

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1. Page 91. The Middle Way, August 1961.

The Great Quotations. By George Seldes.



as a result of his past or present bad kamma. The Buddha teaches us that nothing is permanent and that all conditioned things are impermanent and in a continuing state of flux. They are linked together only by the causal law of "If this is, then that becomes."<sup>1</sup> Even were we to be born in a high state of honour and affluence, our status may change from moment to moment, even falling to a lower level in the present life as a result of our past or present evil kamma. This may be brought about by natural calamities, misfortunes etc. To offset the evil effects of our bad deeds, whether past or present, we must practise morality. We cannot escape the effects of our bad kamma, but we can practise morality and try to accumulate good merits to balance our store of kamma. Circumstances are everchanging and nothing is static. One's good fortune, good looks, good health, etc, will not last; they like all things in life will suffer change and decay and finally dissolution. Another aspect of Kamma is explained by the Venerable Agga Mahā Pandita U Thittila in his lecture "What Buddhism means to the Buddhist." He said: "If properly understood, the doctrine of Kamma teaches us to be careful with our thoughts, words and actions in daily life, so that as time goes on, it makes us better human beings willing to perform better and nobler actions towards all and live more harmoniously with our fellow human beings." We now proceed to the

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1. See page 19, The doctrine of Dependent Origination.



crux of Buddhism... The Three Characteristics of Existence.

Anicca (impermanency), Dukkha (suffering) and Anatta (not-self).

All things in life must one day face decay, destruction or death. Suffering in life begins with birth; The infant will grow older, be rich or poor, high or low, experience ill-health and suffering and either die of disease, accident or old age. No one can escape this fate. It is a universal law. As the Venerable Mogok Sayadaw once said: "You are carrying your own corpse." But while death is inevitable the Buddha taught us how we can save ourselves from suffering in this world and in future existences until we finally win release from rebirths and the attendant sufferings and miseries. The instinct and craving for life and for continued existences are ever present in beings who have not yet won emancipation through the Buddha's teachings. This craving for life force we call bhava-tanhā... a craving for life and future rebirths.

The Anatta doctrine is basic to Buddhism and must be understood and accepted. Without this, the Buddha's teachings cannot be properly comprehended. Anatta or Not-Self means that we must not become too attached to our conventional corporeal personality which we mistakenly consider to be our permanent true self through ignorance or delusion. The false belief that " I am " " This is mine " has no reality and only leads us to have unwholesome thoughts which in turn becomes the cause of more rebirths in



lower planes of existence because of our bad kamma. The Buddha taught us that this Self is just a compound of nāma-rūpa, the Five Aggregates of Attachment. Singly or collectively, they do not constitute an all enduring permanent Self. The Buddha in his discourse to King Bimbisara said: "He who knows the nature of his Self and understands how his senses act, finds no room for the "I" nor even any ground for its supposition." Christmas Humphreys, the well-known Buddhist scholar writes: "The Buddha taught the doctrine of Anatta, Not-Self in which he analysed the being called man and proved it contained no single permanent factor nor anything resembling a changeless and immortal soul."

Morality is the first step towards emancipation from the sufferings of the world and rebirths in new becomings. This is achieved through the observance and practice of the moral precepts which the Buddha has taught us. It must become our way of life..to do good and avoid evil. Two things, namely concentration and meditation (samatha) and insight meditation (vipassanā) must be developed. These when developed will lead to the comprehension of nāma-rūpa and the eradication of ignorance and craving. This may appear simple but it is not so, when you have to begin with the purification of your mind, which is very elusive and swift. Nothing that modern technology can achieve will ever compare with it or be able to control it. The mind can encompass manifold things in the wink of an eye. It is here, there and everywhere. Its swiftness cannot be measured in terms of time and



space. The Buddha taught us how we may tame and control the mind so that all unwholesome thoughts are eradicated from it. "Cittam dantam sukha vham." One who can tame the mind, cultivate it will benefit in this world and in the supramundane world. The tamed mind will bring happiness in this world, in the world of devas and the happiness of Nibbāna. But it is an individual effort. The Buddha stressed self-reliance and resolution. Man can win salvation for himself; others cannot do it for him. This is the teachings of the Buddha and the starting point and culminating point of Buddhism. "By oneself is one purified; no one purifies another." In Buddhism there is no creator God who decides who should be saved and who should be condemned.

The way to the final and absolute fulfillment is the Noble Eightfold Path, of mental and spiritual endeavour... that is the practice of the Path. Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. They constitute the three essentials of spiritual development which will endow one with Sīla (morality), Samādhi (mental concentration) and Pañña (wisdom) and eventually, the realization of Nibbāna.

Just like the bhikkhu whose mind is tranquil, purified, cleansed, flawless, free from defilements and is thus set free, the Noble One who has followed the Buddha's teachings and ful-



filled himself may say, "Rebirth is no more. I have lived the pure life; I have done what ought to be done. I have nothing more to do for the realization of Nibbāna."

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

## The Four Noble Truths

The basic tenets of Buddhism are explained and revealed in the Four Noble Truths. This was expounded by the Buddha in his very first sermon, "Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta" (Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth) to the five ascetics at Isipatana near Benares. All the later sermons of the Buddha are based on these Four Noble Truths. They are:-

1. Dukkha.           Suffering.\*
2. Samudaya.       Origin of Suffering.
3. Nirodha.         Extinction of Suffering.
4. Magga.           The Path leading to the Extinction of Suffering.

The First Noble Truth is Suffering (Dukkha). All forms of existence both in material and mental states are subject to suffering. i.e. birth, old age, disease, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; to be separated from loved ones and pleasant surroundings; to be associated with unloved ones and unpleasant surroundings; being thwarted in one's desires are all suffering. The term dukkha also includes more profound ideas of physical and mental conditions, such as impermanency, insubstantiality, imperfection, dissatisfaction and

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\*The Pali word dukkha is commonly translated as suffering. But, this word does not adequately express what the word dukkha implies. Dukkha covers many shades and levels of suffering; at the very least, an uneasiness of the mind or even a nagging thought is dukkha.



anything not pleasing, etc. "Suffering is impeded volition."

This definition by Schopenhauer is so clear that further clarification is not necessary. All that is contrary to one's volition is suffering and everything that is in accord with one's wishes but is denied or unfulfilled, for that matter is also suffering. Even the state of happiness is suffering because it is not permanent. The Buddha said; "Yad aniccam tam dukkham." (Whatsoever is impermanent is dukkha). This wide embracing meaning of dukkha has tended to give the impression that Buddhism is pessimistic. As a matter of fact it is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. Buddhism, if at all it is to be described, can be termed realistic. It looks at things objectively and sees them for what they really are.

The all pervasive existence of suffering in this world does not mean there is no happiness in life. There are many forms of happiness; such as the happiness of family life, the happiness of the life of a recluse; the happiness of worldly success and pleasures and the happiness of renunciation. There are also the happiness of attachment and the happiness of detachment both physical and mental. All that is unpleasant is suffering; all that is disliked is the same. Pleasant things one likes make one happy. But all these are included in dukkha because the conditions and mental states are not permanent and are everchanging. The enjoyment of these states of happiness is merely transitory and when they cease to exist, the result is always unhappiness,



unsatisfactoriness and suffering. Even the pure states of spiritual bliss (jhāna) attained through higher meditation, which is devoid of suffering and which is only pure equanimity and awareness, even these higher mental states are included in dukkha for they are also impermanent. One must understand this fact clearly and completely, for the Buddha said: "He who sees dukkha sees also the arising of dukkha and sees also the path leading to the extinction of dukkha." (Samyutta Nikāya).

The Second Noble Truth is the Origin of Suffering (Samudaya). It is desire, craving (tanhā) which leads to rebirths, conditioned by craving and attachment for sensual pleasures (kāmatanha), for existence (bhavetanhā) and for non-existence (vibhavetanhā). It is these cravings which give rise to all forms of sufferings and the continuity of rebirths and new becomings. But these alone are not the main cause or origin; tanha depends for its arising on sensation (vedanā) and this in turn arises depending on contact (phassa) and so on in an unending cycle which is explained in the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppāda).

The Origin of Suffering is set forth as follows:-  
 Through Ignorance, Kammaformations are conditioned;  
 through Kammaformations, Consciousness is conditioned;  
 through Consciousness, Mental and Physical Phenomena are conditioned;  
 through Mental and Physical Phenomena, the Six sense Bases are conditioned;



through the Six Sense Bases, Contact is conditioned;  
 through Contact, Sensation is conditioned;  
 through Sensation, craving is conditioned;  
 through Craving, Clinging is conditioned;  
 through Clinging, the Process of Becoming is conditioned;  
 through the Process of Becoming, Rebirth is conditioned;  
 through Rebirth are conditioned Old Age and Death, Sorrow,  
 Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair.

Thus on the linkage of the causal law of "When this is then that becomes" arises the whole mass of suffering again in the future. Though this is also dependent on one another, Craving (tanhā) is the immediate and root cause. What one likes brings about craving and a desire to cling to it and this if denied or frustrated brings about suffering. This craving is not confined to material things; it also includes craving for sensuous mental states as well. This is the desire to live, to exist in new becomings. We must disregard it, eliminate it, uproot and eradicate it in the way shown by the Buddha, i.e. the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Third Noble Truth is the Extinction of Suffering (Nirodha). This means the freedom and emancipation from suffering, from the continuity of rebirths. Total extinction must be brought about through the elimination of the main root of dukkha which is craving, the first of the three main roots of all evil; lobha (craving), dosa(hatred) and moha(delusion).



How this extinction of suffering can be achieved is explained by the Buddha. He said; "O monks, what is the passing away of beings? Monks, on account of the eye and visible object, eye-consciousness arises; phassa (contact) is the conjunction of the three; through the extinction of contact, feeling becomes extinguished; through the extinction of feeling, craving becomes extinguished; through the extinction of craving, clinging becomes extinguished; through the extinction of clinging, rebirth becomes extinguished; through the extinction of rebirth, decay and death become extinguished as well as sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus takes place the extinction of the whole mass of suffering. This is the passing away of beings.\* The total extinction of suffering is Nibbāna and this can be realized by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Path (Magga), also known as the Middle Way (majjhima patipada). It leads to the extinction of suffering and is generally referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path because it is composed of eight factors. Practised faithfully, it will lead the way to Nibbāna. One must follow and practise them with diligence and abide by them. The application of the Four Noble Truths evolve round what we consider to be a being, an individual or I, which for conventional purposes we call a human being, but which in reality is only a combination of mental and physical energies. Mind and matter (nāmarūpa) are composed of

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\*Manual of the Four Noble Truths. By the Ledi Sayadaw, Mahā Thera. The Light of the Dhamma, Vol. V. No. 4. October 1958.



the Five Aggregates of Attachment, namely Aggregate of Matter (rūpakkkhandha), the Aggregate of Sensations (vedanākkhandha), the Aggregate of Perceptions (sannakkhandha), the Aggregate of Kammaformations (sankhārakkhandha) and the Aggregate of Consciousness (viññānakkhandha).<sup>\*</sup> Conditioned states arise and disappear in each of these five aggregates and they as aggregates of attachment are termed suffering. Of the Four Noble Truths it is important to have a clear understanding of the First Noble Truth of Suffering. If one realizes it, then the others are realized as well for they are inter-related. The understanding and application of the Four Noble Truths form the basis of the Buddhist Way of Life which will lead us to the ultimate goal - Nibbāna.

"By not seeing the ariyan truths as they really are, long is the path that is traversed through many a birth; when these are seen, the cause of rebirth is removed; the root of sorrow uprooted; then there is no more suffering."<sup>\*\*</sup> -(Samyutta Nikāya).

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

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\* See page 62

\*\* The Life of Gotama the Buddha. By E.H. Brewster.

## The Noble Eightfold Path

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Middle way, leading to the cessation of suffering. It is known as the Middle way because it avoids the two extremes of attaining happiness through sensual indulgence and the other through self-mortification. The Buddha himself went through the experience of these two extremes until he discovered the Middle Way which led to his Enlightenment and Buddhahood. The Middle way is generally referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path because it is composed of the following eight factors.

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Right Understanding | (Sammā dīṭṭhi)   |
| Right Thought       | (Sammā saṅkappa) |
| Right Speech        | (Sammā vācā)     |
| Right Action        | (Sammā kammaṇṭa) |
| Right Livelihood    | (Sammā ajīva)    |
| Right Effort        | (Sammā vāyama)   |
| Right Mindfulness   | (Sammā sati)     |
| Right Concentration | (Sammā samādhi)  |

Almost all the Buddha's teachings in the course of his ministry deals with ~~this~~ Path. He explained this in many ways to various kinds of people, according to their degree of understanding and capacity to absorb his teachings. But the essence of all the discourses delivered by the Buddha are contained in the Noble Eightfold Path. These factors embody the three essentials of



Buddhist training and discipline, i.e. Ethical conduct (Sīla), Mental Discipline (Samādhi) and Wisdom (Paññā). Endowed with sīla, samādhi and pañña, a person will soon realize the Ultimate Truth—Nibbāna, the summum bonum of Buddhism.

Ethical Conduct (sīla) is based on universal love and compassion for all living beings and on the three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood.

Right Speech means abstaining from speaking false words (musāvācā), back-biting and slander (pisunavācā), rude, harsh and abusive language (pharusavācā) and idle, frivolous gossip (samphapalāpavācā). Refraining from such strong and harmful speech, one speaks the truth and in a gentle manner which is conducive to friendly, pleasant and useful discourse. Speech should also be at the right time and place. Otherwise, there should be a noble silence.

Right Action means moral, honourable and right conduct in our relationship with others. One should not take the life of living beings, even that of the smallest insect; one should refrain from taking what is not given, dishonest dealings and sexual misconduct. One should be a good friend and help others to lead good and honourable lives. One's dealings with others should be conducive to peace and happiness. One should avoid hurting the feelings of others by one's actions, whether intended or otherwise. One must try to control rising anger lest it lead to harmful actions against others.



Right Livelihood means one should not adopt a living which will be harmful to others, i.e., dealing in firearms and weapons, white slavery, selling liquor, poison, slaughtering animals for food, cheating and other ways of dishonest living. One must take up a livelihood that is harmless, good and honest; of a kind that will make a person respected by his neighbours and fellowmen. Buddhist ethical and moral conduct aims to promote a happy and harmonious life both for the individual and for society. Morality is the basis of the Buddha's teachings.

Mental Discipline (Samādhi) includes three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Right Effort is diligence in not permitting evil and bad states from arising in one's character; diligence in getting rid of such evil and bad states that have already arisen; diligence in causing good and healthy states of mind to arise and diligence in guarding good and healthy states that have already arisen and not letting them deteriorate. (Samyutta Nikāya). It is avoidance of evil by thought, word and deed. As the Buddha said, we must work out our own salvation with diligence.

