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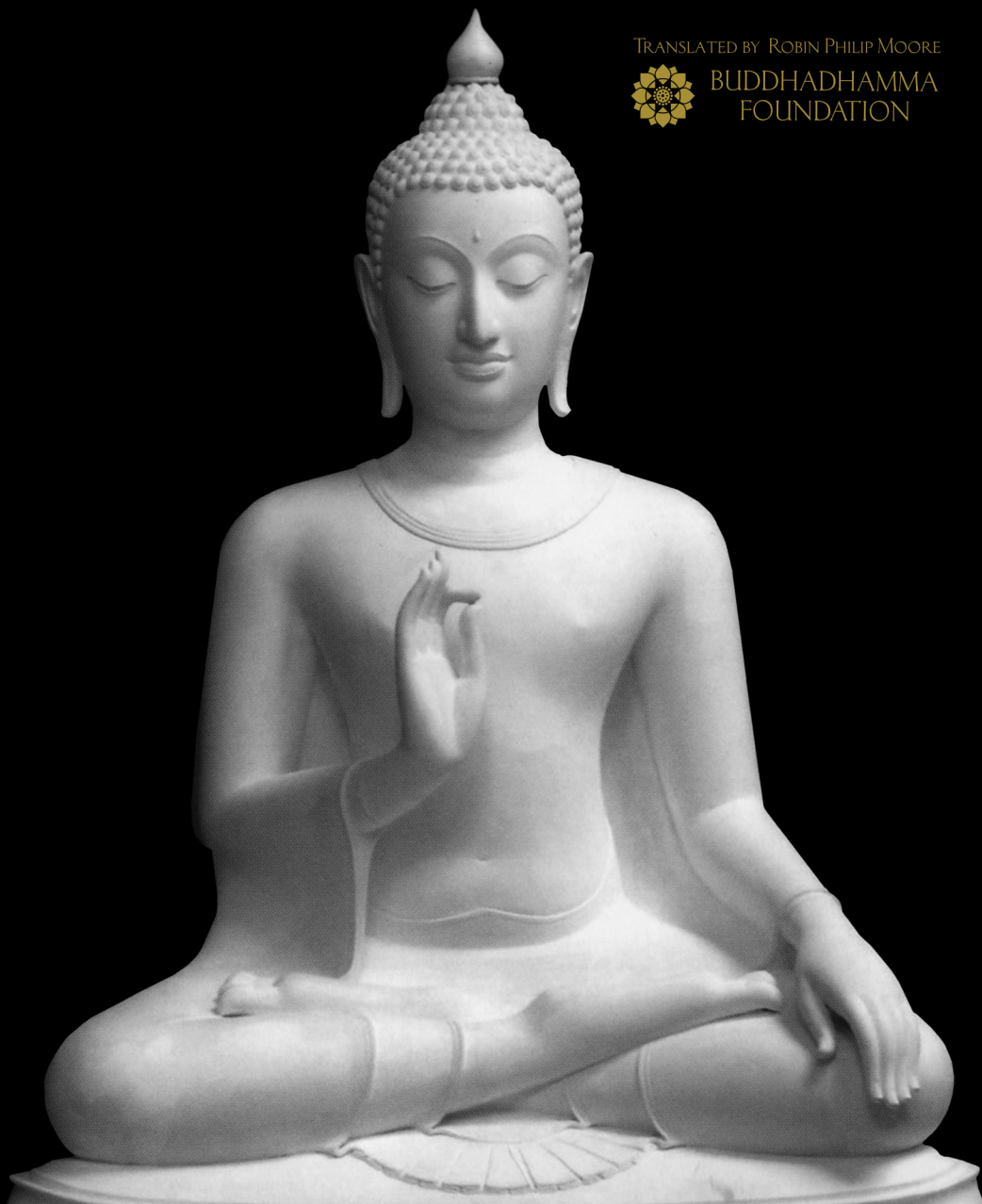
The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life

BHIKKHU P. A. PAYUTTO  
(SOMDET PHRA BUDDHAGHOSACARIYA)

TRANSLATED BY ROBIN PHILIP MOORE



BUDDHADHAMMA  
FOUNDATION



# Buddhadhamma

The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life  
by Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya)

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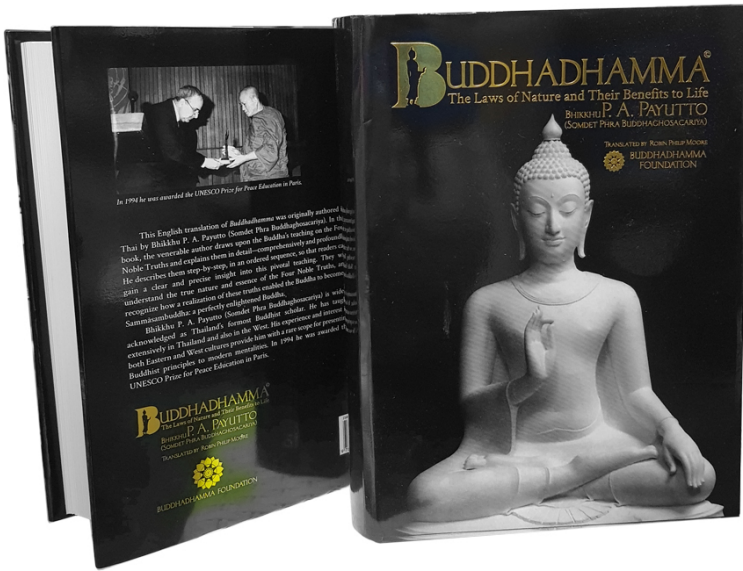
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Translated by Robin Philip Moore

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The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life

BHIKKHU P. A. PAYUTTO  
(SOMDET PHRA BUDDHAGHOSACARIYA)

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*Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti*  
'The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.'



BUDDHADHAMMA FOUNDATION



Bodhi Tree where the Buddha attained enlightenment



# *Anumodanā*

Although the Buddhist teachings on human conduct and relationships are diverse and numerous – according to the suitability for different individuals, communities, and circumstances, and in order to generate wholesome results at various times and in various places – they all converge at the same principles and modes of instruction. All of these teachings encourage people to live and act in harmony with an interrelated natural system functioning according to natural laws. If we are able to follow the guidance of awakened individuals conforming to this natural truth, or if we gain insight into this truth and practise accordingly, we will reap the desired results.

As the basic theoretical Buddhist teachings, which when realized lead to genuine satisfaction, are based on a truth connected to an interrelated natural system, there are additional practical teachings encouraging people to understand this truth. When realization of this natural truth occurs, people can use their understanding to engage with things in order to bring about favourable results, without needing to rely on teachers or external instruction. This is an inherent part of the natural system itself.

These two layers of teaching – the theoretical and the practical – are thus linked and form an integrated body of truth, pertaining directly to a natural order. ‘The One Who Knows’, i.e. the Buddha, simply encouraged people to give heed to this truth of nature, so that they would realize it for themselves.

By clearly realizing this natural truth, one is no longer dependent on the advice and counsel of others. Buddhism thus contains no form of coercion; it neither forces anyone to believe in the teachings, nor is it troubled if people reject the teachings. It follows the principle that all things proceed naturally according to an interrelated system of causes and conditions. Having realized and discovered this truth for himself, the

Buddha out of kindness and compassion gave instruction and guidance to others.

This book *Buddhadhamma* is an attempt to describe the Buddha's teachings – which he systematized and set down as standard principles – on both levels: the basic theoretical teachings on truth and the practical teachings on personal conduct and social engagement, which are directly based on the theoretical teachings.

For many years, Khun Yongyut Thanapura has devoted himself to propagating the Dhamma. Towards the end of 1985, through his own initiative, he and other faithful lay supporters founded the Buddhadhamma Foundation. Although this foundation has no direct affiliation to the book *Buddhadhamma* or to its author, the foundation's name was most likely chosen as a result of their sense of spiritual connection to this book.

As far as I am aware, from 1992 to the present – for almost twenty-three years – Khun Yongyut Thanapura has endeavoured to bring about an English translation of *Buddhadhamma*. He sponsored this work unremittingly, until ere long, two translated books were published: *Good, Evil and Beyond: Kamma in the Buddha's Teaching* (translated by Bruce Evans, January 1993) – a translation of chapter 5 of *Buddhadhamma* titled 'Kamma'; and *Dependent Origination: The Buddhist Law of Conditionality* (translated by Bruce Evans, 1994) – a translation of chapter 4 of *Buddhadhamma* titled 'Paṭiccasamup-pāda'.

Khun Yongyut Thanapura, the president of the Buddhadhamma Foundation, was determined to bring about a complete English translation of *Buddhadhamma*, containing all the chapters. Although he met with much difficulty and obstruction, spending a lot of money and having to wait a long period of time, he was undaunted and did not give up. The result is that now, after many years, a complete translated English edition is ready for publication.

The complete English translation of *Buddhadhamma* is the work of Mr. Robin Moore, who has been working on this translation for many years. Before working with the Buddhadhamma Foundation, while he was still ordained as a monk named Suriyo Bhikkhu, through his own enthusiasm, he began to translate these texts and published *The Three*

*Signs: Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā in the Buddha's Teachings*, a translation of chapter 3 of *Buddhadhamma* titled 'The Three Characteristics'. On that occasion, in 2006, Khun Sirichan Bhirombhakdi and her two daughters, Khun Chuabchan and Khun Pornbhirom Bhirombhakdi, sponsored this publication for free distribution.

After leaving the monkhood, Mr. Robin Moore continued the translations of *Buddhadhamma* under the patronage of Khun Sirichan Bhirombhakdi and her two daughters, who published the following books for free distribution: *Nibbāna: the Supreme Peace* (2009; a compilation of material drawn primarily from chapters 6, 7 and 10 of *Buddhadhamma* on Nibbāna); *Dependent Origination* (2011; a translation of chapter 4 of *Buddhadhamma* titled 'Paṭiccasamuppāda'); and *Awakened Beings: True Disciples of the Buddha* (2014; a compilation of material drawn primarily from chapters 6, 7 and 18 of *Buddhadhamma* on enlightened beings). On this occasion it is thus appropriate to express a deep gratitude to Khun Sirichan Bhirombhakdi and her two daughters for supporting this translation work and giving the gift of Dhamma by publishing and distributing the translated editions of *Buddhadhamma*. Their efforts have nourished and sustained this translation work until it was linked with the project sponsored by the Buddhadhamma Foundation, thus helping to bring about this complete translated edition.

Over more than a decade that Mr. Robin Moore has been working on this project of translating *Buddhadhamma*, I am aware that Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro – through his kindness towards the translator, his love of Dhamma, and his wish to benefit students of Buddhism – has offered his assistance, both in terms of his knowledge of Dhamma and his linguistic skills, to the translator all through to the end. Here, I wish to acknowledge this kind, able, and virtuous assistance by Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro.

I wish to congratulate Khun Yongyut Thanapura, both for his individual efforts and his work as director of the Buddhadhamma Foundation. He has shown enduring charitableness towards Buddha-Dhamma, and has maintained fortitude, constancy, and perseverance, braving hardship and difficulty until the goal of completing the translation of *Buddhadhamma* has been achieved. He has played an important part in sustaining

Buddhist study and practice and has spread the blessings stemming from the Dhamma on a wide scale.

On a similar note, I wish to express gratitude to Mr. Robin Moore, the translator, whose genuine and faultless efforts have brought this translation of *Buddhadhamma* to completion. These efforts have deservedly generated and radiated goodness and wholesomeness.

The original Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma* was written as an offering and dedication to the true Dhamma. As I mentioned in the ‘Brief on Copyright of Translated Material’ (Nov. 9, 2009): ‘All of my books are intended as a gift of the Dhamma, to be printed for free distribution, for the benefit of the wider public. There are no copyright fees for these books. If someone appreciates these books and with pure intent wishes to translate and share them ... this is a way to propagate the Dhamma and perform good deeds for a wider audience. People engaged in such translations must rely on their skill and proficiency, and expend much time and energy.... The copyright to these translated works can thus be considered as belonging to the translator.’ What the translator then wishes to do with these translated texts is his or her responsibility to take into further consideration.

I wish to thank everyone who has participated in helping to bring this translated book into tangible form. May these efforts help to foster goodness and wellbeing, enhance spiritual development, and generate wisdom for all human beings, and help to create a stable and true human civilization.

Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto)

21 November 2015

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<b>8.</b>	<b>Outstanding Benefits of the Four Noble Truths . . . . .</b>	<b>1937</b>
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	<b><i>Viññāṇa-dhātu and Nibbāna-dhātu . . . . .</i></b>	<b><i>1955</i></b>
	<b><i>Discussion of the 'Knower' (Phoo Roo) . . . . .</i></b>	<b><i>1957</i></b>
	<b><i>Author's Postscript . . . . .</i></b>	<b><i>1959</i></b>
	<b><i>Bibliography . . . . .</i></b>	<b><i>1977</i></b>
	<b><i>P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya) . . . . .</i></b>	<b><i>1987</i></b>
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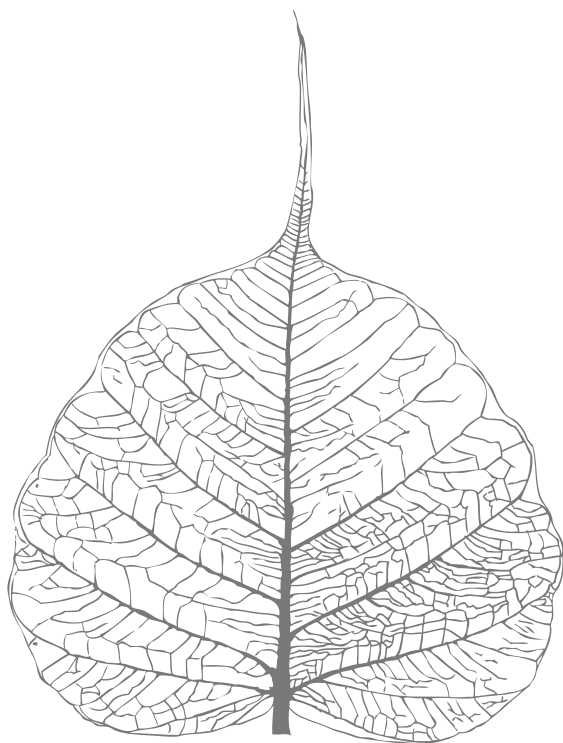
(In the list below, canonical works are in *italics*)

A.	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i> (5 vols.)	J.	<i>Jātaka</i>
AA.	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Manorathapūraṇi</i> )	JA.	<i>Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā</i>
Ap.	<i>Apadāna</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )	Kh.	<i>Khuddakapāṭha</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )
ApA.	<i>Apadāna Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Visuddhajanavilāsini</i> )	KhA.	<i>Khuddakapāṭha Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthajotikā</i> )
Bv.	<i>Buddhavaṁsa</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )	Kvu.	<i>Kathāvatthu</i> ( <i>Abhidhamma</i> )
BvA.	<i>Buddhavaṁsa Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Madhuratthavilāsini</i> )	KvuA.	<i>Kathāvatthu Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthadīpani</i> )
Comp.	<i>Compendium of Philosophy</i> ( <i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha</i> )	M.	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i> (3 vols.)
CompT.	<i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha Tīkā</i> ( <i>Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī</i> )	MA.	<i>Majjhimanikāya Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Papañcasūdanī</i> )
Cp.	<i>Cariyāpiṭaka</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )	Miln.	<i>Milindapañhā</i>
CpA.	<i>Cariyāpiṭaka Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthadīpani</i> )	Nd1.	<i>Mahāniddeśa</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )
D.	<i>Dīghanikāya</i> (3 vols.)	Nd2.	<i>Cūlaniddeśa</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )
DA.	<i>Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Sumaṅgalavilāsini</i> )	Nd1A.	<i>Niddeśa Aṭṭhakathā</i> – <i>Mahāniddeśavaṇṇanā</i> ( <i>Saddhammapajjotikā</i> )
DAṬ.	<i>Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā Tīkā</i> ( <i>Linatthapakāsini</i> )	Nd2A.	<i>Niddeśa Aṭṭhakathā</i> – <i>Cūlaniddeśavaṇṇanā</i> ( <i>Saddhammapajjotikā</i> )
Dh.	<i>Dhammapada</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )	Nett.	<i>Nettipakaraṇa</i>
DhA.	<i>Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā</i>	NettA.	<i>Nettipakaraṇa Aṭṭhakathā</i>
Dhtk.	<i>Dhātukathā</i> ( <i>Abhidhamma</i> )	PañcA.	<i>Pañcapakaraṇa Aṭṭhakathā</i>
DhtkA.	<i>Dhātukathā Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthadīpani</i> )	Paṭ.	<i>Paṭṭhāna</i> ( <i>Abhidhamma</i> )
Dhs.	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi</i> ( <i>Abhidhamma</i> )	PaṭA.	<i>Paṭṭhāna Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthadīpani</i> )
DhsA.	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Aṭṭhasālīni</i> )	Ps.	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )
It.	<i>Itivuttaka</i> ( <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> )	PsA.	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Saddhammapakāsini</i> )
ItA.	<i>Itivuttaka Aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Paramatthadīpani</i> )	Ptk.	<i>Peṭakopadesa</i>



<i>Pug.</i>	Puggalapaññatti (Abhidhamma)	<i>Ud.</i>	Udāna (Khuddakanikāya)
<i>PugA.</i>	Puggalapaññatti Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)	<i>UdA.</i>	Udāna Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)
<i>Pv.</i>	Petavatthu (Khuddakanikāya)	<i>Vbh.</i>	Vibhaṅga (Abhidhamma)
<i>PvA.</i>	Petavatthu Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)	<i>VbhA.</i>	Vibhaṅga Aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)
<i>S.</i>	Saṃyuttanikāya (5 vols.)	<i>Vin.</i>	Vinaya Piṭaka (5 vols.)
<i>SA.</i>	Saṃyuttanikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Sāratthapakāsinī)	<i>VinA.</i>	Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā (Samantapāsādikā)
<i>Sn.</i>	Suttanipāta (Khuddakanikāya)	<i>VinṬ.</i>	Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā Ṭīkā (Sāratthadīpanī)
<i>SnA.</i>	Suttanipāta Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthajotikā)	<i>Vism.</i>	Visuddhimagga
<i>Thag.</i>	Theragāthā (Khuddakanikāya)	<i>VismṬ.</i>	Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā (Paramatthamañjusa)
<i>ThagA.</i>	Theragāthā Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)	<i>Vv.</i>	Vimānavatthu (Khuddakanikāya)
<i>Thīg.</i>	Therīgāthā (Khuddakanikāya)	<i>VvA.</i>	Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)
<i>ThīgA.</i>	Therīgāthā Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)	<i>Yam.</i>	Yamaka (Abhidhamma)
		<i>YamA.</i>	Yamaka Aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)





## *Foreword by Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro*

*Buddhadhamma* is the crowning achievement of Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto), widely acknowledged as the most brilliant Thai scholar of Buddhism in living memory. The venerable author's masterpiece, it is by some distance the most important Buddhist academic work to have been published in Thailand during the twentieth century.

*Buddhadhamma* consists of a rich and comprehensive presentation of the teachings of Theravada Buddhism. As a book dedicated to revealing the Middle Path of the Buddha in all its profundity, it is fitting that the text steers a skilful course between an unquestioning acceptance of ancient commentarial interpretations and a too wide-ranging rejection of their value. On controversial issues, such as Dependent Origination for example, the author fairly summarises the various positions on the debate and leaves it to the reader to decide amongst them. The arrangement of the material in the book is a departure from the norm, but it is a well-considered departure, one that provides the author with a satisfying frame on which to beautifully mount the many jewels of the Buddha's teachings.