Right Mindfulness is to be diligently aware at all times of the activities of the body (kāya), sensations or feelings (vedanā), activities of the mind (citta) such as thoughts, ideas etc. (dhammas). One must always be fully mindful of all the activities of mind and body good or bad, pleasant, unpleasant or



neutral. Always be mindful of their arising and passing away. Of the mental activities, thoughts and ideas that may arise should be carefully noted. We must be aware of the state of our mind, whether it is lustful, given to anger or hatred, deluded or ignorant and we must be aware of their arising and passing away.

Right concentration is practised in the course of meditation and when fully developed, leads one to the four stages of jhana or the state of 'blissful absorption' during the course of which mental defilements and impurities are discarded and feelings of joy (pīti) and happiness (sukha) are attained. Finally, in the fourth and last stage of jhāna one finds all sensations, joy and sorrow disappear, until only pure equanimity and awareness remain. Practice of these factors will result in a mind that is tamed, controlled, guarded, restrained and developed, which is conducive to great benefit.

Wisdom (Paññā) constitutes the remaining two factors, Right Thought and Right Understanding. Wisdom means to gaining of insight-knowledge of the dhammas concerning our existence, the becomings and passing away of beings, the sufferings and finally the cessation of rebirths and the way to achieve it.

Right Thought means thoughts free from lust, ill-will and cruelty. It means thoughts of loving kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), non-hatred (akkodha) and of detachment (uppekha) for

all living beings. Thus a man endowed with these qualities is called a wise man, for the converse of these are due to ignorance and lack of wisdom. Right Understanding, therefore, is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Development of these two factors, Right Thought and Right Understanding will lead one to insight-knowledge and the realization of the Ultimate Truth.

Everyone who sets out on the noble quest for truth must follow the Noble Eightfold Path, practise it and develop it for himself. These factors are inter-related and each helps in the realization of the others. It is the Buddhist Way of Life which is conducive to self-discipline, self-development and self-purification. It will finally lead one to complete freedom, happiness and peace through moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection. This is Nibbāna and it can be achieved in the present life time. This is the supramundane sphere of Sa-upādisesa Nibbāna.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.



Thus I have heard.

Sayadaws, famed and venerated for their knowledge of the scriptures, discharge their ganṭha dhūra (pariyatti), one of the duties incumbent upon them, by preaching the doctrines to their lay followers and guide them through their sermons on how they should live and practise the teachings of the Buddha in order that they may win release from the misery of rebirths in saṃsāra. They preach these sermons in very simple language with appropriate similes and examples to render them more understandable by ordinary folks, so that the Buddha's teachings may become a way of life to them.

Since joining the Order, I have listened to some sermons preached by eminent sayadaws or have had them recounted to me by my lay friends and other brethern monks. I have also read some of the sermons preached by these Mahā Theras. I have chosen a few excerpts from what I have heard and read for the benefit of some of my readers who may not have had the good fortune to have heard them.

These excerpts may not be the final answer we seek for our salvation from continuing rebirths in this mundane world, but I have found them to have been of much benefit to me in my own efforts towards the realization of the Ultimate Truth.

I hope I will not be considered too presumptuous for using as the title, the very words used by the Venerable Ānandā who,

at the First Council convened soon after the Buddha's passing away (parinibbāna), recounted every sermon preached by the Buddha, prefacing them with the words... "Thus I have heard."

I would like to begin by quoting the late Ledi Sayadaw, Agga Mahā Pandita, D. Litt. Mahā Thera's words of advice to his disciples. This sayadaw was a very learned Pāli scholar and was well known to Buddhists in Western countries. He said, "The root cause of all wrong views, evil mental factors and evil kammās is sakkāya ditṭhi (personality belief). Persons with sakkāya ditṭhi tend towards pride, anger, hatred and ill-will towards others. Lobha, dosa, moha and māna must be eradicated."

The late Webu Sayadaw, a most saintly Mahā Thera, was venerated by all Buddhists throughout Burma for his compassion for all living beings, wisdom, piety and the saintliness of his life. The story is told that he once encountered a thief in his monastery and he bade the thief take what property he wanted and go away before the men attendants on the sayadaw discovered him, instead of raising the alarm and having the thief apprehended. He passed away in 1979, after many years devoted to the practice of pari-yatti and patipatti sāsanas. His advice and teachings to his disciples have been of great benefit to all who heard them.

His frequent advice on many occasions, whether in private discourse with a few disciples or in sermons delivered to a congregation of devotees, was to use his own words - "Today the



effort should be done." The following excerpts are from some of his sermons.\* "Fulfill the vows of Sīla you have taken; once you have fulfilled them all your wishes will be fulfilled. It will bring happiness to you now and also in the future.

Strive to attain the three Sikkhas. (1) Adhi Sīla (Higher Morality). When one is mindful of Rūpa and Nāma, there will be no physical and mental violence. This is Adhi Sīla. (2) Adhi Citta (Higher Mentality). When Adhi Sīla is developed, the mind becomes concentrated and tranquil. This is Adhi Citta. (3) Adhi Paññā (Higher Wisdom). When Adhi Citta is developed, one gains insight of the real nature of rūpa and nāma. One who knows by insight, the process of becoming and cessation achieves Adhi Paññā. Vijjā (knowledge) and Carana (conduct) must be developed simultaneously.

Follow the teachings of the Buddha as well as that of the teacher. Be respectful. Be humble. Khanti (forbearance) and Mettā (loving kindness) must be practised assiduously.

Doing meritorious deeds which also include service to others, especially one's parents or teacher or even attending to the needs of your family or of friends. All these will accumulate as merits to your credit."

Finally, the Webu Sayadaw reminds his disciples of this very important fact. He said, "Nothing else, but only the teachings of

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\* The Essence of Buddha Dhamma. Religious Affairs Department 1978.

the Buddha can bring you peace and happiness in the present and in future existences."

The late Mahāsi Sayadaw, Agga Mahā Pandita, U Sobana (d.14-8-82) famed and venerated throughout Burma and abroad for his wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures, devoted a lifetime to the teaching of the vipassanā meditation practice to his many disciples. His sermons were always an exhortation to his disciples to practise this form of meditation if they wished to escape the sufferings of the round of rebirths and realize Nibbāna. He embellished his sermons with anecdotes and examples from the scriptures and even from everyday life to drive home the seriousness and need to practise vipassanā meditation to end suffering and attain Nibbāna.

In his well-known sermon, the Great Discourse on the Wheel of Dhamma, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (Setting in motion the Wheel of Truth), the Mahāsi Sayadaw explained the need for vipassana meditation to be practised daily.

On insight without mindfulness.\* He said, "The commentary is very clear on this point. It is not just listening to the teaching but contemplation on any of the objects, body, feelings, mind and mental objects that helped them to attain higher knowledge. Without contemplation on any of them, it is impossible to

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\* Translated into English by U Ko Lay, Vice-Chancellor (Retd) of the Mandalay University. Published Dec. 1981.



develop insight knowlesge nor knowledge pertaining in the noble path and fruition. It is very clear therefore that mere learning of the definition and classifications of nama and rupa and reflecting on them without actually noting them as they arise within one's body, will never develop the proper path of right view otherwise called the insight knowledge or the knowledge pertaining to the noble path."

Again, he exhorts his disciples in the following words. "The good Buddhists are in the habit of wishing for speedy realization and attainment of Nibbāna whenever they accomplish any meritorious deed. The summum bonum will not of course be attained immediately by their mere wishing. It will be attained only in one of the higher planes which they will reach by virtue of their good deed; and then only if they actually practise developing the Eightfold Noble Path. So, why wait till future existence? Why not start now and work for liberation in this very life ?"

The following excerpts are from one of the sermons\* preached by the Taungpulu Sayadaw, another famous and venerated monk whose reputation has also spread to the West where he has been on many missions propagating the Dhamma. He said, "Charity, morality and mental development lead to the cessation of rebirths, end of suffering - Nibbāna. Dependent on alobha, charity (dāna) arises. Dependent on adosa, morality (sīla) arises. Dependent on amoha, mental development (bhavanā) arises.

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Mahā Satipatthanā Vipassanā - Insight Meditation.  
Translated by U Chit Tin (Kaba Aye) 1979.



Charity and morality can lead one to the state of sotapanna, sakkadāgami and also to the state of anāgami; but it is only bhavenā, mental development which can lead one to the final state of Arahatsip and Nibbāna.

Two things, namely mind and matter must be discriminately comprehended.

Two things, namely ignorance and craving for existence must be abandoned.

Two things, namely concentration (samatha) and insight meditation (vipassanā) must be developed.

If samatha is developed rūpa (matter) is fully comprehended and tanhā is abandoned. If this is abandoned, rāga(lust) is overcome and the mind is freed of defilements.

If vipassanā is developed, nāma (mind) is fully comprehended and avijjā is abandoned. Rāga is overcome and one attains the emancipation of knowledge from defilements. These will lead to the abandonment of atta-ditṭhi, knowledge of anatta and being disgusted with sufferings brought about by these, he will be enlightened.

Samatha will lead to the cessation of tanhā and vipassanā will lead to the cessation of avijjā."

The Udaung-teung Sayadaw U Kumāra, who is now in his 93rd year is a saintly and venerated Pao monk, living in his mountain retreat in the Inle lake area in the Southern Shan State. He is also an accomplished scholar of the Pāli canons. He is regarded



almost like an arahat by his people and thousands of devotees visit his monastery the whole year round. Listening to him speak, you get the impression that his words are directed at you alone out of all the people round him. But this feeling is shared by each and everyone who listens to his sermons. I too, had this same feeling when I visited Udaung-taung and paid my made my obeisance to the Sayadaw and he gave us the following words of advice. I thought he was speaking only to me.

He said: "Cittam dantam sukha vaham." "Happiness will be gained if you can cultivate your mind. If the mind is controlled, happiness in this world of human beings, happiness in the world of devas and the bliss of Nibbāna will be gained."

Tipitakadhara Sayadaw U Vicittasarabhivamsa of Mingun Hill, Sagaing township, is a highly learned and venerated monk, now in his early eighties. He often reminds his disciples of the passing away of time and the need for religious pursuits before it is too late. "Perform meritorious deeds even now, before you grow old and before you die. When you die, all your worldly possessions will not accompany you. It is only the wholesome kammās you have performed which will accompany you."

The Mogok Sayadaw, Agga Mahā Pandita U Vimala, who passed away in October 1962 was a very learned scholar and spent his life preaching and guiding his disciples, whose numbers were legion in the practice of vipassanā meditation. He was a very forceful speaker and his sermons were always attended by the



thousands from far and near. Some excerpts are quoted here. He said on one occasion, "You are carrying your own corpse." It was a very forceful reminder of the impermanency of life and the urgency to strive for one's salvation from the sufferings of samsara while there was yet time to do so. On other occasions he said:

One charity. "When I tell you that you must give away your worldly possessions, I don't mean you must literally give them away to another person. You must abandon them with wisdom, with the knowledge and conviction that "This body is not mine." "These properties are not mine." View them with the knowledge of their impermanency and that they will not accompany you when you die. Your body and possessions must be seen in this right way. When this is realized, you will have no more attachment for them. You must view them with insight gained through vipassana meditation. As the Buddha said, your possessions will only bring you suffering, just as a crow, having a piece of meat in its beak is attacked for its possession by other crows. Only when he abandoned his piece of meat did he escape the sufferings caused by the attacks on him. Similarly, abandonment of possessions or a total detachment for them will save you from sufferings arising out of their possession."

On another occasion he said: "It is wrong to think that your property whether of cash or kind, which you have given away in charity has passed away to another person. You must view it in



this way. Your possessions are always threatened by the 'five great enemies' water, fire, rulers, thieves and enemies. Your body too is subject to old age, decay and death. It is ravaged by all these fires and out of this conflagration, you save something for yourself by giving them away in charity and gaining merit for yourself. You are like a person, who having saved some property from a burning house, may claim possession of them because he did save them from the fire and therefore, you also can consider that the properties you have given away, have not passed into other hands, but remain with you as meritorious kamma salvaged before your body is totally destroyed by the fires of old age, decay and death and your other material properties saved likewise, before they too are lost through the elements of the 'five great enemies.'

In his last sermon, delivered just a few days before his death in October 1962, he said, "The answer to the question, 'Who sent you to the human world?' is, 'It is the kamma dhammas that is responsible.' That is why the dhammas, the teachings of the Truth are supreme; you go where they direct you. That is why, your only refuge is the Dhamma. Because you will have to go where the dhammas direct you, which dhamma will you choose? Do you wish to be directed by the akusala dhammas (evil consciousness) or would you like to go where the dāna dhammas (charity), sīla dhammas (morality), samātha dhammas (concentration) and vipassanā dhammas (insight meditation) send you ?



If you follow the akusala dhammas you will end up in the lower abodes of suffering. If you choose the path shown by dana dhamma you will be in the world of humans and the world of devas. But there too, there still are the conditions of old age, decay and death. Sīla dhamma will send you to the highest abode of the brahmā world, but you will still have to suffer old age, decay and death.

The path through samātha meditation will ensure longevity but you will still have to suffer old age, decay and death.

It is only through the practice of the dhammas of vipassanā meditation that you will realize Nibbāna, where there is no more suffering. So I say to you all, Know the Truth and choose with wisdom. If you wish to go where there is no suffering, you must diligently practise vipassanā meditation. This alone will lead you to the fruition of the path to Nibbāna and no where else.

If you practise vipassanā meditation you will destroy all evils and be free of them. You will no longer suffer the effects of kamma. You have won complete emancipation."

Lastly, I quote the few words of advice given me by my Upajjhāya Sayadaw U Pawara, State Ovādacariya, Mandalay. He is now in his 86th year and in his old age, a man of few words. He gave me this advice. "Nāma-rūpa is anicca. Nāma-rūpa is dukkha. Nāma-rūpa is anatta. Reflect on these and strive to eradicate craving for the five sense pleasures, one by one, till tanhā is



totally destroyed. Practise it till you are free of them - that will lead to Nibbāṇa.

Contemplate on the vicissitudes of life and be unshaken by them. This is another approach to Nibbana. Reflect on these, while practising vipassanā meditation - that nāma-rūpa are impermanent, suffering and not-self and that the five sense pleasures are also the same. This will lead to the extinction of lobha, dosa and moha and the rest of the ten kilesas. (evil dharmas)."

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

## This is the Only Way

This is a recording of a lecture delivered by Ashin Dhammadasa of the Nga-Soat Taik, Mandalay. Ashin Dhammadasa in lay life was Johnny Tin Tut. May is a significant month for Ashin Dhammadasa, for it was on May 28, 1979, that his search for self and his self-purification began which eventually led to his ordination as a Buddhist monk in May 1980.