The venerable author's use of language in this book has earned him wide renown in Thailand. It can, however, offer considerable challenges to a translator. Although the book is free of the elliptical phrases found in the works of many forest monks, the style is dense and given to unusual combinations of words that are stimulating in the original but occasionally overpowering in a literal translation. The translator of this book, Robin Moore, an old friend of mine and ex-fellow monk, has done a fine job in making the English version as accessible as possible, while maintaining an admirable fidelity to the text. It has been a labour of love on his part, and I salute him on behalf of all grateful readers.

*Buddhadhamma* has been my constant companion for over thirty years and is the book I would choose to have with me on a desert island. I would like to express my appreciation that finally an English translation will make this excellent book available to many more people.

Ajahn Jayasaro  
Janamara Hermitage  
June 2016



# Foreword by the President of the Buddhadhamma Foundation

The Buddhadhamma Foundation is non-profit charitable organization, established by a group of devout Buddhists in 1987. Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya (P. A. Payutto) had no part in the establishment of this foundation or in any other matters pertaining to it.

The goal and objective of the Buddhadhamma Foundation is the widespread propagation of the Buddha's teachings, so that people may benefit from them and apply them to solve problems, both personal and social, in everyday life, in accord with the Buddha's directive to his disciples:

Bhikkhus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the many-folk, for the compassionate assistance of the world.

*Caratha bhikkhave cārikaṃ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya  
lokānukampāya.*

The inspiration for the establishment of the Buddhadhamma Foundation was the book *Buddhadhamma*, written by Ven. P. A. Payutto. Besides this text, the venerable author has written many books on how to apply the Buddha's teachings to address problems and work out solutions in various domains, e.g.: education; society; economics; politics; government; jurisprudence; culture; history; health; medicine; family life; adolescence; self-development; Dhamma practice; mind development; sangha administration; remedying problems in the sangha; etc.

For his accomplishments Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya has been given honorary doctorate degrees from fifteen leading universities in Thailand, and in 1994 he received UNESCO's Prize for Peace Education in Paris. The Buddhadhamma Foundation thus primarily focuses on

propagating the Buddhist works written by Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya (P. A. Payutto).

*Buddhadhamma* was compiled by Ven. P. A. Payutto by drawing on the essence of the Buddha's awakening, i.e. the Four Noble Truths. Ven. P. A. Payutto writes in a detailed, systematic, integrated, and logical way, revealing with clarity long-hidden truths to the reader. As a consequence, knowledge arises about the interconnected nature of human life and spiritual practice, from basic stages up to the final goal of life. One discovers the nature of human life, the attributes of life, the goal of life, and the means for living a worthy life. Through wise reflection one develops greater awareness and a transformation occurs in how one conducts one's life, leading to fulfilment and success.

To finish, I would like to thank Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya for his kindness in permitting the Buddhadhamma Foundation to carry out this English translation of *Buddhadhamma*. I am delighted that Mr. Robin Moore has shown such commitment and donated his time to finish this translation in such a thorough and circumspect way. I also wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Bancha Nangsue, who has completed the computer and graphic work for this book with great diligence and determination. The foundation expresses its deep gratitude to all the other people (whose names are not mentioned here) who have provided support for this project and have helped to bring about its success.

The Buddhadhamma Foundation is happy for this English edition of *Buddhadhamma* to be shared and disseminated, both as a printed publication and over the internet, with the stipulation that this is not done in exchange for any form of profit or monetary reward. If anyone wishes to publish or share this book, please contact the Buddhadhamma Foundation first for permission.

I would like to offer this work in homage to the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

On this occasion, I wish to dedicate any goodness generated from the publication of this book to my late parents Mr. Rung Rueng and Mrs. Kulap Thanapura, and to my two children who have also passed away.

Yongyut Thanapura  
President of the Buddhadhamma Foundation  
1 June 2017

Contact:

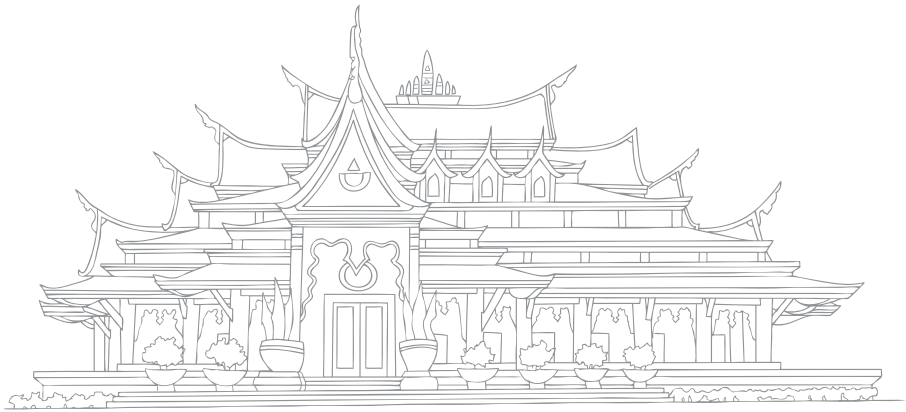
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## *Foreword by the Translator*

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. The first step, however, may be initiated by many different causes. The journey of completing this translation of *Buddhadhamma* in a sense began accidentally, or at least serendipitously.

In November 1994, after completing my 7-year training as an *anāgārika* (white-robed novice) and newly-ordained bhikkhu (*nāvaka*) in the monasteries situated in the UK led by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho (Tahn Chao Khun Rājasumedhācāriya), I asked permission from the elders in the UK to spend some time in Thailand, the spiritual home of the branch monasteries connected to the Luang Por Chah tradition. My request was granted and I was given a oneway ticket.

With only a rudimentary understanding of the Thai language, I went first to Wat Pah Nanachat in Ubon Ratchathani, where Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro was currently the acting abbot. Coincidentally, during the first month while I was there, the community was blessed with a rare visit by Ven. Phra Payutto, who spent several days giving teachings in English. I had of course heard of Tahn Chao Khun Payutto, whose scholarship was renowned in the Western monasteries and whose books – in particular his *Dictionary of Buddhism* – was widely read. I also knew that he had lectured at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, where I had studied comparative religion as an undergraduate.

During those days at Wat Pah Nanachat he gave a talk on happiness. Although I hadn't ever heard anyone emphasize the central importance of happiness in Buddhist practice at all levels of the Path, it wasn't so much the subject of the talk as the manner of the presentation that moved me so deeply. Than Chao Khun radiated happiness – he seemed to embody the joy of one who has tasted the fruits of happiness and who wishes to impart the accompanying knowledge with others. It is not an exaggeration to

say that I was moved to tears. Although this was an inchoate form of bliss, based on devotion, it nonetheless infused me with energy and interest. His talk had served its purpose.

I spent most of the next six years walking tudong<sup>1</sup> in Thailand as well as living in a remote branch monastery – Wat Phoo Jorm Gorm – by the Mekong River bordering Laos. As a monk, and even before that, I always had a strong academic leaning. Rather than using a standard course book or language teacher, I learned Thai primarily by carrying small Dhamma books (by Ajahn Buddhadasa, Tahn Chao Khun Paññānanda, Luang Por Chah, etc.) on my travels. For long periods of time these books were my companions. In 2001 I felt the need to deepen my theoretical or academic understanding of Buddhism, in part because as an 11-vassa monk (and thus officially a ‘Thera’ or ‘Ajahn’) I was expected to provide more formal teachings to the lay community.

I decided to ask permission from Ven. Phra Payutto to live with him at Wat Nyanavesakavan in Nakhon Pathom province. Ajahn Jayasaro took me to meet him. Rather than granting permission immediately, Tahn Chao Khun looked at me and asked: ‘What are you going to do here?’ Obviously this was no place to simply eat and lay back. I replied that I wanted to read the Tipiṭaka in Thai. Tahn Chao Khun seemed satisfied with this answer.

Not long after moving to Wat Nyanavesakavan, I asked Tahn Chao Khun about the *Buddhadhamma* translation project. I knew that Mr. Bruce Evans (formerly Puriso Bhikkhu) had spent several years working on this book during the 90’s. Two of the chapters – on Dependent Origination and on Kamma – had been published and very well received. But for some reason, the project had come to a standstill. Tahn Chao Khun asked me whether I would be willing to look at the unfinished manuscript and see whether it could be polished up and made ready for publication. Very soon, however, it became apparent that editing or rewriting someone else’s work, at least in this case, was significantly more difficult than translating the entire text from scratch.

<sup>1</sup>Tudong: the traditional practice of itinerant monks. This word stems from the Pali *dhutaṅga*, which is translated as a training for eliminating or ‘shaking off’ mental impurity.

And so the journey began. At first it seemed like walking through a garden filled with exotic flowers, set on gentle foothills. I had no specific destination in mind. It was simply a matter of replacing my original goal of reading the Tipiṭaka with this new activity. I would joke with people, saying that it would take me several lifetimes to complete the entire translation.

In 2003 I returned to the UK and acted as abbot of Hartridge Buddhist Monastery in Devon. In my spare time I would work on the translation, until, in 2007, I completed chapter 3 (I chose not to work sequentially on the text, but rather selected subjects that were of particular interest to me at the time). This was published as a separate volume titled *The Three Signs: Anicca, Dukkha and Anattā in the Buddha's Teachings*. The book was sponsored by Khun Sirichan Bhirombhakdi and her two daughters.

In 2007, after having struggled with a debilitating physical illness over the entire nineteen years of my monastic life, I decided to disrobe and see if life as a layman would bring about an improvement of health. Whereas it appeared as if the translation project would come to an abrupt halt, or enter a period of long abeyance, things in fact took an opposite turn, impelling me, metaphorically, from the foothills into elevated heights, where rhododendron trees bloom and the tree line gives out to expansive, moraine-sculpted valleys. Only weeks after disrobing in the UK I received a phone call from Khun Sirichan, urging me to return to Thailand and continue with the *Buddhadhamma* project. She made it clear that, in her mind, it was irrelevant whether I was in robes or not – she wished to support me and enable this valuable enterprise to be sustained. And so a new chapter of my life began.

Once in Thailand, I continued on the translation in earnest. Fortuitously, Khun Yongyut Dhanapura, the president of the Buddhadhamma Foundation, heard about the work I was doing and proposed that I continue with this project under the auspices of this organization. This enabled me to have all the proper documentation to stay longterm in Thailand and also to receive a salary so that I could earn a living. Here the journey began its most regular and consistent interval. One step at a time, one page of translation a day.

Although the actual translation of the text was completed in November 2014, it has taken another two years to attend to all the necessary details involved in preparing the text for publication. Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro kindly read through the manuscript and we met regularly to make corrections and improvements. After this, the entire formal preparation for publication began – selecting fonts, font sizes, margins and spacing, hyphenations, index, bibliography, contents, etc.

The journey now comes to end, although I hope the book itself will have a life of its own and travel into the world. Although I don't claim to have reached a summit – that honour rests with the author – I have reached a high saddle or plateau, circumambulating with devotion Tahn Chao Khun's crowning achievement. As a bonus I have been afforded rare glimpses and insights into the Dhamma. The project would never have reached this stage without devotion and love – a faith and devotion in Tahn Chao Khun's ability to elucidate the Buddha's teachings and a love of truth and goodness. Those of you who read the chapter on desire will recognize this latter quality as *chanda* – the first factor of the four roads to success.

It was perhaps an audacious step to use *Buddhadhamma* as my sharpening stone in learning the skills of translation. I was not a proficient translator or writer when I began this project. In this light, I have most likely not done full justice to the original Thai book. It is possible that I may have translated some passages incorrectly. If as readers you have doubt about any of the material, I have inserted the page numbers of the Thai edition into the text, in curly brackets, so that you can compare the English with the original. I have confidence, however, that with the help of my editors, in particular Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro, the book contains no blatant distortions or discrepancies.

Besides attempting to capture the meaning of the original Thai text, it has also been a challenge to find a suitable style of translation. Developing such a style was part of the evolution of translating this book. I think it is fair to say that the way in which ideas are formally conveyed in the Thai language differs from the traditional method of English compositions. One friend explained the distinction thus: Thai follows an inductive method whereas English traditionally follows a deductive method.

Whether this is an accurate description or not, the text of the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma* often follows what I would describe as a series of concentric circles, returning repeatedly to a similar premise. Using this same method in the English translation seemed inappropriate. If one is not used to this style, one can easily feel that, rather than adding layers of meaning and elucidation, one is encountering unnecessary repetition or redundancy. I have therefore reorganized the text accordingly, on many levels: paragraphs, chapter sections, and even entire chapters have been shifted. When key changes were made I consulted with the author to receive his approval. In any case, I can state with conviction that I have neither removed any important text or added my own interpolations.

One major task involved locating equivalent scriptural references used in the footnotes. This was not difficult with references to the Pali Canon, since the BUDSIR program (version 7) developed by Mahidol University contains a quick and easy to use search option for finding the corresponding Pali Text Society page numbers, matching the page numbers in the Thai Pali Tipiṭaka. The challenge was greatly multiplied, however, when faced with references to the commentaries, sub-commentaries, and other non-canonical texts. In most cases, I would have to copy the relevant Pali passage using the BUDSIR program, which does not give the PTS page numbers, and then try to match it by typing Pali terms in Roman script and pasting them into the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka program (version 4.0), which does provide page numbers, or sometimes only headings, to the PTS editions. The BUDSIR program is based on the Siam Raṭṭha Pāli Tipiṭaka (supplemented by the Thai translation called the Royal Tipiṭaka) which is the source of the references in *Buddhadhamma* (see bibliography). It is quite possible that there are errors with some of these footnote references. If readers spot any errors I would be grateful if you contact me so that I can make corrections for future printings. In the case where numbers are in brackets this indicates that I was unable to find an equivalent PTS (or other Roman alphabet) page number. Again, hopefully these will be updated in the future.

So many people have been supportive and helpful with this project that it is impossible to name everyone. The most important people are as follows:

First and foremost, my gratitude extends to Ven. Phra Payutto, who, besides being a constant inspiration and beacon of wisdom and compassion, has bestowed so much trust and confidence in my ability to complete this project at a required quality and standard. Although, due to his many other responsibilities and limitations on the physical level, he has not been able to read through the entire English translation, he has always answered my questions and doubts punctually when they arose. Although I may have been able to reflect some of his depth of wisdom and intellectual brilliance, it is beyond my powers to transport his beaming smile and radiant kindness to the reader. Those of you who have had the good fortune to meet him know what I'm talking about.

Second, I give my thanks to Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro, who has provided me with so much encouragement on many levels throughout the past fifteen years (and beyond that). He shares a similar devotion to Tahn Chao Khun Payutto, as well as a love for language. Our time poring over this manuscript has deepened my respect for and friendship with him.

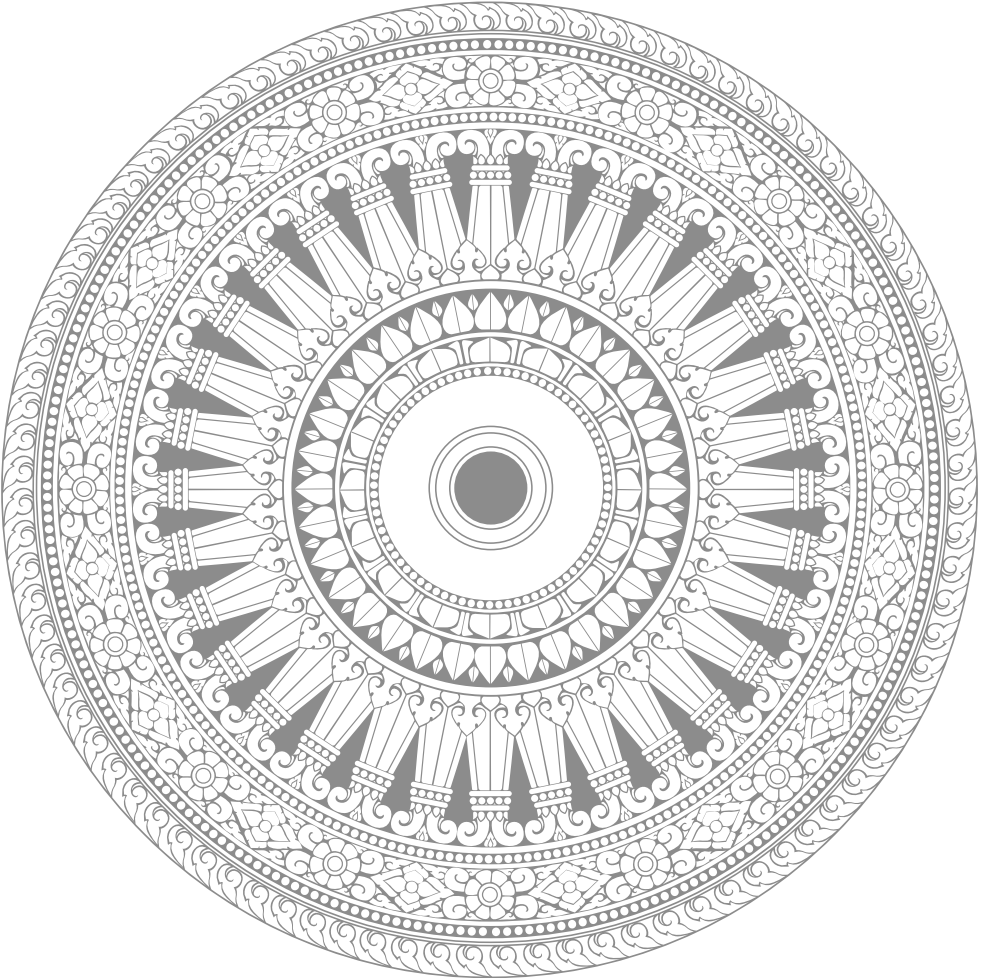
Third, I thank Khun Sirichan Bhirombhakdi for acting as the catalyst in bringing me back to Thailand to continue this work until it reached completion. Sometimes we must hear the words 'I believe in you' to overcome inertia or other mental obstacles.

Fourth, this project would not have been completed without the enthusiasm and support by Khun Yongyut Thanapura, president of the Buddhadhamma Foundation. It was through his initiative and longterm vision that this book has materialized.

My mother and stepfather – Karin and Jon Gunnmann, and my father and step-mother – Basil and Subithra Moore, have given me material and emotional support over the years, including a time when I was between jobs. Important editors and proofreaders over the years include: Ven. Gavesako Bhikkhu, Ven. Cittasamvaro Bhikkhu, Ron Lumsden, Max Mackay-James, and Martin Seeger. I thank Mr. Bruce Evans for letting me consult with his earlier translations of *Buddhadhamma*, a work he did with great dedication. Other people who have provided notable support include Mr. Sian Mah and Mrs. Chantana Ouysook.

May these collective efforts help to bring light and peace to the world through the power of wisdom and understanding. The Buddha bequeathed the Dhammavinaya to us, to safeguard and uphold. This entails more than simply keeping copies of the Tipiṭaka in glass-fronted bookshelves. Although the realization of the Buddha's teachings may be summarized as a fulfilment of the four duties vis-à-vis the Four Noble Truths, i.e. understanding suffering, removing its cause, realizing its cessation, and cultivating the Path, or more succinctly, knowing suffering and the end of suffering, many tools and skilful methods may be needed to accomplish this goal. The beauty of the Buddha's teachings is that they provide us with a treasure chest of insights and guidelines. Another metaphor is that the Dhamma is a multifaceted diamond. No matter from what direction you pick it up, it offers invaluable glimpses of truth which may be used to cut through the shrouds of delusion. These teachings were expanded upon and elucidated by later commentarial authors. Ven. Phra Payutto's gift and genius here is to present the canonical and post-canonical teachings in a lucid integrated whole, a watertight vessel for taking us to the other shore. The work to be undertaken is still ours to do, but the Path, and its many obstacles, has been clearly outlined and revealed.