The aim of the Buddha's teachings is the eradication of impurities and defilements in one's person, purification and self-development and the eventual release from the miseries and sufferings of the many rebirths in samsarā, till one finally comes to the realization of the Ultimate Truth. This can be achieved through a vigorous and earnest practice of the Buddha's teachings which show his followers many ways for reaching it. Each individual chooses what he thinks he can best adopt and practise. I have chosen the way of Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā for the purpose of my own practice. The Buddha, in one of his discourses, said "Yassa dānena sīlena bhāvanam bhāveti khayam Nibbānam pāpunāti." It means, "He who practises dāna, sīla and bhāvanā shall reach Nibbāna."

I hope this talk will help to light your way to the final goal.

The month of Kason commemorates three important events in the life of the Buddha. It was on the fullmoon day of this month in the year 623 B.C. that he was born an Indian prince,



Siddhattha by name. His father King Suddhodana, ruled over the Sakya clan ( what is now modern Nepal) and his mother was Queen Māyā. It was also on this day, 35 years later, that he gained Enlightenment as the Omniscient Buddha who gave to the world, the doctrines of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the practice of which characterizes the Buddhist way of life and which will lead us to the realization of Nibbāna the end of suffering endured by all living beings in the round of rebirths. Finally, it was also on this day that the Buddha, at the age of 80 years passed away, the day of his Parinibbāna. There was to be no more rebirths for him and he was not symbolized as an eternal deity by his followers. But to Buddhists all over the world, he continues to live in his sublime teachings which still are ever fresh in their pristine purity and truth. The doctrines which he left to us as our legacy, teach us how we ourselves, through our own efforts can also realize Nibbāna even in the present lifetime and win release from all of rebirths in new existences. It is a way of life to be followed and practised by each individual. It is self-discipline of our minds and bodies.

Sabba pāpassa akaraṇam  
 Kusalassa upasampadā  
 sacitta pariyodāpanam  
 Itam Buddhena Sāsanam

These are the words spoken by the Buddha and they embody the essence of all his teachings. Translated it means, "Not to do evil, to be full of good; to completely purify one's mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddhas." It may appear out of place to use Pāli quotations in these modern times, since Pāli, which is an ancient language of India, is no longer in daily use and only finds a place in academic circles. But it was the language spoken by the Buddha and it is appropriate and even necessary occasionally to make such quotations, so as to reaffirm and strengthen our belief and conviction in the truth of his teachings, by hearing in his own words his message of salvation to suffering mankind.

"The mind of beings delights in evil" and it is this uncontrolled mind with its propensity for evil that has been the fount from which springs all the ills and sufferings of living beings. Thus, the need 'to completely purify one's mind.' It is only when this has been accomplished can we gain knowledge and realize Nibbāna. According to the Buddha's teachings there are three stages which we must follow and practise to achieve this. These three stages which also characterize the Buddhist way of life are Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā.

Dāna (charity) is not only the giving of gifts, offerings and donations for religious and secular purposes, but it is also the virtue of giving oneself to the service of others. The giving of gifts and offerings are meritorious when the occasion is appropriate to the need. We call this, kāla dāna. The offering of gold plates to gild the Shwedagon pagoda is no doubt worthy of great merit, but the gift of a hospital for the lay people is a more deserving one, for the need of such



gifts is ever present in these days and therefore, more meritorious. Offerings of food, robes, dwellings and medicines to monks who are in need of such are very good deeds which will earn great merit for the donors, bring them peace and happiness in the present life and ensure that they will be reborn in a higher state in their next existence. Of far greater benefit is that they will <sup>likely</sup> not descend to the nether worlds of apāya.

The giving of oneself in self-less service to others, especially to the sick and the aged, the generosity with which we give alms and offerings to the monks, conditions and elevates our minds to noble and virtuous planes and encourages us for the practice and acquisition of Sīla which is the second stage in our efforts towards self-purification. This is the more difficult to achieve since we must try and destroy all evil from our minds. In doing so, we must begin with the practice of Sīla (morality). Akusala (wrong-doing) by word and deed must be avoided. Thoughts and volitions also must be controlled. Morality is the foundation of the Buddhist way of life. The cleansing of our minds of evil thoughts, self-purification, it must be repeated, is not an easy task. If one could easily do so, Nibbāna in the present life would be within the reach of all who tried to purify themselves. They would be free from all further misery, decay and death, for there would be no more rebirths for them after their life-span in the present existence was over. For such a one had achieved the final goal. However, all this will come about only through one's own determined and vigorous efforts for the Buddhas only show the way. The



Dhammapada has this beautiful little stanza which you should remember. "By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself indeed is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another." Prayers and entreaties to the Buddha will not save you from the consequences of the evil you have done. One must pay for the result of one's own actions. If you do good, you will receive good; if you do evil you will receive evil. But no one is condemned forever; you can purify yourself by practising the teachings of the Buddha and ensure a store of good merits to counterbalance the evil that has been done.

The first step in the practice of Sīla is the observance of the precepts laid down by the Buddha which restrains us from wrong-doing either by thought, word or deed. There are three kinds of evil proclivities inherent in us, which are kindled by the fires of Lobha, Dosa and Moha. These evil inclinations which we unknowingly have in us and which tend to break out if not restrained or destroyed are, (1) Vītakkamma kilesā, (2) Pariyutthāna kilesā and (3) Anusaya kilesā. Vītakkamma kilesā is an act of transgression or aggression, the kind of wrong-doing committed by word or deed and which is motivated by greed, anger or ignorance. This can be destroyed by the practice of Sīla which means Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. Pariyutthāna kilesā comprises the evil that occurs in



thoughts, thus creating a perturbed mind. This can be destroyed by Samādhi (concentration), which is based on Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Anusaya kilēsa, the third bad mental state which lies latent in us is the most difficult to destroy. Even if we have uprooted the first two kilesās and have achieved some degree of virtue and tranquility of spirit as a result of a well-controlled mind, this kilesā being latent in our personalities may break out at any moment. This can be destroyed only by Paññā (wisdom), based on Right Thought and Right Understanding, through bhāvanā (meditation). It must be noted that Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration are the components of the Noble Eightfold Path. If a person is earnest and diligent in the observance and practice of dāna, sīla and bhāvanā, he will enjoy peace and happiness in the present life and later, stage by stage, reach Nibbāna. Regarding the practice of the precepts, we should observe nicea sīla, a precept to be practised in our day-to-day lives. This is the aḷvaṭṭhamaka sīla, which signifies the practice of virtuous living. If this sīla is broken, there is no demerit and it can be reestablished immediately by renewing the undertaking. The other precepts which are observed on sabbath days are much more strict and if any are broken, an offence is committed. Much merit is gained by their observance and if possible, they also should be adopted as a mode of living. It is therefore of the utmost importance



and essential to our Buddhist way of life to purify our minds of all evil. Therefore in order to acquire and hold on to a virtuous way of life, we must practise the following four padanas or diligent efforts. (1) One must be diligent in not permitting evil and bad states to arise in one's character. (2) One must be diligent in getting rid of evil and bad states that have already arisen. (3) One must be diligent in causing good and healthy states to arise in one's character. (4) One must be diligent in guarding good and healthy states that have already arisen in one's character and not allow them to deteriorate. These four padanas are embodied in the Right Effort of the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the practice and observance of morality, we must strive with diligence and energy to destroy the three main roots of all evil which dominate our lives. These are lobha, dosa and moha. Lobha is not just mere greed or a desire for more and better material things of life. It also signifies a thirst or craving (tanhā) for the sensual pleasures of mind and body and also for life itself, which is known as bhava tanhā. Dosa is anger and hatred, for both will lead one to violence and wrongdoing, verbally and physically while under their influence. Anger and hatred can dominate the mind even to the extent of making a person take the life of another. These two evils, lobha and dosa are brought about by moha (ignorance) which is the primary cause. Here, ignorance means the lack of knowledge of the true doctrines taught by the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths



and the Noble Eightfold Path. It is this ignorance which results in wrong-doing motivated by lobha and dosa. In a broader sense, moha also means delusion, especially self-delusion. This is due to a false belief in the permanency of the ego-personality or the idea of an everlasting Self or I. This is opposed to the Buddhist doctrine of Anatta or Not-Self. The fallacy that a human being is Self or I is the result of a craving or thirst for existence and new becomings due to an excessive attachment or obsession for Self, which is then thought to be unchanging and everlasting in its present form and fortune. This is mainly due to the ignorance of the Buddha's teaching that all things are conditioned and everchanging and that all impermanent things are dukkha. Therefore it is wrong to have an attachment for things which are impermanent and dukkha, including the Self or I, which the Buddha said are only the five aggregates of attachment composed of mental and physical energies that make up the human being or Self. These are subject to suffering, decay and death and as such, one should not have any craving for them or cling to them. They must be regarded as fetters and as such, to be cast aside. In essence, the Buddha's teachings are to make us have a detachment for worldly and sensuous things, including our corporeal selves if we wish to follow the path he has shown us to reach Nibbāna. The Pāli word Nibbāna, literally means non-attachment. It also means the extinction and cessation of craving (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha), the three main roots of all evil volitions. They are the cause of all the



sufferings in this world and thus Nibbāna has also come to mean freedom from suffering and rebirths. Nibbāna is not situated anywhere as a sort of heaven. It is a supramundane state and it can be attained in this present life and is within the reach of all who will practise the dhammas taught by the Buddha... the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the Samyutta Nikāya, the Buddha describes one who has achieved this state. "He who has realized the Ultimate Truth is the happiest being in the world. He is free from all complexes and obsessions, the miseries and troubles that torment others. His mental health is perfect. He does not repent the past, nor does he brood over the future. He lives only in the present." He is one who has freed himself of *looha*, *dosa* and *moha*.

Now we enter into the practice of *bhāvanā*, the third stage in the Buddha's teaching which will lead us to the goal of Nibbāna, through mental culture gained through vigorous and earnest practice. *Bhāvanā*; in its fullest sense means mental culture. It aims at cleansing the mind of all impurities and defilements and to bring about awareness, concentration and knowledge. *Bhāvanā* or the practice of meditation, has many methods but only two major forms. One is the development of mental concentration (*samātha*), one-pointedness of mind and the other is the realization of insight knowledge (*vipassanā*). *Samātha* meditation only brings about a sense of peaceful and happy living and a serenity of mind in this existence and a favourable rebirth in the next, but does not assist us to



attain the wisdom that will lead to Nibbāna. It is also widely practised all over the world by non-Buddhists. Vipassanā meditation, on the other hand, is the true form of Buddhist meditation. It is an analytical method based on awareness, mindfulness and vigilance. According to the Buddha, there are forty methods of meditation. But whatever the method one adopts, the essential thing to remember and practise diligently is mindfulness. There are four objects of mindfulness. First, is the body (kāya), second, is sensations (vedanā), the third is mind (citta) and the fourth, mind objects (dhammas).

In the Buddhist doctrines, the mind is the starting point, the focal point of all volitional actions, whether good or bad. In the Anguttara Nikāya, the Buddha teaches us that 'Whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil, all issues from the mind. Whatsoever there is of good connected with good, belonging to good, all issues from the mind.' The culminating point is the liberated and purified mind that gains insight leading to the Ultimate Truth.

The greater part of man's sufferings comes not so much from deliberate or inherent wickedness as from ignorance, thoughtlessness, rashness and from a lack of moral shame (hiri) and moral dread (ottapa) the two lokapāla dhammas that protect the world. In the Anguttara Nikāya, the Buddha said, "Two dhammas, O monks, are protecting the world - Hiri and Ottapa. If these two dhammas were not to protect the world, then one would not know one's mother, nor the mother's sister, nor one's brother's



wife nor one's teacher's wife." Lack of these or a wilful disregard for them has been the cause of many evils and the down-grading of a man's moral character. In another sense, it is a lack of self-control. Very often, a single moment of mindfulness and reflection would have prevented a far-reaching consequence of misery and guilt. Mindfulness slows down or even stops transition from thought to action, allowing more time for reaching a wiser decision. Mindfulness is the instant and clear awareness of what is happening to us at successive moments in our daily lives. It is constantly being aware of all the actions and perceptions emanating from the five physical sense organs and through the mind, which in Buddhism, is regarded as the sixth sense organ or faculty. When attending to these, mindfulness is kept to the bare registering of the facts observed without any physical or mental reaction. The great importance of getting at the bare fact was stressed by the Buddha in the following weighty and concise saying: "In what is seen, there should be only the seen; in what is heard, only the heard; in what is sensed, (as smell, taste or touch) only the sensed; in what is thought, only the thought." (Udāna 1.10). This should serve and guide one who devotes himself to the practice of bhāvanā. It is concerned with living in full awareness of the continuing arising and passing away of all volitional actions in the present moment. It teaches us how to live in the present without trying to escape from it by living in the past or brooding on the future.



By turning full attention to our thoughts and actions as they arise, we come to see things as they really are and this realization leads us to the highest penetrating knowledge of the dhamma called Insight. This knowledge makes us fully realize the nature of the Three Characteristics of Existence *Anicca* (impermanence); the object of our noting arises and passes away and thus we see that it is impermanent. The arising and passing away, its very nature of impermanency is *Dukkha*. The Buddha said all that is impermanent is *dukkha* (*yad aniccam tam dukkham*). Next comes *Anatta* (Not-Self); thoughts and actions arise according to their own nature. They occur of their own volition. There is no thinker behind the thought, no doer behind the deed. They are out of our control, so they appear to be Not-Self. The moment we realize this, the delusion that all things are permanent, happiness and with Self is dispelled and thus craving for it is extinguished. With the extinction of craving, there does not arise clinging and the resulting kamma actions and reactions. As we go on noting, we come to realize that which cognizes is *nāma* (mind) and that which is cognized is *rūpa* (matter). Thus, we come to see that there are only *nāma* and *rūpa* with every act of noting. As we continue noting every physical and mental arising and passing away, we realize that from the intention to move arises the movement and thus we realize the law of causation. We will also come to realize how, with every act of noting, the dhammas of the Noble Eightfold Path are functioning. Abstaining from



unwholesome bodily acts is Sammā Kammanta (Right Action). Abstaining from verbal acts such as telling lies, using abusive language etc, is Sammā Vācā (Right Speech) and abstaining from unlawful means of livelihood is Sammā Ājīva (Right Livelihood). These three dhammas constitute Sīla. The effort to note is Sammā Vāyama (Right Effort). The act of mindfulness is Sammā Sati (Right Mindfulness) and concentrating on the object of mindfulness is Sammā Samādhi (Right Concentration). These three constitute Samādhi. Rightly knowing the object for what it is, is Sammā Diṭṭhi (Right Understanding). Inclining the mind to such understanding is Sammā Saṁsaṅga (Right Thought). These two constitute Paññā (Wisdom). Thus, the virtues of the Noble Eightfold dhammas are developing with every act of noting. As you develop concentration and you progress towards a spiritual detachment, all sensations, emotions, mind wanderings and ~~unwholesome thoughts disappear.~~ Finally, you are so deeply absorbed in the present moment that you feel as if the external world does not exist. This is a tremendous moment in your meditation and for a fleeting moment, you catch a glimpse of Nibbāna. It is the intrinsic nature of vipassanā meditation that it produces a growing detachment and an increasing freedom from craving (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha), the three strongest roots of all evil in this world. These kilesas (defilements) will be totally destroyed when one passes through the four stages of holiness and realize Nibbāna. The first stage is that of the Sotāpanna (Stream-Winner). A person who has achieved this stage of holiness, will be reborn again



only seven times in the round of samsara, in the higher celestial abodes of devas and brahmas or as a rich and noble person in the world of human beings. Because he has been able to dispel only some of the defilements he is not yet free from the sufferings of rebirth, decay and death. But he will never again descend to the lower regions of apāya or be reborn again in the lower life forms of existence. The Sotāppana, after passing amongst celestial and human life spans for a great length of time, will finally become an Arahāt and realize Nibbāna.

The Sakadāgāmi (Once-Returner), is one who has reached the second stage of holiness and will be reborn again only once, either as a celestial or a noble human being, before realizing Nibbāna.

The Anāgāmi (Non-Returner), is a person who has achieved the third stage of holiness and after his life span in the present existence is over, ~~he will not be reborn again and will~~  
~~attain Nibbāna.~~

The fourth stage of holiness, is that of an Arahāt (the Holy One), who has purified himself of all defilements and impurities in the present existence and has attained the final goal of Nibbāna. He will not be reborn again anywhere.

These stages of holiness can be realized through the practice of Satipatthāna (Way of Mindfulness) meditation. It is a guiding principle of this second method of meditation that one should discover for himself what is happening to him, see things as they really are through personal experience,

while noting all that is arising and passing away in his body, sensations, mind and mind objects. These four applications of mindfulness lead one to the attainment of Sīla, Samādhi and Pañña; the cessation of grief and suffering and the treading of the Noble Eightfold Path and the realization of the final goal - Nibbāna.

Of the Satipatthāna meditation, the Buddha said; "Ekayano ayam bhikkhave maggo. O monks, this is the Only Way."

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

he will not be reborn again in this world, but will sojourn in the Suddhāvāsa Brāhmā abode; attaining arahatship he will enter into his parinibbāna.



## Our Immeasurable Debt to Parents.

According to the Buddhist doctrines there are Five Greatest Benefactors in the world to whom we will always owe a debt of gratitude we can never hope to repay. They are also known as the Five Infinites or Five Illimitables. They are:

- |           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Buddha | 4. Parents,  |
| 2. Dhamma | 5. Teachers. |
| 3. Sangha |              |

Regarding parental love and compassion for their children, which are incomparable and immeasurable in their infinitude and not easy to repay for all they have done for us, the Buddha preached the following sermon: "Great indeed is the debt we owe parents."

"O monks, one can never repay two persons, I declare. What two? Mother and father. Even if one should carry about his mother on one shoulder and his father on the other and so doing should live a hundred years, attain a hundred years and if he should support them, anointing them with fragrances....if he should establish his parents in supreme authority in the absolute rule over this mighty earth abounding in the seven treasures, not even thus could he repay his parents. What is the cause of that? Monks, parents do much for their children; they bring them up, they nourish them. They introduce them to the world."

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

### The Reality of Pain.

Pain is suffering and is ever present in our lives in varying degrees and manifestations since birth and will continue to be suffered so long as the five aggregates of attachment are functioning. All matters pertaining to them will be extinguished only with the cessation of the five aggregates. Pain has to be borne either physically or mentally in full consciousness or it may lie untouched and unfeeling in the realm of the unconscious and the sub-conscious, conditioned by psychic forces. Mental anguish is also pain and is subject to these conditions. Thus mind is the dominant factor in the control or subjugation of pain, both physical and mental.

Dr. Gulla A.Kell, a German visiting professor at the Department of Philosophy, Rangoon University and a student of Abhidhamma under the tutelage of the late Mulapatthan Sayadaw U Nārada, Agga Mahā Pandita, wrote an article "On the Reality of Mind." - A comparison of Western Opinions with Abhidhamma in the Light of Buddha, April 1958 published by the Burma Buddhist Society, Mandalay. She says, "Western opinions on the reality of mind disagree." To illustrate this diversity she takes a passage from Professor C.G.Jung's "Psychic Reality." I reproduce it here in part as it has some relevance to my subject. Jung prefers to use the term *psyche* instead of mind, "because 'mind and mental' are associated primarily with consciousness, whereas 'psyche and psychical' are used to cover both consciousness and the unconsci-



ous' " He says: "All that I experience is psychic. Even physical pain is a psychic event that belongs to my experience." I have left out the rest of the quote as they have no further bearing on my subject.

According to the Buddhist teachings, pain whether physical or mental, can be influenced by psychic forces generated through diligent and concentrated meditation practices such as samatha or vipassanā. Dr. Kell comments that Jung acknowledges the reality of the influence of one kind of psyche or Nama on the mind and body of a person. She points out that Jung and those who share his view on the reality of the psyche i.e. its influence on mind and body have become benefactors to thousands of people which modern medical science based on the criterion of the natural sciences neither could help nor cure. I am inclined to agree with their point of view, inasmuch as they appear to be somewhat nearer to the Buddhist concept that mind or psyche can be cultivated, tamed and controlled so that all physical and mental experiences can be influenced and directed. Pain however excruciating can be controlled through meditation practices till one becomes oblivious of its presence physically or mentally. In a lesser degree, pain can be temporally subdued by the absorption of the mind in other external experiences. A friend of mine who suffered intense pain from intermittent attacks of migraine, told me that he found some relief, from pain, however temporally, through absorbed attention in an interesting TV programme! In his case pain had been pushed back into the sub-conscious through an external influence.



A similar experience is told by the Chan Myay Sayadaw, the Reverend U Janaka, while he was with the late Mahāsi Sayadaw on a world Buddhist mission abroad in 1979. In his book, "Letters from Abroad - with the Mahāsi Mission," the Chan Myay Sayadaw related the following story of a distraught young Danish woman, who had lost all her worldly possessions in a fire which destroyed her home, and who now sought the aid of the Buddhist Sayadaws to gain solace for her anguished mind and to bring her back to peace and sanity. She came to the Mt. Soule meditation center in Switzerland where the Mahāsi mission was holding a meditation session. The Chan Myay Sayadaw instructed her in the Way of Mindfulness meditation practice and under his compassionate guidance, she gradually regained peace of mind and confidence. Realizing the very great benefit she was deriving from the guidance and assistance of the Buddhist sayadaws, she continued her meditation practice, following the Mahāsi mission to England where she attended the Mahāsi Institute of Buddhist Meditation and Studies at Oakenholt near Oxford and, not content with that, followed the mission to the Teedorf meditation center in the Netherlands. Observing the gradual but perceptible changes in her features and general demeanor, the Chan Myay Sayadaw remarked that when she first came for spiritual help to the Mt. Soule center, she was suffering so much mental anguish and despair that her features were ravaged and unpleasant looking. Now after continuous meditation sessions her face appeared serene and calm as was her gene-



ral behaviour. She appeared to have regained her sanity and had won peace again. She no longer felt despair and anguish over the loss of her worldly possessions. As the Sayadaw said, it was as if a lotus flower had found water to bloom again. Because she had now had practical experience of the teachings of the Blessed One, she had become once again a young pretty woman, serene and calm in outlook and confidently facing her new life. Pain under the influence of the mind had been conquered.

In this connection, I would like to recount what I remember of Dr. Kell's own experience of pain as a psychic event. She lived in Burma for almost five years from 1955 to 1960. I had met Dr. Kell at the Paṭṭhan Sayadaw's monastery on Prome road. The Sayadaw was my Upajjhāya when I was ordained a dullabha monk in May 1956, during the celebrations of the 2500th year of the Sāsana held in Rangoon. Towards the end of her stay in Burma she was hospitalized with carcinoma. She suffered intense pain, and on the advice of her mentor, the Paṭṭhan Sayadaw, she devoted her mind to the practice of vipassanā meditation. Under the encouragement and guidance of the Sayadaw, she set her whole body and mind to meditation and so intense were her efforts that she soon became oblivious to her pain. As a matter of fact, I was told that she lived without pain for some years after her return to Hamburg, West Germany. But like all mortals who cannot by-pass death, she finally succumbed to the dread disease. However, while in Burma and while under the guidance of the Paṭṭhan Sayadaw, she was able to continue her studies of the Abhidhamma, unhampered by



pain which had been laid dormant. This account of Dr. Kell's experience, I learnt from the Paṭṭhan Sayadaw.

In later years when I became a monk for the second time, I practised satipatthana vipassanā meditation under the guidance of my Upajjhāya Sayadaw, U Janaka of the Chan Myay Yeiktha. As all yogis know, the meditation practice during the initial stages, apart from the frequent mind wanderings, physical pain created in various parts of the body was so intense and unbearable that meditation could not be carried out. But under guidance, noting the arising of pain and the point at which it was manifest, one soon had the mind free of its presence. Pain had vanished and one could meditate with full and proper mindfulness of the arising and passing away of all the psycho-physical phenomena in oneself. I think this psychic experience is shared by all those who have taken up meditation practice. Awareness of Self soon disappears.

To bring up another illustration of the concept of the reality of pain, is the Nakulapitā Sutta which I read in the Samyutta Nikāya, Khandhavagga. While the Buddha was residing in a forest grove near the town of Susumārāgira, a wealthy man, Nakulapitā approached the Buddha and after paying his respects sat on one side. He told the Buddha that because of his old age, his body suffered constant pain and he deplored the fact that because of it he would no longer be able to attend upon the Buddha and the Sanghas to pay his respects. He requested the Buddha to preach



him a dhamma which would be beneficial to him. The Buddha's advice to him was in these few and cryptic words. "O Nakulapitā, you should practise this dhamma so that you may be able to say thus: "I have a body which suffers great pain, but yet my mind shall be free of it(pain)."

Nakulapitā rejoiced at these words though not fully understanding them. He paid his respects to the Buddha and then approached the Venerable Shin Sāriputtā, one of the great disciples of the Buddha, and after paying his respects, sat on one side and related his meeting with the Buddha and asked Shin Sāriputtā to explain the meaning of the words uttered by the Buddha. The Venerable Sāriputtā then told him that persons who realized the Dhamma preached by the Buddha no longer had attachment for rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṃkhārā and viññāṇa which together only made up the corporeal body called 'Self'. If one became detached from the body (rūpa) which is not-self, then though it suffers pain, the mind will be free of it. The wealthy Nakulapitā rejoiced to hear these words which were of great benefit to him.

The reality of pain and suffering lies in the psychic. It is explained fully in the Four Noble Truths. Pain exists and will always be a part of living, but it can be tamed through the practice of meditation in which, when 'absorption bliss' is attained, nothing in connection with nāma rūpa appears to exist. This will lead to the ultimate goal which is the end of suffering and the realization of Nibbāna.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.



### Anatta - The Doctrine of Not-Self

Soon after his Enlightenment the Buddha preached two important sermons. The first was the Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta (Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth) and the second was the Anatta Lakkhana Sutta. During the 45 years of his ministry, the Buddha preached these two sermons in many ways, to many people and on many occasions. But in essence, they were always the same in purpose and purport.

The Buddhist doctrine of Anatta denies the existence of a Soul, a Personality, Self or I. The Soul is defined as an immaterial entity, distinguishable from and superior to the body, individual or being and is regarded in many religions, as being immortal and separate from the body at death. This is opposed to the Buddhist doctrine of Anatta; Not-Self, Soullessness and Impersonality. The doctrine of Anatta or Not-Self is the result of the analysis of the five Aggregates of Attachment which make up the being and the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppāda). According to the Buddha's teachings, the idea of Self is an imaginary and false belief which has no corresponding reality. This idea of Self produces harmful thoughts and defilements, such as lobha, dosa and moha, which in turn gives rise to greed, desires, envy, ill-will, wilfulness, conceit, pride, anger and arrogance. The attachment for Self or I also creates problems arising out of possessiveness. This has been the main cause of the many troubles arising in human society, both regional and international, leading to



tensions and present day cold and hot wars between warring nations, each with a strong sense of the I and 'This is mine' complex. All these have come about because of an ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, which the Buddha preached in his first sermon the Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta.

In the First Noble Truth, it is explained that what we call a human being is made up of the five Aggregates of Attachment which are a combination of swift and everchanging mental and physical energies. These five aggregates are: (1) The Aggregate of Matter (Rūpakkhandha), which is composed of the six elements (dhatu) namely, solidity, fluidity, heat, motion, space and consciousness. Also included are the six faculties of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind and their corresponding six external objects such as visible form, sound, odour, taste, impression and thoughts and finally, the six corresponding objects of consciousness. All that which concerns matter, both internal and external are included in the Aggregate of Matter. (2) The Aggregate of Sensations (Vedanakkhandha) includes all physical and mental sensations, pleasant and unpleasant or neutral, experienced through the contact of the six faculties with their external objects. (3) The Aggregate of Perceptions (Saññakkhandha) are also produced through the contact of the six faculties with the external objects. It is perception that recognizes objects whether physical or mental. (4) The Aggregate of Mental Formations (Sankhārakkhandha) is made up of all volitional activities



generally known as kamma, both good and bad. In the Anguttara Nikāya, the Buddha defined volition as kamma. He said: "Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitva Kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācā manasā." Translated it means, "O bhikkhus, it is volition (cetanā) that I call kamma. Having willed, one acts through body, speech and mind." Volition directs the mind whether in good or bad activities. Like sensation and perception volition is connected with the six faculties and their corresponding six external objects and consciousness. Sensation and perception are not volitional actions. They do not produce kammic effects.

(5) The Aggregate of Consciousness (Viññānakkhanda). Consciousness is the response to the contact of the six faculties and their corresponding six external objects. For example, visible consciousness arises when the eye sees a visible form. Mental consciousness responds in the same way when the mind fixes its attention on a mental object such as an idea or thought. Consciousness does not recognize an object, it is only aware of it. It is also dependent on the other four aggregates. It cannot exist by itself.

It is these five aggregates and their six faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind which make up the corporate body which we wrongly take to be Self or I. According to Buddhist thought, this body, which we call a being or Self is only a combination of everchanging psycho-physical phenomena. It is only for conventional purposes that this being or Self is



given a label or a name to distinguish an individual from another, thus giving him a false sense of identity, which leads him to regard his earthly personality as his true self (atta) and attach a particular value to this Self and as a result, harmful desires arise which tie him to this existence and leads him from rebirth to rebirth in new becomings (bhava).