Robin Moore  
Green Park Home  
August 2016

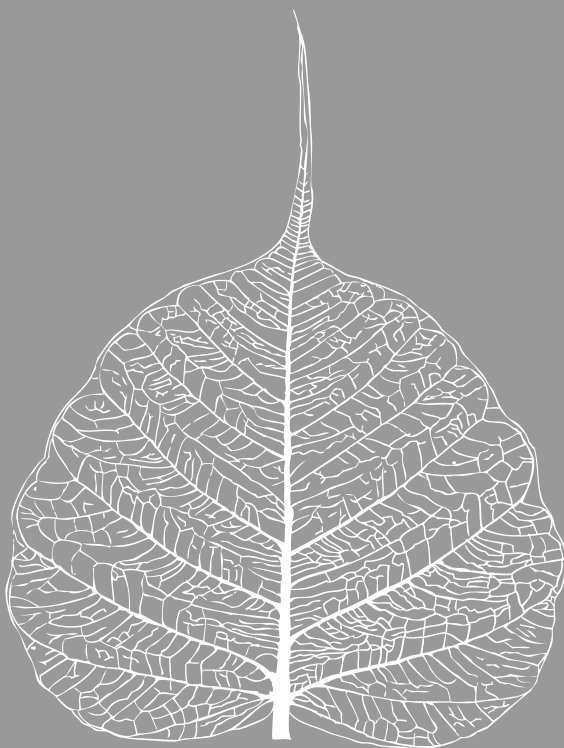


Dhammacakka (Wheel of Dhamma)



# INTRODUCTION





# Introduction

People today frequently pose the question whether Buddhism is a religion, a philosophy, or simply a way of life. This query gives rise to all sorts of debates and opinions, which often just create confusion.

Although this book *Buddhadhamma* is written as a form of philosophical treatise, I will not engage in the aforementioned debate.<sup>2</sup> My focus will simply be on what is stated in the Buddha's teachings – on the gist of these teachings. As for the question whether Buddhism is a philosophy or not, it is up to various philosophical systems themselves to determine whether Buddhism fits their criteria. Buddhism remains what it is; it is unaffected by these judgements and interpretations. The only specification I wish to make here is that any teaching or doctrine on truth that is only intended as an intellectual exercise of logic or reason, and contains no corresponding elements for practical application in everyday life, is not Buddhism, especially the original and genuine teachings given by the Buddha himself, which are referred to as Buddha-Dhamma.

It is a difficult task to compile the Buddha's teachings, especially on the premise that one is presenting the true or genuine teachings, even if one cites passages from the Pali Canon which are considered the words of the Buddha. This is because these teachings are copious and contain various dimensions or levels of profundity, and also because imparting them accurately depends on the intelligence and sincerity of the person presenting them. It may happen that two people with divergent opinions are both able to quote passages from the sacred texts supporting their own points of view. To determine the truth is dependent on how accurately one grasps the essence of these teachings, and on how consistent the link is between one's theories and the evidence one uses to support them.

<sup>2</sup>When I began to write this book, I was invited to compile the Buddha's teachings (Buddha-Dhamma) into chapters by following a philosophical approach.

In many cases the supporting evidence is not comprehensive enough, and thus it is inevitable that the presentation of Buddha-Dhamma often reflects the opinions and understanding of the person interpreting it.

To clarify one's analysis of the teachings, it is helpful to examine the life and conduct of the Buddha, the supreme teacher, who is the origin and source of these teachings. {2} Although one may argue that the stories of the Buddha's activities come from the same sources as the formal teachings, nonetheless they are very useful for reflection. Occasionally, the Buddha's actions reflect his aims and wishes more clearly than the formal teachings in the scriptures.

From the evidence in the scriptures and from other historical sources, one can draw a rough sketch of the events and the social environment at the time of the Buddha as follows:

The Buddha was born in the Indian subcontinent about 2,600 years ago. He was born among the warrior caste (*kṣatriyaḥ/katthiya*), and named Prince Siddhattha. He was the son of King Suddhodana, the ruler of the Sakyan country, which lay at the northeast of the Indian subcontinent, adjoining the Himalayan mountain range. As a prince, and in accord with the wishes of the royal family, he was fully provided with worldly pleasures, which he enjoyed for twenty-nine years, during which time he was married and had a son.

At this time, absolute monarchies were in the ascendancy and were trying to expand their empires by waging war. Many other states, especially the republics, who ruled by a general assembly based on unanimous decisions, were gradually losing their power. Some of these states were conquered and incorporated into larger states, while others that remained strong were under duress, aware that war could break out at any time. And the large, powerful nations were often at war with one another.

Trade and commerce were burgeoning, giving rise to a new group of highly influential wealthy merchants (*seṭṭhi*), whose prestige and authority began to extend even to the royal courts.

According to the teachings of Brahmanism, people were divided into four social classes or castes (*vaṇṇa*). People's privileges and social standing, as well as their occupations, were determined by their caste. Although Hindu historians claim that the caste system at that time was not yet very strict, members of the class of manual workers (*śūdra/sudda*) were not entitled to listen to or to recite passages of the Vedas, the sacred texts of the brahmins. These restrictions became increasingly rigid and severe; *śūdra* who defied these injunctions and studied the Vedas were penalized with capital punishment. Moreover, outcastes (*caṇḍāla*) were not entitled to any form of formal education. The sole factor for determining one's caste was birth, and the members of the brahmin class claimed to be superior to all others.

The brahmins safeguarded and upheld the traditions of Brahmanism. They developed ever greater arcane and mysterious teachings and rituals, which became increasingly irrational. Rituals were observed not simply for religious purposes, but also as a way for powerful rulers to demonstrate their importance. And the priests who conducted these rituals gained personal advantage and riches.

These ceremonies and rituals increased selfishness in those people seeking wealth and pleasure. At the same time, they caused distress for members of the downtrodden lower classes – the slaves, servants, and labourers – and they caused agony to those countless animals slaughtered as a sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> {3}

During the same period, one group of brahmins doubted whether these religious rituals actually lead to eternal life, and they began to devote themselves to the contemplation of immortality and the path to its realization. In their search for truth, many of them separated themselves from society and resorted to the forests in seclusion. Such renunciants, who renounced the household life and went forth in search of the true meaning of life, were collectively referred to as *samaṇa*.

The brahmanical teachings during this time – the era of the Upanishads – was full of contradictions. Some religious factions affirmed the effectiveness of the established rituals, while other factions denounced these very

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g.: *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* (Sn. 115-16) and *Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta* (Sn. 52-5).

same rituals. There were conflicting views on the subject of immortality and the soul (*ātman*). Some brahmins claimed that the *ātman* is equivalent to *brahmin* (Brahmā/Brahma; the godhead; the divine essence); they claimed that Brahma generates and permeates all things, and is ineffable, as is expressed in the phrase, *neti neti* ('not this, not that'). They believed that the *ātman/brahmin* unity is the supreme goal of spiritual practice. They engaged in religious debates on this subject, while at the same time jealously guarding knowledge on this matter within their own circles.

Meanwhile, another group of renunciants were disenchanted with the seeming meaninglessness of life, and practised in the hope of attaining exceptional states of mind or of reaching the deathless state. Some of them engaged in extreme forms of self-mortification, by fasting and undertaking strange and unusual ascetic practices, which ordinary people would not believe were possible. Others developed the concentrative absorptions (*jhāna*), reaching the fine-material attainments (*rūpa-samāpatti*) and the formless attainments (*arūpa-samāpatti*), while some became so proficient in the *jhānas* that they were able to perform marvels of psychic powers.

Included among the groups of renunciants were those who wandered from village to village, establishing themselves as teachers and expounding their various religious views by engaging in religious debate and dialectic.

The search for meaning and the propagation of various beliefs and teachings proceeded in an intense and energetic manner, leading to numerous ideologies and doctrines.<sup>4</sup> As is mentioned in the scriptures, there were six major established doctrines at the time of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, one group of people was growing in wealth and power, revelling in sensual pleasures and seeking increased riches. At the same time, many other people were neglected, and their social standing and

<sup>4</sup>According to the evidence in the scriptures, the doctrines of the renunciants and brahmins can be divided into sixty-two different views or belief systems (D. I. 13-45).

<sup>5</sup>For a closer examination of the conditions in the Indian subcontinent at the time of the Buddha, see, e.g.: G. C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* (India: University of Allahabad, 1957), pp. 310-368.

quality of living was declining. Another group of people was separating itself from society, bent on discovering philosophical truths, but they too did not take much interest in the conditions of society.

Prince Siddhattha enjoyed worldly pleasures for twenty-nine years. Not only did his family provide him with such pleasures, they also prevented him from seeing firsthand the lives of the ordinary folk, which were full of suffering. This suffering, however, could not be concealed from him forever. The problems and afflictions of human beings – most notably aging, sickness, and death – preoccupied the prince and caused him to seek a solution. {4}

When the prince reflected on these social problems, he saw a group of privileged people who pursued their own personal comforts, competing with one another and indulging in pleasure, without any care or concern for the suffering of others. They were enslaved by material things. In times of happiness, they were engrossed in their own selfish pursuits; in times of affliction, they were obsessed with their own distress and despair. In the end, they grew old and sick, and died in vain. Another group of people, the disadvantaged, had no opportunity to prosper and were desperately abused and oppressed. They too aged, grew ill, and died in a seemingly meaningless way.

Seeing his pleasures and delights as pointless, the prince became disillusioned with his own life. Although at first his search was unsuccessful, he began to look for a solution, for a way to discover lasting and meaningful happiness. His life full of temptations and distractions was not conducive to his reflections. In the end he recognized that the renunciant life is uncomplicated, free from worry, and conducive to spiritual knowledge. He considered that this way of life would probably help him solve these universal human problems, and he may very well encounter renunciants who could teach him valuable lessons.

This line of thinking prompted the prince to relinquish the princely life and go forth as a renunciant. He wandered around studying with various teachers, learning the methods of spiritual endeavour (*yoga*) and developing meditation, until he reached the concentrative attainments

(*jhāna-samāpatti*) – including the highest formless attainments (*arūpa-samāpatti*) – and became proficient at psychic powers (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*). Eventually, he practised extreme austerities.

In the end he came to the conclusion that none of the methods belonging to these other renunciants were able to solve his conundrum. When he compared his present life to his earlier life in the palace, he realized that both were expressions of extremes. He decided to follow his own reflections and investigations, until he finally reached complete awakening.<sup>6</sup> Later, when he proclaimed to others the truth, the Dhamma,<sup>7</sup> that he had discovered, he referred to it as the middle truth (*majjhena-dhamma*) or the middle teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*), and he referred to the system of practice that he laid down for others as the middle way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*; the ‘middle path of practice’).

The Buddhist perspective is that both a life of greed and indulgence – abandoning oneself to the stream of mental defilements – and a life of complete retreat from the world – giving up all involvement in and responsibility for society, and afflicting oneself with hardship – are incorrect and extreme forms of practice. Neither of these can lead people to a truly meaningful way of life.

After his awakening the Buddha returned to the wider society and began to teach the Dhamma in an earnest and devoted manner for the wellbeing of the manyfolk. He devoted himself to this task for the remaining forty-five years of his life.

The Buddha realized that sharing the teachings and helping others would be most effective through the renunciant form. He thus encouraged many members of the upper classes to renounce their wealth, go forth into the renunciant life, and realize the Dhamma. These individuals then participated in the work of self-sacrifice, devoting themselves to

<sup>6</sup>For more on this period of the Buddha’s life, see, e.g. the Sagārava Sutta: M. II. 209-213. [Trans.: this sutta is also known as the Saṅgārava Sutta.]

<sup>7</sup>Trans: Sanskrit: *dharma*. The word *dhamma* has many definitions; some of the most common are: thing, phenomenon, quality, property, nature, natural law, truth, reality, virtue, righteousness, the teachings revealed by the Buddha, and mind object.



benefiting others, by wandering around the country and meeting with people of all social classes. {5}

The monastic community itself is an important medium for solving social problems. For example, every person, regardless of which caste or social class he or she comes from – even from the class of outcastes – has the same rights and privileges to be ordained, to train, and to reach the highest goal.

Merchants and householders, who are not yet prepared to fully renounce their possessions, may live as male and female lay disciples, supporting the monastic sangha's activities and duties, and assisting other people by sharing their wealth.

The true objective and extent of activities by the Buddha and his disciples is summed up by the Buddha's injunction, which he gave when he sent out the first generation of disciples to proclaim the teachings:

Bhikkhus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the many-folk, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and humans.

*Vin. I. 20-21.*

The Pāsādika Sutta offers a summary of how the Buddhist teachings are connected to society and how they benefit various groups of people:

The 'holy life' (*brahmacariya* = the Buddhist religion) is only considered to have reached fulfilment, to be of benefit to the manyfolk, and to be firmly established – what is referred to as 'well-declared by devas<sup>8</sup> and human beings' – when the following factors are complete:

1. The Teacher (*satthā*) is distinguished, experienced, mature, and advanced in seniority.
2. There are bhikkhu elder disciples with expert knowledge, who are well-trained and fearless, who have realized the unsurpassed safety

<sup>8</sup>Trans: *deva* = god; divine being.

from bondage, who are able to teach the Dhamma to others effectively, and who successfully refute (opposing) doctrines correctly and in line with the Dhamma. Moreover, there are bhikkhus of middle-standing and newly ordained monks who have the same abilities.

3. There are bhikkhuni<sup>9</sup> disciples – nuns who are senior, of middle-standing, and newly ordained – who have the same abilities.
4. There are male lay disciples, both those who live a celibate life and those who live at home and enjoy the pleasures of the senses, who have the same abilities.
5. There are female lay disciples, both those who live a celibate life and those who live at home and enjoy the pleasures of the senses, who have the same abilities.

Even lacking female householders with such virtuous qualities means that Buddhism is not yet prospering and complete.<sup>10</sup>

This sutta reveals how the Buddhist teachings are intended for everyone, both renunciants and householders. Buddhism embraces all of society. {6}

## PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES OF BUDDHA-DHAMMA

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The two main attributes of Buddha-Dhamma may be summarized as follows:

1. It reveals ‘middle’ (i.e. ‘objective’) principles of truth, and is thus referred to as the middle truth (*majjhena-dhamma*) or the middle teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*). It reflects the truth in strict

<sup>9</sup>Trans: Pali: *bhikkhuni*. For the sake of simplicity, I use the spelling ‘bhikkhuni’ in this text.

<sup>10</sup>See the Pāsādika Sutta: D. III. 122-5. Note how the term *brahmacariya* (‘holy life’, ‘sublime life’) incorporates householders.

line with cause and effect and according to laws of nature. It has been revealed solely for the benefit of practical application in real life. It does not promote an attempt to realize the truth by creating various theories and dogmas based on philosophical conjecture and inference, which are consequently adhered to, debated and defended.

2. It lays down a system of practice referred to as the ‘middle way’ (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), which acts as a guideline for those undergoing spiritual training. These practitioners gain a clear insight into their lives, steer away from credulity, and aim for those fruits of practice accessible in this lifetime, namely: happiness, purity, enlightenment, peace, and liberation. In practical application the Middle Way is connected to other factors, such as one’s life as a renunciant or life as a householder.

Buddhism is a religion of action (*kamma-vāda*; *kiriya-vāda*), a religion of effort (*virīya-vāda*).<sup>11</sup> It is not a religion of supplication nor is it a religion based on hope.

The practical benefits of the teachings are available to everyone no matter what his or her situation, beginning with the present moment. Regardless of a person’s station in or condition of life, everyone can access and utilize these teachings as is suitable to his or her circumstances, both in terms of understanding the Middle Truth and of walking the Middle Way. If one is still anxious or concerned about life after this world, one is encouraged to devote oneself through proper conduct to generating the desired favourable conditions now, until one gains confidence and dispels all worries and fears about the future life.<sup>12</sup>

Every person is equally eligible according to nature to reach the fruits of spiritual practice. Although people’s spiritual abilities differ, everyone should have equal opportunity to develop these wholesome results of practice according to his or her ability. Although each one of us must generate these results through individual effort – by reflecting on one’s

<sup>11</sup>E.g.: A. I. 286-7.

<sup>12</sup>E.g.: S. V. 386.

full responsibility in these matters – we are all important agents for assisting the spiritual practice of others. For this reason, the Buddha stressed the two chief principles of heedfulness (*appamāda*) and virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*). On the one hand, one takes full responsibility for one's own life, and on the other hand one recognizes the supreme value of wholesome external influences.

The Buddha focused on several major tasks. One of these was his attempt to eliminate naive and superstitious beliefs around misguided religious ceremonies, in particular the practice of animal sacrifice (not to mention human sacrifice), by pointing out their harmful effects and overall fruitlessness. {7}

There were several reasons why the Buddha gave so much emphasis to abandoning the practice of sacrifices. First, these practices caused people to seek help from divine intervention. Second, they caused great hardship and affliction for other people and living creatures. Third, they increased selfishness and craving for material rewards. Fourth, they brought about a preoccupation with the future, rather than a wish to improve the present state of affairs. To counteract these detrimental practices, the Buddha emphasized generosity and service to society.

The second thing that the Buddha tried to abolish was the caste system, which used people's birth as a way to restrict their privileges and opportunities, both in society and in regard to spiritual development. He established the monastic community, which welcomes people from all social classes into a system of equality, just as the ocean receives all rivers, as one unified and whole body of water.<sup>13</sup> This then led to the institution of monasteries, which later became vital centres of education and the spreading of culture, to the point that Hinduism followed suit and created their own monastic institutions about 1,400-1,700 years after the Buddha.<sup>14</sup>

According to the principles of Buddha-Dhamma, both women and men are equally able to realize the highest goal of Buddhism. Not long

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g.: A. IV. 202-203; D. III. 97-8.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g.: B. V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, (1959), p. 335, and: S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, (1962), p. 210.

after the Buddha had established the bhikkhu sangha, he also established the bhikkhuni sangha, despite social conditions being unfavourable to a female monastic order. The Buddha was fully aware of how difficult it would be to create a suitable form for women to live the renunciant life. He exercised great care in its establishment at a time when extreme restrictions around spiritual practice were placed on women by the religions of the Vedic period, to the extent that one may say the door had been closed to them.

The Buddha taught the Dhamma using vernacular language – the language used by the common people – so that everyone, regardless of his or her station in life or level of education, would be able to benefit. This was in contrast to Brahmanism, which insisted on the sacredness of the Vedic texts and used various means to reserve higher religious knowledge within a narrow, elite group. Specifically, the brahmins used the Sanskrit language, the knowledge of which was confined to their own group, to transmit and guard the texts. Later, some individuals asked the Buddha for permission to preserve and transmit the Buddhist teachings in the Vedic language, but he rejected this proposal and had the monks continue to use the language of the common people.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the Buddha absolutely refused to waste time debating on matters of truth through philosophical speculation – on matters which cannot be empirically proven by way of rational discussion. If people came to him with such questions, the Buddha would remain silent. He would then lead the person back to everyday, practical matters.<sup>16</sup> Those things to be understood by way of speech he would share with others by speaking; those things to be understood by way of sight he would reveal to others to see. He would use the most direct and appropriate method according to the circumstances.

The Buddha used many different methods when teaching the Dhamma, so that everyone may benefit. His teachings contain many layers: those aimed for householders and members of mainstream society, and those aimed for individuals who have relinquished the household life. There

<sup>15</sup>See: Vin. II. 139.

<sup>16</sup>See, e.g.: A. V. 193-8; M. I. 426-32.

are teachings focusing on material benefits and others focusing on deeper, spiritual benefits. {8}

Because the Buddha taught within a brahmanic culture and was surrounded by various religious belief systems, he was required to engage with spiritual terms used by these other traditions. As the Buddha wished for his teachings to reach the greatest number of people within a short period of time, he applied a unique approach in regard to these terms. Rather than directly refuting or discrediting people's beliefs associated with these terms, he questioned or challenged the true meanings of these terms. He did not use an aggressive approach; instead, he promoted a natural form of transformation through understanding and spiritual development.