In the Time magazine (March 2, 1981) I came across this passage in an essay 'On Meditation' written by Carl Sagan an American scientist with a Ph.D. in astronomy and astrophysics. He is, at present, the head of Cornell University's laboratory of planetary studies. Apparently, western scientists have reached somewhat similar conclusions respecting the individual, the being or Self. Carl Sagan said: "I am a collection of water, calcium and organic molecules called Carl Sagan. You are a collection of almost identical molecules with a different collective label."

Another illustration which makes for a clearer understanding of the Anatta doctrine is in a passage from the Visuddhimagga, Book 11, which I read in an article, 'Misconceptions of Self' by Dr. Sananayake.\* It very clearly illustrates the point that a Self or I cannot be found anywhere in the five aggregates of attachment which compose the human being, when we examine them one by one.

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\* Light of the Dhamma, January 1964. Vol. VIII No. 1 P. 5.

"Just as the word chariot" says Buddhagosa, "is but a mode of expression for axle, wheels, pole and other constituent parts, placed in certain relation to each other, but when we come to examine the members one by one, we discover in the ultimate sense, there is no chariot ... in exactly the same way, the words 'living being' 'entity' and 'I' are but a mode of expression for the five attachment groups (khandhas), but when we come to examine the elements of the being, one by one, we discover in the ultimate sense there is no living being there to form the basis for such figments as 'I am' or 'I'; in other words, that in the absolute sense there is only mind(nāma) and matter (rūpa)."

An action or thought arises and disappears, conditioning the appearance of the next in a series of cause and effect. There is nothing in these that one can call a permanent self. It is only when these five physical and mental forces which are interdependent work together in combination that we get the idea of Self or I. The five aggregates also are the embodiment of the Three Characteristics of Existence. Impermanency(anicca), suffering (dukkha) and Not-Self (anatta). They are impermanent and in a constant state of flux. The Buddha has declared that whatever is impermanent is dukkha and that in brief, the five aggregates of attachment themselves are dukkha. They arise and disappear in a wink of an eye,



The five aggregates which originated in the past do not continue in the present in the same visible form. It is only the kammic forces that are the same. For example, a boy who grows up as a grown man, is the same and yet not the same person.

Likewise, the five aggregates existing in the present in its corporate form, will not after death follow into the future in the same form; only its kammic forces will continue in another sphere of existence which is conditioned by past kamma. To take another example; the flame of a candle is extinguished, the candle is relit; the flame is not the same as the previous one, yet it is the same. As the Buddha said: "Na ca so na ca anno." It means, "Neither is it the same, nor is it another."

So also, the five aggregates, as a result of Kamma, will assume a corporeal body in the future existence, the same yet not the same and will come to extinction in that period. Therefore, the five aggregates in the past, present and future are impermanent (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and Not-Self (anatta).

In the Samyutta Nikāya, the Buddha's exposition of the Anatta Lakkhana Sutta makes the point clearer. In this discourse, the Buddha declared: "O bhikkhus, rūpa (corporeality) is anatta (Not-Self). If rūpa is Self, then this rūpa would not be subject to disease and one should be able to say, "Let my rūpa

be thus, let my rūpa be not thus." But since rūpa is not Self, It is subject to disease and none can say, "Let my rūpa be thus, let my rūpa be not thus." The Buddha makes it clear that, that over which we have no control, whether of mind or matter, should not be regarded as the Self or I. The Buddha said: "It is not proper or fit to regard these as the Self or I." The same conditions also apply to the other aggregates that compose the individual or being, that is, vedanā (sensations), saññā (perceptions), saṃkhāra (kamma actions) and viññāna (consciousness). All these factors should not be regarded as Self. Singly or collectively they are not Self, because they too, like rūpa are not under our control and each functions according to its own nature. The Buddha said that it is not proper or fit to regard such forms which are impermanent, dukkha and subject to change as, "This is I" "This is mine" and "This belongs to me." This is what he said in the Anatta Lakkhana Sutta.

"O bhikkhus, any kind of rūpa whatever, whether past, future or present, whether gross or subtle, whether internal or external, whether inferior or superior, whether far or near, must, with right understanding of things as they really are, be regarded thus: "This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself." Bhikkhus, seeing thus, the learned, noble disciple becomes disgusted with rūpa, with vedanā, with saññā, with all

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\* Vinaya Pitaka. Mahāvagga Pali. 6th Synod Edition. F.20.



these, he gets detached and from detachment he attains deliverance."

What we call a human being or an individual is composed of the five aggregates and when these are analysed, one by one, there is nothing behind them or in them which can be taken as Self or I or any permanent entity.

The Anatta doctrine is also based on the principle of conditionality, relativity and interdependency in the process of life; its continuity and its cessation are explained in the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppāda).

This is one of the most profound discourses delivered by the Buddha. It is based on the process of birth and death, rebirth and suffering in continuing existence, conditioned by relativity and inter-dependency. The Buddhist conception is that nothing in this world is absolute and permanent; everything is conditioned, relative and interdependent and in a constant state of flux.

The life cycle of birth, death and rebirth in continuing existences is as follows:

1. Through ignorance arises kamma formations (avijjāpaccayā saṃkhāraṃ).
2. Through kamma formations arise consciousness (saṃkhārapaccayā viññānaṃ).

3. Through consciousness arises mental and physical phenomena.  
(viññānāpaccayā nāmarūpam).
4. Through mental and physical phenomena arise the six faculties. (nāmarūpāpaccayā ṣaḷāyatanaṃ).
5. Through the six faculties arise physical and mental contacts. (saḷāyatanaṃpaccayā phassa).
6. Through physical and mental contacts arise sensations.  
(phassapaccayā vedanā).
7. Through sensation arises craving. (vedanāpaccayā tanhā).
8. Through craving arises clinging. (tanhāpaccayā upādānaṃ).
9. Through clinging arises the process of becoming.  
(upādānaṃpaccayā bhavo).
10. Through the process of becoming arises rebirth.  
(Bhavapaccayā jāti).
11. Through rebirth arises old age and death. (jātipaccayā jarā maraṇaṃ).

Thus the entire aggregate of suffering arises and the life process continues. Taken in reverse order, we come to the cessation of the life cycle. Through the complete cessation of ignorance, kamma formations cease; through the cessation of kamma formations, consciousness ceases; through the cessation of rebirth old age and death cease. Each of these factors is the result of a condition and is also the cause that produces a condition. So ends the entire aggregate of suffering.



The Anatta doctrine is one of the most important and profound discourses delivered by the Buddha. It forms the basis of Buddhist philosophy. From it stems all the Buddha's teachings for the avoidance of evil, the practice of good and the purification of ourselves in treading the path he has shown us to realize Nibbāna. The Buddhist concept is that nothing in this world is absolute and permanent; everything is conditioned, relative and interdependent and in a constant state of flux. Thus, there is nothing in the being which should be properly regarded as Self or I, for us to form an attachment for it. We must see things as they really are and form a detachment for them if we wish to be liberated from the sufferings of saṃsāra.

According to the doctrine of Dependent Origination and the analysis of the being in the five aggregates, the idea of Self or Soul as a permanent, everlasting and abiding immortal substance is considered only as a mental projection and a false belief of eternalism (sassata diṭṭhi).

Another important exposition of this anatta doctrine is contained in three verses of the Dhammapada which are extremely important and essential in the Buddha's teachings.

Sabba saṅkhāram aniccaṃ  
 Sabba saṅkhāram dukkhaṃ  
 Sabba dhamma anattaṃ.

It means:-

All conditioned things are impermanent  
 All conditioned things are suffering  
 All dhammas are without Self.

The term sankhara denotes the five aggregates, but the term dhamma in the last verse has a wider meaning. It includes not only the conditioned things and states, but also the non-conditioned, the Absolute, the Ultimate. Therefore, it is clear that there is no Self, no Soul, not only in the five aggregates, but also nowhere else, outside of them or apart from them. According to the Buddha's teaching, there is no Self or Soul in the individual or in the Dhamma. This is the Buddhist doctrine of Anatta, Not-Self.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.



## Some Thoughts on Anatta

The entire structure of the Buddhist doctrine is based on the Buddha's teaching that there is no Self as an everlasting ego-personality that transcends the impermanency of the being and manifests itself in another form or being in a new existence. The theological definition of the Pāli word 'Atta' which means 'Self' has made it appear to be synonymous with the Soul, which is recognized in other religions. But this does not conform to the meaning given in the Pāli texts or to the sense in which the Buddha meant it to be understood. The word 'Atta' just means 'Self' and nothing else, whereas, the Soul is defined as immortal, abiding and separate from the body at death, when it then transmigrate to wherever it is destined to go. As such, the Buddha denies the existence of a permanent Self which is likened to a Soul.

The fundamental or dominant direction which the Buddha gave to this word is based on the doctrine of 'Anatta' or 'Not-Self.' The 'Self' in its conventional form with its attendant connotations, such as 'I' 'Mine' etc, is a false belief and is the result of a delusion that the corporeal body which embodies the conventional 'Self' or 'I' is a permanent ego-personality which will accompany us from one plane of existence to another. The Buddha, however, teaches us that the 'Self' constitutes a psycho-physical phenomena of five aggregates, (1) the Aggregate of Matter, (2) the Aggregate of Sensations, (3) the Aggregate of Perception, (4) the Aggregate of Mental Formations



and (5) the Aggregate of Consciousness. These together make up the corporate body which is subject to decay, old age and death; The Buddha teaches us that all conditioned matter is impermanent and therefore suffering and unpleasant, and as such, we should not conceive or consider this 'Self' to be our own ego-personality and form an attachment for it, because it is a repository of unwholesome matter and mental tendencies and we must eliminate all sensuous desires, both mental and physical, so that we will no longer think of the 'Self' as 'I' the all important psycho-physio make-up of our present existence and so enable us to direct our efforts without hindrances to the realization of Nibbana.

In one of his discourses, the Buddha, in reply to questions by some ascetics in this regard, said: "These ascetics wrongly, vainly, falsely and inappropriately accuse me of being what I am not, O monks, and of saying what I do not say. "A denier is the ascetic Gotama, he teaches the destruction, the annihilation and perishing of the being that now exists." Only one thing, monks, do I teach, now as before, namely, suffering and the abolition of suffering." In short, the Buddha set aside this question concerning the existence of a 'Self' because he considers that it will lead to fruitless discussions and explanations and divert our minds from the purpose of his teachings.

The doctrine of Anatta or Not-Self, is an intellectual and psychological conception. The 'Self' when viewed with wisdom and objectivity, will be seen for what it really is in the



ultimate sense and will show us the truth of the Buddha's teaching that while the conventional 'Self' as seen in the corporeal body exists, it is, in the final analysis, only a combination of mental and physical energies which are subject to change, decay, old age and death, thereby dispelling the illusion of a permanent, abiding soul, self or entity. The psychological factor of the anatta doctrine, is that for these reasons we must become disenchanted and form a detached attitude towards our physical body, which must be seen for what it really is; that is, as a mere shell made up of the Four Great Dhātus or elements: solidity, fluidity, energy and motion and having in it, the faculties that constitute life. Moreover, because its conventional form and its components are enhanced by social, political and economic environments, we are led to believe it to be our true and permanent Self, unchanging now, and wishful of its reappearance in new existences, as 'I am this now and again I am this' in a continuum of rebirths.

We must come to view our corporeal body in the light of the law of causal relations, for as the Buddha has taught us, we are the result of our own kamma.

Kamma, the resultant of our good and bad deeds, which will determine the form of our rebirth, is the only possession we will take away with us when we die; it is not the 'Self' or 'Soul' that will accompany us into another existence after our death.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

## Kamma and Rebirth

The Pāli word kamma is defined as volitional action, good or bad. Literally, it means action, deed. The theory of kamma is based on the law of causation, the natural law of cause and effect. Good kamma will produce good effects and bad kamma will produce bad effects. Every volitional action produces its effects or results. Kamma is both continuative and retributive. Effects of volitional action may continue to manifest themselves even in life after death. What one becomes in the next existence as a result of rebirth is conditioned by one's own kamma. But what influences the form and existence into which one is reborn is the state of mind and the immediate thoughts preceeding death. This kamma-energy is fused by the dying person at the moment of death and this determines the form of the new rebirth. But no transmigration of a real being or a soul-entity takes place, but only the transmission of the kamma-energy. This is called *Patisandhi*, *viññāna* the connecting or rebirth consciousness. Our Ego or Self is in reality only this process of the continuum of change, the continuing arising and passing away of the psycho-physical phenomena, moment after moment, time after time, life after life, *ad infinitum*.

What one becomes in the next existence is conditioned by one's own kamma. Nothing in this world happens by chance or



accident. We ourselves are our own kamma and kamma is the only possession we will take away with us into another existence when we die. We are the masters of our own fate. The differences among beings, of high and low status, rich and poor, handsome and ugly, good and evil are determined by this law of kamma.

Man reaps what he has sown in the past or in the present. What he sows now, he will reap now or in the future at the right moment and at the right time. Man himself is mainly responsible for his own happiness and misery. He creates his own fate. What he makes, he can unmake. His bad kamma can be offset by doing good and purifying himself of evil. But he is not bound to reap the effects of all that he has sown. If it were so, self-purification would become meaningless and emancipation an impossibility.

As an illustration to this point, there is the story of Angulimāla, the notorious murderer. His teacher had told him that if he made an offering of one thousand human fingers to the nats (spirits), he would become the Protector of the world, that is, a Universal Monarch. Thus inspired, Angulimāla set about the gruesome task of collecting the thousand fingers. He killed his victims where he found them for their fingers. Soon, people went in fear of him and King Pasenadi Kosala sent his soldiers after Angulimāla.

One day, when he required only one more finger to complete the required thousand, Angulimāla espied his mother in the distance coming towards him. Determined to obtain the remaining



finger, he went towards her sword in hand. As a matter of fact, his mother was on her way to warn him that the King's soldiers were after him.