To accomplish this the Buddha used some of these already established spiritual terms and gave them new meanings in line with Buddha-Dhamma. For example, he defined the term *brahma/brahmā* ('Brahma,' 'divine,' 'sublime,' 'sacred') as referring to one kind of celestial (yet mortal) being; in other contexts it was used in reference to parents. He altered the concept of worshipping the six cardinal directions into the notion of maintaining and honouring one's social relationships. He changed the meaning of the sacred brahmanic fire worship, by the three kinds of sacrificial ceremonies, into fulfilling a responsibility vis-à-vis three kinds of individuals in society. And he transformed the factor determining a person as a brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*; 'one who is sacred,' 'one who has divine knowledge') and as noble (*ariya*; 'cultured,' 'civilized') from a person's birth into a person's conduct and spiritual development.

Occasionally, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to draw upon wholesome and beneficial aspects of other religious traditions. He acknowledged and approved of any teaching that is correct and connected to virtue, considering that such righteousness and virtue is a universal aspect of nature. In the case that specific principles of practice by these other traditions had varying interpretations, the Buddha explained which ones are correct and which ones are false. He sanctioned only the practice of what is correct and wholesome.

The Buddha pointed out that faulty or harmful practices observed by other religious traditions were sometimes a result of a decline or degeneracy within these traditions themselves. The original teachings espoused by these traditions were sometimes virtuous and correct. He occasionally described these original wholesome teachings. Examples of this include his historical explanations on the notions of ‘religious austerity’ (*tapa*), the offering of sacrifices (*yañña*), the principles of leadership in regard to social assistance, and the duties of a brahmin (*brāhmaṇa-dhamma*).<sup>17</sup>

In the centuries following the Buddha’s death, after his teachings had spread to different areas, numerous disparities arose in people’s understanding of Buddha-Dhamma. This occurred for various reasons: those people who transmitted the teachings had different levels of training, understanding, and aptitude, and they interpreted the teachings in different ways; people began to mix in beliefs from other religious traditions; local cultures exerted an influence on people’s ideas and understanding; and some aspects of the teachings grew in prominence while other aspects fell into obscurity, due to the interest, predisposition, and skill of those individuals who safeguarded the teachings. These disparities resulted in the breaking off into various schools (*nikāya*), as is evident today in the division between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism, along with numerous other subsidiary schools and lineages. {9}

Although the Theravada tradition is known for its precision and accuracy in preserving the original standards and teachings, it could not escape some changes and alterations. The authenticity and validity of some teachings, even those that are contained in the scriptures, are debated among members of the current generation, who often seek proof in order to either substantiate their own opinions or repudiate the views of others. Discrepancies are especially evident in the views and practices upheld by the general public. In some cases, these views and practices seem to stand in direct opposition to the original teachings, or they have almost developed into another religious ideology, perhaps even one refuted by the original teachings.

<sup>17</sup>See: A. IV. 41; A. V. 190-91; Sn. 51-53; see also the following subject material.

Take for example the understanding in Thailand of the word *kamma* (Sanskrit: 'karma'). Most Buddhists in Thailand when they encounter this word think of the past, in particular of deeds from past lives. They focus on the harmful effects in the present of bad deeds from past lives and on the negative results of previous evil actions. In most cases, their understanding is shaped by a collection of such thoughts. When compared to the true definitions of *kamma* in the scriptures, one can see how remote some of these ideas are from genuine Buddha-Dhamma.<sup>18</sup>

In this book the author<sup>19</sup> is attempting to present Buddha-Dhamma in a way that is as true and accurate as possible. Because it is considered superfluous to this task, these divergent views, definitions, and practices are not discussed.

The source of the material for this book is the collection of Buddhist scriptures, which, unless otherwise specified, refers to the Tipiṭaka (Pali Canon). It is generally accepted that this text is the most accurate and complete compilation of the Buddha's teachings. The author has selected those teachings in the Pali Canon which are deemed most authentic and accurate, by applying the principles of compatibility and coherence in respect to the overall body of Theravada scripture. As an added assurance in this undertaking, the author considers the Buddha's conduct as a complement to the formal Dhamma teachings.

<sup>18</sup>Thai people have developed similarly unique meanings of other concepts and terms, e.g.: *ārammaṇa* ('sense object'), *viññāṇa* ('consciousness'), *pārami* ('spiritual perfection'), *santosa* ('contentment'), *upekkhā* ('equanimity'), *adhiṭṭhāna* ('determination'), *parikamma* ('preliminary meditation exercise'), *bhāvanā* ('cultivation'), *vipassanā* ('insight'), *kāma* ('sense desire'), *lokiya* ('mundane'), *lokuttara* ('transcendent'), *puñña* ('merit'), *icchā* ('longing'), etc. These terms are now used either in a completely different meaning from how they were originally intended, or else their range of meaning has changed. In the study of Buddha-Dhamma it is vital to be able to recognize and distinguish these newer meanings in order to understand the true definition of these terms.

<sup>19</sup>Trans: In the original Thai text of *Buddhadhamma*, the venerable author never uses the first person pronoun to refer to himself. This is a means of distancing himself from the text. As he states in the Author's Notes, he wishes as much as possible to present an objective account of the Buddha's teachings, and in this regard, to have the readers forget that he is there. As this is unusual in an English context, I have occasionally inserted the first person pronoun.



Having selected these guidelines, the author is confident that he has accurately explained and presented the true essence of Buddha-Dhamma.

On a fundamental level, however, the accuracy of this presentation depends on the extent of the author's wisdom and intelligence, as well as any unacknowledged bias or prejudice. Let us simply conclude that this is one attempt to present the Buddha's teachings in the most accurate way, based on specific methods of scholarship in which the author has the most confidence. {10}

One may separate Buddha-Dhamma into two parts, as matters of truth (*sacca-dhamma*) and matters of conduct (*cariya-dhamma*): as theory and practice. The former is defined as those teachings pertaining to reality, to manifestations of truth, to nature, and to the laws and processes of nature. The latter is defined as those teachings pertaining to principles of practice or behaviour, to benefiting in a practical way from one's knowledge of reality or one's understanding of the laws of nature. *Sacca-dhamma* is equated with nature and natural truths; *cariya-dhamma* is equated with knowing how to act in response to such truths. Within this entire teaching, no significance is given to supernatural agents – to any alleged forces over and above nature – for example of a creator God.

In order to do justice to the entire range and scope of Buddha-Dhamma as an integrated system, one should describe both of these aspects. That is, one should first reveal the theoretical teachings, followed by an analysis of how to apply these teachings in an effective and valuable way.

For this reason, the chapters in this book, each of which deals with a specific aspect of truth, also contain guidelines on how to apply these truths in a practical way. For example, at the end of the second chapter dealing with different kinds of knowledge, there is a section on the practical meaning and benefit of such knowledge. Moreover, the main body of *Buddhadhamma* follows this format: the first main section pertains to specific laws of nature, and is titled 'The Middle Teachings.' The second main section pertains to a practical application of such laws in everyday life, and is titled 'The Middle Way.'

Although the presentation in this book may seem unorthodox, it corresponds to an original style of teaching. It begins with those aspects of

life that are problematic, and it then traces back to the source of such problems. The analysis continues to a deeper inspection of the causes of suffering, the ultimate goal of spiritual practice, and the practical methods for solving problems and for realizing the goal. Indeed, the presentation is consistent with the Four Noble Truths.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>See the 'sequence of teaching' (*desanānukkama*) at: MA. II. 219 (in reference to: M. I. 184-91). [Trans.: this final statement, of the presentation being consistent with the Four Noble Truths, is particularly noteworthy. For more on this subject, see how the four factors of *Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirodha*, and *Magga* are included in the Contents. See also chapter 19 on the Four Noble Truths.]





# PART I.

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## MIDDLE TEACHING

*Majjhena-dhammadesanā*

*Principles of Truth Based on Natural Laws*

Brahmin, without veering towards either of these two extremes,  
The Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle:  
‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be];  
with volitional formations as condition, consciousness ...

*Ete te brāhmaṇa ubho ante anupagamma  
Majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti:  
Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā,  
Saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ ...*

(S. II. 76)



# SECTION I.

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## NATURE OF HUMAN LIFE

### Chapter 1

#### *Five Aggregates*

### Chapter 2

#### *Six Sense Spheres*



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# CHAPTER 1

## FIVE AGGREGATES

### *The Five Constituents of Life*

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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From the perspective of Buddha-Dhamma, all things exist according to their own nature. They do not exist as separate fixed entities, and in the case of living creatures, they are not distinct and immutable ‘beings’ or ‘persons’, which one could validly take to be a legitimate owner of things or which are able to govern things according to their wishes.<sup>1</sup>

Everything that exists in the world exists as a collection of convergent parts. There exists no inherent self or substantial essence within things. When one separates the constituent parts from each other, no self or core remains. A frequent scriptural analogy for this is of a vehicle.<sup>2</sup> When one assembles the various parts according to one’s chosen design, one assigns the conventional term ‘wagon’ to the end product. Yet if one disassembles the parts, no essence of a wagon can be found. All that remains are the various parts, each of which is given its own specific name.

<sup>1</sup>In Pali, one may refer to ‘things’ as phenomena (*dhamma*), elements (*dhātu*), or aspects of reality (*sabhāva*). The complete spelling of this third term is *sabhāva-dhammā* (from *sa* + *bhāva* + *dhamma*), which literally means ‘things that exist according to their own nature’.

<sup>2</sup>S. I. 135. [Trans.: in ancient India this referred to a wagon; in modern parlance we may refer to this as a ‘car’.]

This fact implies that the ‘self’ or ‘entity’ of a vehicle does not exist separate from its constituent parts. The term ‘car’, for instance, is simply a conventional designation. Moreover, all of those constituent parts may also be separated into further parts, none of which possesses a stable, fixed essence. So when one states that something ‘exists’, one needs to understand it in this context: that it exists as a collection of inconstant constituent elements.