The Buddha, who in his Omniscience, knew that Angulimāla was to become an arahat, suddenly appeared in the way of Angulimāla, to prevent him from committing the most grievous crime of matricide, which would forever debar him from obtaining arahatship and condemn him to hell. Angulimāla then turned his attention to the Buddha, not knowing who he was and chased him with the intention of killing him for the remaining finger. However fast he ran, he could not catch up with the Buddha, who was standing still. So he called out, "Stay. O monk, why are you running?" The Buddha replied, "I am not running, it is you who is running." The Buddha meant that since he had discarded all defilements, he no longer needed to run through the cycle of rebirths in saṃsarā, whereas Angulimāla who was not yet free of these defilements was running and would continue to run through saṃsarā. With his own release imminent, Angulimāla immediately realized the truth of the Buddha's words and throwing his sword into a nearby lime pit, renounced the lay-life and asked to be ordained a monk. He came to be a faithful disciple of the Buddha and he was so exemplary in his conduct that he soon became a venerated monk. One day, King Kosala came and paid his respects to the Buddha and also informed him that his soldiers were looking for Angulimāla. The Buddha pointed to Angulimāla who was seated next to him and said to



the king. "There O King, is Angulimāla." The king, seeing Angulimāla in the robes of a monk, was suddenly awed and shaken out of composure,

One day, despite the Buddha's warning not to go into an hostile village on his food begging rounds, Angulimāla, who had in the past, killed many people of that village, nevertheless went there, knowing fully well what would befall him. It was perhaps his act of self-expiation and renunciation. But in reality, he was reaping the effects of his own kamma.

The angry villages killed him though he was a monk. When asked by his disciples as to where Angulimāla had gone after his death, the Buddha replied that Angulimāla was now an arahat and had attained Nibbana. He had purified himself and his atonement was complete. Despite his evil deeds, his good kamma led him to his fulfillment. Nobody is ever condemned in Buddhism. Redemption is possible through self-purification once a person sees the Dhamma.

The Dhammapada says. "Greatness is latent even in the seemingly lowest, just as lotuses spring from muddy ponds."

Buddhists firmly believe in the doctrine of Kamma. It gives them self-reliance, hope and courage to face life. It is this firm belief in kamma that restrains Buddhists from doing evil, makes them ~~do good~~ and live a virtuous life, knowing that their present actions will bring their own good effects. They are not afraid of punishment, for they rely on themselves for their own purification. It is this doctrine of kamma that explains the



cause of suffering, of the mysteries of fate and destiny and the inequalities of life either in this world or in the life beyond.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth and the theory of reincarnation, which implies transmigration of a soul, are not identical. According to the doctrine of *Paticca Samuppāda*, as well as can be seen in the composition and functions of the five aggregates, the idea of Self or I or Soul or Atman in an abiding immortal being or person is considered only as a false belief. This, as we have seen, is the doctrine of *Anatta*, - Not - Self.

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, we have this account. An obscure monk who could not accept the Buddha's doctrine asked the Buddha, "If there is no Self or Soul, who then will receive the results, of kamma actions?" The Buddha replied, "I have taught you, bhikkhus, to see conditionality everywhere in all things. O bhikkhus, when neither Self nor anything pertaining to Self can truly and really be found, this speculative view, the universe is the Atman (soul); I shall be that after death, permanent, abiding, everlasting, unchanging and I shall exist as such for eternity. Is it not wholly and completely foolish?" Again, it is said in the *Visuddhimagga* Book XIX, "Everywhere, in all the realms of existence, the noble disciple sees only mental and corporeal phenomena, functioning as a result of cause and effect. No producer of the volitional act of kamma does he see, apart from the kamma, no recipient of the kamma-result apart from the result."



"No doer of the deed is found,  
 No one whoever reaps their fruits;  
 Empty phenomena roll on;  
 This is the only right view."

"A mere phenomenon it is, a thing conditioned,  
 That rises in the following existence.  
 But not from previous life does it transmigrate  
 there  
 And yet it cannot rise without a previous cause."

Thus in the absolute sense, there exists no real being that wanders through the round of rebirths, but merely this ever-changing twofold process of kamma activities and kamma results takes place.

What we call a being is the functioning of the physical and mental forces and death is the total non-functioning of the physical body. But these physical and mental forces do not stop functioning with death. They continue to manifest themselves in another form in a continuity of existences called rebirths. A person who dies here, and is reborn again elsewhere is neither the same person nor another. He continues in the life process of becoming and rebirth because of the continuity of his karmic forces. The last thought-moment in this life conditions the first consciousness in the next life. What he will become is determined by the last thought-moment before death. Every volitional action produces the effects and results even in life after death.

The Buddhist conception is that differences in our present personalities, physical, mental, intellectual and our stations

in life are mainly due to our own actions and tendencies, both past and present. We are the result of what we were; we will be the result of what we are. However, in another sense, we are not totally the result of what we were; and we will not be absolutely the result of what we are. For example, Angulimāla, the notorious murderer, became an arahat after death.

In the matter of rebirths, there are some persons, who probably in accordance with the laws of association, develop a memory of their past birth and remember some portions of their previous lives. Such cases which have been discovered in many countries of the world have been scientifically investigated and have been well attested for their veracity. One of the foremost western scientists who has been carrying out an intensive and scientific research into reincarnation cases of rebirth for many years, is Dr. Ian Stevenson, M.D., Carlson Professor of Psychiatry, at the University of Virginia, U.S.A. He has visited many countries in his field of research and has also visited Burma for many years, where he has been investigating many cases of reincarnation rebirths. He is also the author of many books on this subject.\*

The theory of reincarnation can neither be totally proved nor disapproved, but it is accepted as an evidentially verifiable fact. Karma and rebirth are immutable laws.

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\*Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation. By Ian Stevenson, M.D. University Press of Virginia. 1974. (2nd edition) U.S.A.

India: Cases of Reincarnation Type. Vol.1 Ten Cases in India. By Ian Stevenson, M.D. University Press of Virginia. 1975. U.S.A.



So long as ignorance of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path exists, the continuum of the life cycle will go on, until it is finally cut off through right understanding of the Buddha's doctrines. Things must be seen as they really are. This is Paññā (wisdom), the pinnacle of understanding which will lead us to the Ultimate Truth.- Nibbāna.

May all beings realize the Dharma and enjoy peace and happiness.

### He Abides in the Law.

There are three kinds of Sāsana as taught by the Buddha. The first is Pariyatti, that of learning the doctrines and the second is Patipatti, practising the doctrines and the third is Pativedha, gaining penetrating knowledge.

The Pāli word Sāsanaṃ means the teachings of the Buddha and the Sāsana has been in existence for more than 2500 years. The Sāsana of the Buddha can be practised by all, monks, laymen and laywomen alike. It is not the prerogative of any one section of society or individual. It has been practised through all these years by men and women, both of the holy order and the laity and many have gained the fruition of the four stages of holiness.

The only distinction in the practice of the Sāsana, between the sanghas and the lay people, is that the sanghas have two dhuras or duties to uphold. One is the practice of pariyatti (gantha dhura). It is the responsibility of learning the doctrines, understanding them with wisdom and being able to transmit them to others and thus keep alive the Sāsana. However, since the fourth Buddhist Synod held in Ceylon (450 B.C.), when the doctrines of the Buddha, the Pāli texts were written on palm leaves and handed down the centuries in their written form, it has not been mandatory for everyone to learn the Pāli texts by rote as in the past, especially those who



joined the Order in late life. It was necessary to do so then, because at the first Buddhist Synod held a few months after the parinibbāna of the Buddha in 543 B.C. the teachings of the Buddha were recited by the Venerable Ānandā, who had heard all the discourses of the Buddha and the Vinaya texts, the rules of the Order were recited by the Venerable Upali. The doctrines had to be committed to memory and handed down verbally from generation to generation in order to keep the Sasana alive.

This practice of reciting the Tipitaka in Pāli is still observed in the congregation of Buddhist councils, such as at the Sixth Buddhist Synod held in Burma in 1956. This tradition which began at the first Buddhist Synod, has been kept unbroken and will continue to be observed whenever a Buddhist synod is held in the future. In a way, it is a reaffirmation of the Buddha's teachings preserved in the original language used by the Buddha himself. In modern times, however, there are now translations of the Pāli texts in Burmese, English and many European and Oriental languages. Thus the need to learn the Pāli doctrines by heart is no longer mandatory for the purpose of learning and understanding the doctrines. However, the Pāli texts are still learnt by rote at pariyatti monastic schools and some sanghas, have gained scholarly distinction by reciting from memory all the Pāli texts in Tipitaka examinations and thus earning for themselves the title of Tipitakadhara. The learning of the Pāli texts by committing the entire Tipitaka to memory is a great achievement of scholarship and in Burma



today, there are only four learned sanghas who have accomplished this and have won the title of Tipitakadhara.

The second duty is the patipatti (vipassanā dhura). It is the responsibility of practising the doctrines for mental development to gain insight knowledge, so that the teachings and practice may be better kept alive; so that the influence of one, himself wholly freed, may be for the benefit of the many. During the life time of the Buddha, as soon as monks were ordained and had gained knowledge of the teachings, most of them gaining arhatship, they were sent forth by the Buddha, not in groups, but one by one, in all directions to teach the dhamma and to show the way to humanity how to win release from the sufferings and miseries of the many rebirths in samsara. The monks practised vipassana, each in his own way, in his own secluded spot under a tree in the forest grove where the community resided.

Recently, following the lead taken by the government in assisting the Mahā Theras, in the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Sāsana, some monks for reasons of their own, have left the Order. Sometimes, the reason given was that they feared restrictions would be placed on how they lived and conducted themselves. These fears are groundless; for it was not the intention of the government to organize the sanghas for their own purpose. It was the sincere desire of the government to help purify, perpetuate and propagate the Sasana. Without the government's assistance these could not have been



achieved. As a result of this purification process, many bogus monks have been weeded out and favourable conditions created for the good ones to follow the teachings of the Buddha in peace.

So long as he does not commit any pārājika offence, which automatically deprives him of monkhood, a monk, observing the patimokkha rules and abiding in the law has nothing to fear and no one can deprive him of his holy status. The Order is open to all and anyone who has attained the age of 20 years and also has the other required qualifications, can be ordained a monk and none may say him nay. Having renounced the lay-life and taken up the life of the homeless, he can complete his holy mission in his life time, by seeking salvation for himself and teaching the ways of the Buddha to others, so that they may win salvation for themselves. The function of the sangha is twofold; to strive within the best possible conditions to gain self-development and to teach the dhamma to mankind. As the purpose for giving up the householder's life, which is dominated by lobha, dosa and moha, the three main roots of all evil, is to destroy and uproot these evils from one's own mind and thereby realize Nibbana, a monk, by necessity, must practise some measure of austerity. Thus, the need of a calm, sequestered life, 'far from the madding crowd' where he can perform his duties.

He teaches the young and the old; he also preaches the doctrines of the Buddha to lay congregations and act as their

spiritual mentor. There, his duties to the lay people ends and for the rest, he is concerned with his own search for enlightenment. How these are accomplished and where and when he devotes himself to self-development and self-salvation are his own concern and nobody's. A monk has no fixed daily schedule. Buddhism is a religion of individual effort and endeavour and it may even be called a selfish practice. Each person, whether monk or layman, strives for his own release from the miseries of saṃsārā.

In the Dhamma Vihāri Sutta the Buddha describes the kind of monk, whom he says, "abides in the law." Answering a question put to him by a monk, as to what extent a monk must strive, to be able to say of him, that he is one who abides in the law, the Buddha describes in the following manner, a monk who studies and practises the doctrines and who may be called "one who abides in the law."

A monk may study all the scriptures, commit them to memory, disseminate all that he has heard and learnt to others, recite the doctrines aloud, make a mental study, analyse, reflect on the doctrines he has heard and learnt and spend the entire day, with thoughts centered on them, but if he abandons living within himself in seclusion (meditation) and makes no effort to develop insight, such a monk, said the Buddha, may not be said to be "one who abides in the law."



'But a monk, who studies the doctrines, but does not spend the entire day doing so, and who does not abandon living within himself in seclusion (meditation) and who strives to develop insight knowledge may be said to be "one who abides in the law."

Then again, the Buddha said that a monk who studies the doctrines, but beyond that, does not understand them with wisdom, may not be said to be "one who abides in the law." Similarly, the Buddha said that a monk may disseminate the doctrines he has heard and learnt to others, recite the doctrines aloud, make a mental study, analyse, reflect on the doctrines he has heard and learnt, but who, beyond that, does not understand them with wisdom, may not be said to be "one who abides in the law."

But a monk, who studies the doctrines, and beyond that understands them with wisdom, may be said to be "one who abides in the law."

Finally, the Buddha said to the monk, "Monks strive for advancement and profit. Such being so, I, the compassionate teacher, out of compassion for them, have shown what should be done. There are the roots of trees where there is peace and seclusion. Reflect again, O monks. Do not be forgetful, do not repent later that you had not done so. These are my advice to you."

In this way, the Buddha has shown monks how they should discharge the two dhuras and conduct themselves and strive for freedom from the evils of this world and realize Nibbāna.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.



A Universal Benediction  
( Mettā Sutta from the Sutta Nipata )

May creatures all abound  
in weal and peace; may all  
be blessed with peace always.  
All creatures weak or strong,  
all creatures great or small;  
creatures seen or unseen,  
dwelling afar or near,  
born or awaiting birth,  
may all be blessed with peace.

Let none cajole or flout  
his fellow anywhere;  
let none wish others harm  
in dudgeon or in hate.

Just as with her own life  
a mother shields from hurt  
her own, her only child  
let all embracing thoughts  
for all that lives be thine,  
an all embracing love  
for all the universe,

in all its heights and depths  
and breadth; unstinted love,  
unmarred by hate within  
not rousing enmity.

So, as you stand or walk,  
or sit or lie, reflect  
with all your might in this  
'tis deemed a state divine.

Written and presented to me by an old  
friend U Thi who passed away on  
February 23, 1982.



## Mettā - Loving Kindness

Our strife-torn world is in great need of peace. Military action and diplomacy have not achieved this. Too much ill-will, anger and hatred are being generated by the world's leaders, especially those of the super powers, through mutual distrust and suspicion of each other. We, who are the followers of the Buddha are fortunate in having the guidance of the Blessed One to live by and win peace for ourselves. The benediction of an all-embracing love for all living beings which the Buddha preached can bring about world peace if only mankind will practise it in their daily lives. Only with peace will happiness and well-being come to all living beings.

In the 7th sutta, Ekakaniṣṭha Pāli (Anguttara Nikāya), the Buddha spoke these words: "Bhikkhus, I know not of any other single thing that can be (1) the cause of non-arising of ill-will that has not arisen and, (2) the cause of abandoning of ill-will that has already arisen as loving kindness that is deliverance of mind.

In him, bhikkhus, who pays attention to loving kindness that is deliverance of mind, in a proper manner, ill-will that has not arisen does not arise, and ill-will that has already arisen is abandoned."

Mettā, is a Pāli word and its translation into English as 'love' is vastly different in concept and scope from the Mettā of the Buddhist doctrines. Mettā is defined in Childer's Pāli

dictionary as "friendliness, goodwill, kindness, love, charity." It is a highest expression of love that has no desire to possess. It is altruistic and compassionate love that desires to help others and with a spirit of self-sacrifice for the welfare of humanity. It is spiritual and calm in nature. Its benediction is healing. In the context of the Buddha's teachings, the word *Mettā* has a much wider significance and in its total scope, it may be translated as 'Loving Kindness' or as some have interpreted, Universal Love. It is the exercise of goodwill towards all living beings without exception or distinction. This *Mettā* must not be confused with the corrupted form 'Myittā' which also means love in everyday parlance. This word 'myittā' may take various forms of expression. It can be emotional, sentimental, sensual, passionate, fiery and destructive in its intensity. We have a saying, "The greater the love, the greater the hate it will generate."

This kind of love may also be platonic and altruistic or self-sacrificing to have found expression in such words as "Greater love hath no man, than he who gives his life for a friend." Charles Dickens gives us an example of such love in his book, 'The Tale of Two Cities.' In this story, Sydney Carton sacrificed his life for his friend, Charles Darney and Lucie Manette, whom both loved; but who favoured Darney. Sydney Carton died on the guillotine taking the place of his friend Charles Darney. Such love invoked the sentimental lines; "It is a far, far, better thing that I do than I have ever done." But



as you will have seen, this love, however noble, was destructive in nature and the sacrifice benefited only two individuals.

To take another example of this kind of love, we find it epitomized as the 'grand passion' by William Shakespeare in his great tragedy, 'Romeo and Juliet.' It was an emotional and passionate love of a youth for a maid which was destructive for family and friends and ended with the suicide of the two youthful lovers, because of the feuding between their two families. The only good that came of this great love was the remorse and repentance it brought the Montagues and the Capulets, who as a result, learnt to live in peace with one another.

But such kinds of love, as different from one as the other, are just the antithesis of the Buddhist Mettā or Loving Kindness, because they apply to a relationship between individuals and therefore selective; whereas loving kindness is extended to all living beings without exception.

Loving Kindness was preached by the Buddha in the Mettā Sutta. The occasion was brought about while the Buddha was residing at Sāvatthi in the monastery donated by Anathapindika, the wealthy banker. A group of monks had been instructed by the Buddha to go and meditate in a distant forest grove and when they did so, they unknowingly harassed the deities who no longer could live in the trees because of the monks meditating below. Thus, they tried to frighten the monks away from the forest.



Disturbed and frightened, the monks sought the protection of the Buddha, who preached to them the Mettā Sutta to ward off harm and danger. They recited the sutta and by the exercise of loving kindness, overcame the animosity of the tree deities and they lived together in peace and harmony. This sutta is composed of twelve stanzas and are recited by monks in the homes of their disciples to protect them from harm and ill-fortune, by extending loving kindness to all living beings, that they may enjoy peace and happiness and be free from harm and danger.

To point out the significance of Mettā, I would like to quote a translation of a passage from the Mettā Sutta in which the Buddha gives an example of loving kindness. He said: "Just as a mother, even at the risk of her life, loves and protects her child the only child, so let a man cultivate this Universal Love towards the whole universe; below, above, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of opposing interest. Let him remain steadfastly in this state of mind, all the while from the time he awakes, whether he be standing, walking, sitting or lying down. This state of heart is the best in the world." It means that we must extend loving kindness to all living beings; to those who love or hate us, to the good and evil, rich and poor, those far and near, living and those yet unborn, the visible and the invisible. It is a universal love for all beings in our universe. It should also be extended to the world of devas (gods) and those abiding in the lower worlds without malice and enmity.



I am reminded of another passage I read in a book. It said: "For someone to give, there must be someone to receive. Else, giving is empty, futile." I was struck by this and pondered over it. In the mundane sense, it is true. For someone to give, whether of love, compassion or of a material kind, such as a gift, there must be a receiver who will respond to it. The giving in this instance, desires some thing in return; an appreciation, or expression of thanks or even of gratitude for the giving. Without such response, the giver finds no receiver and therefore considers his giving, empty and futile. This is in great contrast to the Loving Kindness preached by the Buddha by which we give and share with others. For in reality, loving kindness is a sharing of merits and benefits with all living beings. We begin first with self. Only when self is fulfilled, will one be able to help others. That is why we begin by saying, "May I be well and happy" and then extending the same to others, "May they also be well and happy." Thus, this thought is made to fill our minds and then shared and extended to also pervade the lives of other living beings.

For the daily practice of Mettā, I have been taught by another monk, a good friend, to say the following words, when I am about to wash my face on awakening in the morning. "Cool as this water is, may I be cool likewise. Cool as this water is, may those who love or hate me be cool like this water. Cool as this water is may all beings living in the eight quarters of the



universe, be as cool as this water." I then diffuse my mind with these thoughts and try to keep them within myself. I have found that this daily extension of loving kindness to all beings early in the morning makes for the beginnings of a good day. It should also be carried out at all times as instructed by the Buddha, in order that you will always be suffused with loving kindness, peace and happiness and so be able to share them with other living beings. Try also repeating this thought projection before you go to sleep at night. "May I be well and happy. May all other beings also be well and happy." Try to feel that you are suffusing the world with loving kindness. you will find that you sleep better and without bad dreams or nightmares. I have found this to be true. However, mere recitation is not enough. You must practise what the Buddha has preached, to saturate yourself with this highest form of love, so that you may benefit yourself and others.

In the Anguttara Nikāya Ekadassa nipāta 16 the Buddha said that when loving kindness is maintained towards all living beings, eleven blessings can be expected. These eleven blessings are: "A man sleeps in comfort; he wakes in comfort; he dreams no evil dreams; he is dear to human beings; he is dear to non-human beings; the gods guard him; no fire or poison or weapon harms him; his mind can 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."



On the other hand, ill-will, anger or hatred directed at others will only result in pain and anguish for oneself. The evil thoughts that a person harbours for another will disturb his peace of mind and cause him to lose his equanimity and his sense of what is right and what is wrong. His judgement will be misdirected and will lead him to acts detrimental to himself physically, mentally and materially. His decadence will only be gratifying to his enemies. One must turn aside anger and hatred with thoughts of loving kindness. Then only will hatred cease.

Finally, this exercise of Mettā, extending loving kindness to all living beings, is one of the Four Divine Abidings. The other three being, Compassion (Karunā); sympathetic joy for others' wellbeing or success (Muditā); and finally, Equanimity (Upekkhā) is discerning rightly, without attachment or aversion the good or bad states which you or others may meet. This practice will create peace and happiness in the family, in the community and lastly in the world.

The Buddha also said; "Hatred never ceases by hatred in this world. Through loving kindness it comes to an end. This is the eternal law." - Dhammapada V.5.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

## Sakkāya Diṭṭhi

The Pāli word Sakkāya Diṭṭhi means the heresy of individuality. It denotes Ego-personality, or Self with a great emphasis on the "I" "I am" and "This is mine" concept. The last three expressions arise from conventional usage which are mistakenly thought to express the existence and importance of a being, the substance of which is the Ego or Self. We have come to regard this corporeal body as our own true personality or Self. But the Buddha has taught us that our personality is made up of the Five Aggregates of Attachment. The basis of the personality is formed by the material body which in turn is made up of the four great elements (mahabhūta). Pathavī (solidity), Apo (fluidity), Tezo (energy) and Vāyo (motion), and which is endowed with the six sense organs, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, bodily contact and mind. These form the corporeal body or rūpa. In the Majjhima Nikāya, the material body is likened to a house which is built of a combination of wood, matting and other materials. Likewise, the body too is a combination of bones, flesh and blood and these have come to be regarded as composing the being.

But the body which is compounded in such a manner with the six sense organs is only the basis of our personality and not yet the personality itself. To be complete and functioning, there must be other faculties such as sensations, perceptions, kamma formations and consciousness. It is these five aggregates and



their six faculties of eye, nose, tongue, bodily contact and mind which make up the corporate body, which we wrongly take to be our Personality or Self. According to Buddhist thought, this body which we regard as a being or I is only a combination of everchanging physical and mental forces. They are impermanent and in a constant state of flux. There is no such thing as a real Self. Sakkāya Ditthi is the wrong view of this Self.

A friend, whom I am honoured to know for his piety and endeavour in his search for the Truth, has often given me snippets of wisdom gleaned from his readings of the Buddha's teachings or from hearing them expounded by learned Sayadaws. I quote him.

" I digress here to mention these words of the Buddha which have captured my imagination because they state the truth dear to my heart and one of them, the second expression was repeated by the Taungpulu Sayadaw in one of the sermons I listened to years ago.

1. Natta khandhā sammā dukkha. 2. Atta sammā pema natti.

The first means "There is no dukkha bigger than the khandhā." The second means "In the whole universe you love yourself best; there is nothing you love better than yourself." Contradictory as these two expressions may sound, it is true. As the Buddha said, this body is dukkha (suffering); nevertheless, we love ourselves as we see ourselves in our worldly personalities, the more pleasing, the more the Sakkāya Ditthi. For there is nothing



you love better than yourself. The efforts you make to personalize yourself with the assertive "I" and the care taken of your body to enhance its appearance, demonstrates the great attachment you have for your ego-personality, which you mistakenly regard as your true and everlasting Self. The Buddha, in one of his sermons, showed his repugnance and detachment for his material body. He said to the monk Vakkali who moaned that he was unable to come and see the Buddha because of his illness, "Hush, Vakkali, what is there in seeing this vile body of mine. He who sees the Dhamma sees me." He has taught us that we should not have an attachment for anything that is impermanent and suffering. We must become detached from them. Our physical body is but a conventional housing of conditioned things made up of mind and matter which are subject to disease, old age, decay and death and is therefore impermanent and suffering. Attachment for this mistaken Self is Sakkaya Ditthi - a view that an everlasting Self, or Ego-personality exists. This view gives rise to many evils. It is the basis of selfishness; one boasts of one's worldly achievements and possessions, forming an attachment for them, while they in turn become fetters binding a person to this and future existences. The ignorant or the deluded, speak vainly of their wealth, status in life and their children as their very own, when in truth they do not even belong to themselves. Their physical being, which is only nāma and rūpa is anicca, dukkha and anatta.



In the *Sammā Ditṭhi Dipanī*, the Ledi Sayadaw, Mahā Thera said: "The root cause of all wrong views, evil mental factors and evil kamma is *attā-ditṭhi* (*sakkāya ditṭhi*). Persons with this wrong view tend towards pride, anger, hatred and ill-will towards others." Another eminent Sayadaw, the Paṭhan Sayadaw U Visuddha also said: "The real culprit is *sakkāya ditṭhi* and not *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. The former gives rise to the latter."

But to us who have been living in this shell which we have come to regard as our true Self, how can we become disenchanted with it? To rid ourselves of *sakkāya ditṭhi* and its attendant evils, we must become detached from it. We must abhor it. How can we achieve this attitude of mind? For in reality, *sakkāya ditṭhi* or our misconception of Self begins in our mind and is retained and nourished by it. My friend whom I mentioned earlier, shared a unique experience with me. He said: "Everytime I pass a festering leper on the roadside, the thought that he and I breathe the same air deflates me and kills the lingering ego in me for the moment." The realization that we also have the same kind of body or self made up of the same compounded energies of mind and matter and that we have the same functions, does really lower our self-esteem. He continued to rationalize his feelings further. "Previous kamma is the sole prop in keeping us alive. We go, disintegrate and turn into a corpse the moment kamma is exhausted, to be cast away before it stinks and becomes unsightly. The hideous, clammy and bulging dead body of mine I visualize also deflates me." How very true.



I also had a similar experience while I was practising vipassanā meditation at the Chan Myay Yeiktha, Rangoon. During the course of a meditation walk, my eyes fell upon a sleeping person; he slept in such an ungainly posture that he appeared to me as a corpse. The realization that his body, now in my eyes just a corpse, and mine, or as I thought, our two selves were wrought from the same compounds shook me and I felt a repugnance for my physical body or the Self it represented. My friend and I had arrived at similar conclusions and shared a common feeling of revulsion and dismay because without our realizing it, we had gone beyond 'mindfulness' meditation and had strayed into the deeper realm of 'asubha' meditation. Later, I learnt that this form of meditation is actually carried out in a cemetery at dead of night as one of the thirteen austerity practices. How I came to experience such a revulsion of feeling I will never know, but ever since, I have come to regard my physical self with more detachment. Max Hoppe, a very lucid writer on Buddhism, in his preface to the book *The Doctrine of the Buddha*, by George Grimm, which he co-edited with M. Keller Grimm notes: "The ordinary man can easily be led astray into regarding his earthly personality as his true Self. This leads him to attach a particular value to this Self and to anything connected therewith. In this way craving and thirst, awake. He clings to it, he grasps it and thus creates conditions which fetter him to this existence and lead him from rebirth to rebirth in a new becoming. If on the



other hand, he recognizes that all this is not his true Self and in reality does not touch him, the craving is extinguished; he turns away from everything earthly, the fetters binding him to existence are broken and he attains salvation." But the " I " is hard to subdue and submerge it under an awakening knowledge of its reality. Just when one thinks one has it under control, it comes to the fore when least expected. It is craving and pride arising out of delusion, evils which lie dormant in us. It is the desire to assert oneself and personal pride and vanity sustains this attitude. Sakkāya Ditṭhi is as dominant as ever with all the evil it entails. So long as we cling to this view and act accordingly, we will have to live in woeful states in future existences and will never be able to set foot on the path to Nibbana.

Moreover, this view is heretical because it repudiates the Buddha's teaching of Anatta, the Doctrine of Not-Self, which is essential to one who wishes to practise the Buddha's way to end suffering - the realization of Nibbāna. The Self which has become so important to such persons who are egoists or " I " specialists, is nothing but nāmarūpa compounded of the five khandhas. The Buddha has explained that there is no self in any of these factors or as a whole being, because they are of an impermanent nature and suffering and are nothing so desirable that we should form an attachment for them or believe in Self as the dominant force of existence. The Buddha also said: "The noblest state of happiness is achieved when one has conquered Self."

These akusala kammās can be tamed, controlled and finally eradicated through the practice of sīla and bhavanā. As the Webu Sayadaw advised his followers, we must practise vipassanā meditation continuously so as not to allow an opportunity for unwholesome thoughts to enter our minds. In doing so, two things, namely, mind and matter (nāmarūpa) must be fully comprehended, delusion and craving for Self must be discarded. If vipassanā meditation is developed, nāmarūpa is fully understood and when ignorance is discarded, one can attain emancipation from defilements. This will finally lead us to the abandonment of the false belief of Sakkāya Diṭṭhi. This knowledge of oneself, the looking inwards to discover the realities that go to make up our ego-personality will make us become disgusted with it and the sufferings attached therein and we will have gained a penetrating insight of the Paramattha Saccā (Ultimate Truth). This knowledge and the elimination of Sakkāya Diṭṭhi are the first steps towards the realization and fruition of the first stage of holiness, the Sotāpatti magga phala.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.



## Sotāpatti Magga

Sakka, the King of the devas asked the Buddha, "Lord, how can one visualize Nibbāna? The Buddha replied, "By eradicating love and hatred."

This was the theme of the advice my Upajjhāya Sayadaw gave me as part of my religious training while I was residing at his kyaung in Mandalay. He had been telling me that my late entry into the Sangha Order was not a handicap for the realization, at least, of the fruition of sotāpatti, if I was earnest and diligent in my efforts to achieve it. He said that a bhikkhu must at least achieve this stage, if only to escape rebirth in the lower worlds. A Sotāpanna will never be reborn in a state lower than his present one and he will continue to exist in the world of devas and human beings, before finally realizing Nibbāna. The Sotāpanna, or the Stream-Winner as he is also called, will be reborn only seven times in saṃsāra.

To eradicate love and hatred from one's self. The thought was absorbing. The divesting of love from one's life; not to have it to give or to share with others was a sobering thought. But to live without it; without anyone to care what happens to you was a bleak prospect. However, the balance against this was rewarding, if only one could achieve it. The Sayadaw had not

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\* Mahāvagga, Sakkapañha Sutta, 6th Syn. Edn.

told me how I could do it. He had left me to find out for myself.

Since I first joined the Order. I had been devoting myself to a serious study of the Buddhist scriptures, reading everything available at hand. So I delved into the knowledge gleaned from my readings and tried to find the answer to the questions I sought. Love, desire or affection, especially for living beings, is much deeper in intensity than the craving for material and immaterial things, which one may easily abandon if the need arises. Love gives one a glow of well-being, that one loves and is loved. But on deeper reflection, one finds that love is nothing more than *tanhā* (lobha), an attachment, craving, a desire, passion or thirst for sensuous pleasures. These, the Buddha has taught us, are the cause of all suffering. To be separated from a loved one is torture and pain. This state of suffering and frustration is incomprehensible in its early stages of exquisite torment. One is still under a deluded state created by *moha*, the ignorance of the truth and reality of things. Love should be seen as a fetter binding one to unending existences in *samsarā*. Therefore, it must be discarded if one is to attain the realization of *Sotāpatti magga*, the first step towards *Nibbāna*. At this point, the Buddha's words in the *Dhammapada* comes to mind with its revealing truth and solace. "From affection springs grief, from affection springs fear. For him who is wholly free from affection, there is no grief, much less fear." (Verse 213)



The Buddha's words touch the core of life and its natural tendencies. Grief comes in the wake of affection on parting even temporally, and disastrously when the parting is final as in death. But a timely recall to sanity through the clear insight of the Buddha's words will save one from suffering and woe. For freedom from suffering is the object of the bhikkhu's life.

The second fetter to be discarded is hatred. This is the second of the evil triad, lobha, dosa and moha. Hatred or dosa, is a searing fire which is self-consuming when roused in a person. He loses all sense and reason when in the uncontrollable grip of hatred. Violence, destruction and death are the natural consequences if hatred is unchecked. We must control this arising in us with a reflection on the Buddha's words. Again in the Dhammapada, he speaks these words, "Hatred never ceases by hatred in this world. Through Loving-Kindness it comes to an end. This is the eternal law." (Verse 5)

Thus far, we have come only to the realization of what passion and hatred can destroy in human and spiritual values and also that they, in reality are only defilements which must be discarded if one is to seek salvation from the suffering of rebirths in the rounds of saṃsāra.

Having realized passion and hatred for what they are, we must proceed towards their eradication. This can be achieved only through the practice of the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline. Ethical Conduct (Sīla), Moral Disci-



pline (Samādhi) and Wisdom (Paññā). These three make up the Noble Eightfold Path, the practice of which will lead to the eradication of lobha (desire), dosa, (hatred) and moha (delusion) which will practically enable us to visualize Nibbāna. The fundamental step towards the realization of Nibbāna, is the practice of vipassanā meditation. In this meditation, one will soon lose the illusion that the corporeal body is a self-contained entity. One comes to see it as only a body made up of mind (nāma) and matter (rūpa). As one gains more concentration (samādhi) the impermanency of things (anicca), the suffering caused by attachment to them (dukkha) and lastly, that Self is a delusion and is non-existent (anatta) are realized. With this realization comes total detachment, knowing them at last for what they are; that they are defilements and hindrances in one's efforts to reach Nibbāna. Passion, hatred and delusion all fade away and in their place, one must practise universal benevolence. Metta or Loving-Kindness must be the mantle one should wear, because only then can loving-Kindness be extended to all living beings.

Having reached this stage, one has discarded the fetters of desire, hatred, ego-personality (sakkāya ditthi), sceptical doubt (vicikicchā) and attachment to rites and rituals (sīlabbata parāmāsa or upādāna). The four characteristics of one who has achieved sotāpatti magga, are an unfailing faith in the Triple Gems, the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha and having



the perfect morality of one who has steadfastly practised the Five Precepts (Ariyakanta Sīla). Such a person is one who associates with the wise and good persons, hears the good dhamma, has a wise consideration for all living beings and lives in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

Having achieved the Sotāpatti Magga, a person lives a calm, noble and happy life with the assurance that he will not be reborn in the nether worlds. He will be reborn again only seven times in the heavenly and human worlds and finally, he will have put an end to all suffering and attain to Nibbāna.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and enjoy peace and happiness.

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\* See page 65.

## The Five Precepts

The Five Precepts (Pañca Sīla) are called Varitta Sīla, which means refraining from certain practices which the Buddha mentioned as practices to be avoided. The observance of the precepts enables one to gain merit, while non-observance will result in demerit. The most important thing, however, is that faith in the Three Gems - the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha must be unshaken and steadfast, otherwise the observance of the precepts will be of no avail.

Firstly, the disciple will make the following supplication: "Okāsa, Okāsa, Okāsa. I pray that I may be permitted to pay homage most humbly and respectfully to the Three Gems - the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, in order that I may be cleansed of unwholesome kamma, committed by thought, word and deed and live a long life, free from ill. For this good Kamma which I now perform, may I be safe from being reborn in the lower states of existence or hell and may I live free from all dangers and harm; may I be free from the ills and sufferings of Samsāra."

\*(The monk will then give his benediction, at the end of which the disciple will say, "May it be fulfilled, Your Reverence.")

\*(Your Reverence, I most respectfully request you to give me the Five Precepts. For the second time, I most respectfully request you to give me the Five Precepts. For the third time, I most respectfully request you to give me the Five Precepts.")



\*(The monk will then say, "I shall speak the words, repeat them after me and the disciple will say, "Reverend, I will do so.")

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa. (Repeat three times.)

(Veneration to Him, the Most Exalted, the Purified One, the Supremely Enlightened Buddha,)

Buddham Sāraṇam Gacchāmi ... (I take refuge in the Buddha)

Dhammam Sāraṇam Gacchāmi ... (I take refuge in the Dhamma)

Sangham Sāraṇam Gacchāmi ... (I take refuge in the Sangha)

For the second time ... (repeat as above)

For the third time ... (repeat as above)

\*(The monk will then say, "You are now endowed with the Three Gems." The disciple will say, "Yes, Your Reverence.")

The Five Precepts are to be taken as follows.

1. I shall abstain from taking the life of all living beings.
2. I shall abstain from taking what is not mine.
3. I shall abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. I shall abstain from speaking falsehood.
5. I shall abstain from taking intoxicating drinks and drugs.

\*(The monk will then say, "You are now endowed with the Three Gems and the Five Precepts. Do you observe and keep them with diligence and mindfulness." The disciple will say, "Reverend, I will do so.")

Benefits of observing the Five Precepts in brief.

1. Prosperity will be achieved and sustained.
2. Good reputation as a noble and upright person will be gained.
3. Self-assurance in meeting people.
4. Peaceful death without perplexity of mind.
5. Will be reborn in the world of Devas (gods) and again in the world of human beings.

Result of breaking the Five precepts in brief.

1. Loss of prosperity.
2. Will gain notoriety and bad reputation.
3. Lack of assurance in meeting people.
4. Death will be with a troubled mind.
5. Will be reborn in the lower states of existences or in hell.

\* The will not apply when the precepts are taken by the disciple himself.



## Selections from the Dhamma

Dhammapada, the Way of the Dhamma, consists of 423 melodious Pāli verses uttered by the Buddha on about 300 occasions to suit the temperaments of his listeners in the course of his preaching during his ministry of 45 years.

Attahi ettano natho

"One is one's own refuge."

D. 380.

"Not to do evil

To be full of good

To completely purify one's mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddhas."

D. 183.

"By oneself indeed is evil done;

By oneself is one defiled.

By oneself is evil left undone;

By oneself indeed is one purified.

Purity and impurity depend on oneself.

No one purifies another."

D. 165.

"Self-conquest is the best of all conquests.

He who conquers himself,

Is the greatest of conquerers."

D. 103.

"He who meditates

may live only a day;

but more blessed than he,

who lives to be hundred

without a day of meditation."

"Hatred never ceases by hatred in this world.

Through loving kindness it comes to an end.

This is the eternal law."

D. 5.

"From affection springs grief;  
 from affection springs fear.  
 For him who is wholly free  
 from affection, there is no grief,  
 much less fear."

D.213.

"For the sleepless the night is long.  
 So too, the journey for the weary traveller.  
 For those ignorant of the Dhamma,  
 Samsāra is unending."

D.

Lokapāla Dhamma.

Two dhammas which must be upheld in this world and which should serve as the basis of one's character, are, Hiri (moral shame) and Ottappa (moral dread).

To be ashamed of what one should be ashamed of; to be ashamed of performing evil and unwholesome things; this is called moral shame. To be in dread of what one should be in dread of; to be in dread of performing evil and unwholesome things; this is called moral dread. These two laws are also termed the Lokapalas, "Protectors of the World."

The Buddha said; "Two dhammas, O monks, are protecting the world; moral shame (hiri) and moral dread (ottappa). If these two were not to protect the world, then one would neither know one's mother, nor the mother's sister, nor the brother's wife, nor one's teacher's wife."

Anguttara Nikāya.



## Sampadā

Blessings or virtues which are to be acquired and practised if one aspires to a better life now and in the next existence.

These are Saddhā (faith). One must have faith in the omniscience and teachings of the Buddha. Hiri (moral shame). One should have a moral shame of being guilty of immoral conduct. Ottappa (moral dread). One should have a moral dread of being guilty of immoral conduct. Viriya (energy). One should be energetic in avoiding and discarding evil and unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds and in the performing and upholding of good and wholesome things, mentally, verbally and physically. Paññā (wisdom). One should be constantly aware of the arising and passing away of all volitional actions; one should discard unwholesomeness and strive to possess the penetrating knowledge that will lead to Nibbāna where all suffering ends.

Anguttara Nikāya.

## Brahma Vihāra

The following four Divine Abidings should be practised and attained. They will lead one to the attainment of the Ten Pārami, which are perfections towards Buddhahood.

Mettā.                    Extending unlimited universal love and kindness to all living beings.

Karunā.                  Compassion for all living beings who are suffering, in trouble and affliction.

Muditā. Sympathetic joy in others' success, welfare and happiness.

Upekkhā. Equanimity in all vicissitudes of life.

Abhidhamma.

Eight Lokadhammas.

Vicissitudes in life which one must face with equanimity.

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| Labho.      | Gain      |
| Alabho.     | Loss      |
| Yaso.       | Honour    |
| Ayaso.      | Dishonour |
| Pasamsanam. | Praise    |
| Neindan.    | Blame     |
| Sukha.      | Happiness |
| Dukkha.     | Misery    |

When any of these conditions arise, one should reflect thus: "This condition has arisen in me, but it is impermanent and is suffering; its nature is changeable and fluctuating and it should be known as it truly is and not allowed to overwhelm the mind. One should not be glad nor distressed. One must be detached. If we do good, we will receive good and if we do evil, we will receive evil."

Anguttara Nikāya.



## Moral Reflections.

Every day one should reflect thus:-

"It is our nature to grow old and we cannot bypass this condition of old age.

It is our nature to suffer and we cannot bypass this condition of suffering.

It is our nature to die and we cannot bypass this condition of death.

We are bound to be parted from all things and persons we love and all things which make us happy and contented.

We have kamma as our own possession. If we do good, we will receive good. If we do evil, we will receive evil,"

Anguttara Nikāya.

## Ten Kilesas

Defilements and impurities which must be avoided and discarded.

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Lobha             | Craving, greed.      |
| Dosa              | Hatred, anger.       |
| Moha              | Delusion, ignorance. |
| Māna              | Conceit, pride.      |
| Diṭṭhi            | Wrong views.         |
| Vicikicchā        | Sceptical doubt.     |
| Thina-middha      | Torpor, languor.     |
| Uddhacca-Kukkucca | Mental agitation.    |

|           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| Ahirika   | Lack of moral shame. |
| Anotteppa | Lack of moral dread. |

Abhidhamma.

### Five Nivāraṇas

These are hindrances to spiritual progress and the realization of the Ultimate Truth - Nibbāna.

|                   |                                        |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Kāmaśchanda       | Lustful, sensuous desires.             |
| Vyāpāda           | Intending harm to others;<br>ill-will. |
| Thina - middha    | Torpor, languor.                       |
| Uddhacca-Kukkucca | mental agitation.                      |
| Viccikicchā       | Sceptical doubt.                       |

Anguttara Nikāya.

"Whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil, all issues from the mind. Whatsoever there is of good, connected with good, belonging to good, all issues from the mind."

Anguttara Nikāya.



## Pabbajjāti

"The wise discards all kilesas,  
 the fires are extinguished.  
 free of Craving, Hatred, Delusion,  
 He finds peace 'thru' Renunciation."

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.

"Repent not the past  
 nor brood over the future.  
 Live in the present."

Samyutta Nikāya.

"He who lives with his senses guarded and conquered, and is established in the Dhamma; delights in uprightness and gentleness; one who has gone beyond attachment and has overcome all sorrows. That wise man does not cling to what is seen and heard."

Sutta Nipāta.

The monk's conduct towards women

"How are we to conduct ourselves Lord with regard to womankind?"

"By not seeing them Ānandā!"

"But if we should see them, what are we to do?"

"No talking, Ānandā!"

"But if they should speak to us Lord, what are we to do?"

"Be wide awake, Ānandā!"

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.

"Challenge him, who with sword raised threatens to kill you; face even an ogre: touch and handle a deadly snake whose bite you know will kill you. But do not hold converse face-to-face with a woman!"

Mātāputta Sutta.

Hendadāni bhikkhave amantayam  
Vayaḍhamma sankhāra  
appamādena sampādettha.

"Verily, I say unto you, O monks  
all conditioned things are transient;  
work out your salvation with diligence."

(These were the last words spoken by the Buddha  
to Ānandā, just before his parinibbāna).

\*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.