Having made this claim, the Buddhist teachings go on to describe the primary elements or constituents that make up the world. And because the Buddhist teachings pertain directly to human life, and in particular to the mind, this elucidation of the constituent parts encompasses both mind and matter, both mentality (*nāma-dhamma*) and corporeality (*rūpa-dhamma*). Here, special emphasis is given to the analysis of the mind.

There are many ways to present this division into separate constituents of life, depending on the objective of the specific analysis.<sup>3</sup> This chapter presents the division into the ‘five aggregates’ (*pañca-khandha*), which is the preferred analysis in the suttas.

In Buddha-Dhamma, the human living entity – what is referred to as a ‘person’ or ‘living being’ – is divided into five groups or categories:<sup>4</sup> {14}<sup>5</sup>

1. *Rūpa* (corporeality; body; material form): all material constituents; the body and all physical behaviour; matter and physical energy, along with the properties and course of such energy.
2. *Vedanā* (feeling; sensation): the feelings of pleasure, pain, and neutral feelings, arising from contact by way of the five senses and by way of the mind.

<sup>3</sup>The broadest division is into mind (*nāma*) and body (*rūpa*), or mentality and corporeality. The Abhidhamma texts prefer the threefold division of the mind (*citta*), mental constituents (*cetasika*), and the body (*rūpa*). If one compares this analysis to the five aggregates, one may equate the following: *citta* = *viññāṇa-khandha*; *cetasika* = *vedanā-khandha*, *saññā-khandha*, and *saikhāra-khandha*; *rūpa* = *rūpa-khandha*.

<sup>4</sup>See more details on the five aggregates see Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup>The numbers in curly brackets refer to the page number of the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*.

3. *Saññā* (perception): the ability to recognize and to designate; the perception and discernment of various signs, characteristics, and distinguishing features, enabling one to remember a specific object of attention (*ārammaṇa*).<sup>6</sup>
4. *Saṅkhāra* (mental formations; volitional activities): those mental constituents or properties, with intention as leader, which shape the mind as wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral, and which shape a person's thoughts and reflections, as well as verbal and physical behaviour. They are the source of *kamma* ('karma'; intentional action). Examples of such mental formations include: faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri*), fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*),<sup>7</sup> wisdom (*paññā*), delusion (*moha*), greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), conceit (*māna*), views (*diṭṭhi*), jealousy (*issā*), and stinginess (*macchariya*). They are the agents or fashioners of the mind, of thought, and of intentional action.
5. *Viññāṇa* (consciousness): conscious awareness of objects by way of the five senses – i.e. seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling tangible objects – and awareness of mind objects.

There are several points to bear in mind in reference to the final four aggregates, comprising the mental aggregates (*nāma-khandhā*):<sup>8</sup>

**Perception** (*saññā*) is a form of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> It refers to the perception or discernment of an object's attributes and properties, including its

<sup>6</sup>The term *ārammaṇa* ('object of attention') refers to those things cognized by the mind by means of the six 'doorways' (*dvāra*), i.e.: visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and mind objects (thoughts).

<sup>7</sup>The meaning of this important term *upekkhā* is often misunderstood. This term appears in the group of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), where it is equivalent to specific neutrality (*tatramajjhataṭṭā*), and also in the group of feelings (*vedanā*), where it is equivalent to neutrality (*adukkhamasukha*), i.e. to neither-painful-nor-pleasant sensations.

<sup>8</sup>The following explanations are based on references from the Pali Canon as well as comparative references from the commentaries, in particular: M. I. 292-3; S. III. 87; [MA. II. 462]; SA. II. 291; Vism. 436, 452-3.

<sup>9</sup>For the commentarial analysis of perception see Appendix 2.

shape, appearance, colour, etc., as well as its name and conventional designations. For example, one knows that an object is ‘green’, ‘white’, ‘black’, ‘red’, ‘loud’, ‘faint’, ‘bass’, ‘high-pitched’, ‘fat’, ‘thin’, ‘a table’, ‘a pen’, ‘a pig’, ‘a dog’, ‘a fish’, ‘a cat’, ‘a person’, ‘him’, ‘her’, ‘me’, ‘you’, etc.

Perception relies on the encounter or comparison between previous experience or knowledge and new experience or knowledge. If one’s current experience corresponds with previous experience – say one meets someone familiar or one hears a familiar sound – one has ‘recognition’ (note that this is not the same as ‘memory’). For example, Mr. Jones knows Mr. Smith. A month later, they meet and Mr. Jones recognizes Mr. Smith. {15}

If a new experience does not correspond with previous experiences, people tend to compare it to previous experience or knowledge, looking at those aspects that are either similar or different. They then identify the object according to their labels or designations, determined by the similarities and differences. This is the process of perception – of designation and identification.

There are many layers to perception, including: perception in accord with common agreement and understanding, e.g.: ‘green’, ‘white’, ‘yellow’, and ‘red’; perception in accord with social conventions and traditions, e.g.: ‘this is polite’, ‘this is beautiful’, ‘this is normal’, and ‘this is abnormal’; perception according to personal preferences and conceptions, e.g.: ‘this is attractive’, ‘this is admirable’, and ‘this is irritating’; perception based on multiple factors (perception of symbolism), e.g.: ‘green and red represents this university’, and ‘two rings of the bell designate mealtime’; and perception according to spiritual learning, e.g.: ‘perception of impermanence’ and ‘perception of insubstantiality’.

There is both common, everyday perception and subtle, refined perception (i.e. perception that is intricately connected to the other aggregates). There is perception of matter and perception of the mind. The various terms used for *saññā*, such as ‘recognition’, ‘remembering’, ‘designation’, ‘assignation’, ‘attribution’, and ‘ideation’ all describe aspects of this aggregate of perception.

Simply speaking, perception is the process of collecting, compiling, and storing data and information, which is the raw material for thought.

Perception is very helpful to people, but at the same time it can be detrimental. This is because people tend to attach to their perceptions, which end up acting as an obstruction, obscuring and eclipsing reality, and preventing one from penetrating a deeper, underlying truth.

A useful and practical division of perception (*saññā*) is into two kinds: ordinary perceptions, which discern the attributes of sense objects as they naturally arise; and secondary or overlapping perceptions. The latter are sometimes referred to by specific terms, in particular as ‘proliferative perception’ (*papañca-saññā*): perception resulting from intricate and fanciful mental proliferation driven by the force of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*), which are at the vanguard of negative mental formations (negative *saṅkhāra*). This division highlights the active role of perception and shows the relationship between perception and other aggregates within mental processes.

**Consciousness** (*viññāṇa*) is traditionally defined as ‘awareness of sense objects’. It refers to a prevailing or constant form of knowing. It is both the basis and the channel for the other mental aggregates, and it functions in association with them. It is both a primary and an accompanying form of knowledge.

It is primary in the sense that it is an initial form of knowledge. When one sees something (i.e. visual consciousness arises), one may feel pleasure or distress (= feeling – *vedanā*). One then identifies the object (perception – *saññā*), followed by various intentions and thoughts (volitional formations – *saṅkhāra*). For example, one sees the sky (= *viññāṇa*) and feels delighted (= *vedanā*). One knows the sky to be bright, beautiful, the colour of indigo, an afternoon sky (= *saññā*). One is delighted by the sky and wishes to admire it for a long, uninterrupted period of time. One resents the fact that one’s view is obstructed, and one wonders how one can find a place to watch the sky at one’s leisure (= *saṅkhāra*).

Consciousness is an accompanying form of knowledge in that one knows in conjunction with the other aggregates. When one feels happy (= *vedanā*), one knows that one is happy (= *viññāṇa*). (Note that the feeling

of happiness is not the same as knowing that one is happy.) When one suffers (= *vedanā*), one knows that one is suffering (= *viññāṇa*). Perceiving something as pleasurable or painful (= *saññā*), one knows accordingly.<sup>10</sup> And when one engages in various thoughts and intentions (= *saṅkhāra*), there is a continual concomitant awareness of this activity. {16} This prevailing stream of awareness, which is in a continual process of arising and ceasing, and which accompanies the other mental aggregates, or is part of every aspect of mental activity, is called ‘consciousness’ (*viññāṇa*).

Another special characteristic of consciousness is that it is an awareness of particulars, a knowledge of specific aspects, or a form of discriminative knowledge. This may be understood by way of examples. When one sees say a striped piece of cloth, although one may not initially identify it as such, one discerns specific attributes, for example its colours, which are distinct from one another. Once consciousness discerns these distinctions, perception (*saññā*) identifies them, say as ‘green’, ‘white’, or ‘red’. When one eats a particular kind of fruit, although one may not yet have identified the flavour as ‘sweet’ or ‘sour’, one already has an awareness of such distinctions. Similarly, although one may have not yet distinguished between the specific kinds of sourness, of say pineapples, lemons, tamarind, or plums, or between the specific kinds of sweetness, say of mangos, bananas, or apples, by tasting the flavour one is aware of its distinctive nature. This basic form of knowing is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Once this awareness arises, the other mental aggregates begin to operate, for example one experiences the flavour as delicious or unsavoury (= *vedanā*), or one identifies the flavour as one particular kind of sweetness or sourness (= *saññā*).

The knowledge of specific aspects referred to above may be explained thus: when consciousness arises, for example when one sees a visual object, in fact, one is seeing only specific attributes or facets of that object in question. In other words, one sees only those aspects or angles that

<sup>10</sup>Trans.: one sometimes encounters the term ‘apperception’ as a definition for *saññā*. According to the ‘Collins Concise Dictionary’ (© 1999), apperception is defined as: ‘the awareness of perceiving’, which is closer to this function of consciousness.

one gives importance to, depending on the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) which condition the arising of consciousness (*viññāṇa*).<sup>11</sup>

For example, in a wide expanse of countryside grows one sole mango tree. It is a large tree, yet it bears only a few pieces of fruit and in this season is almost barren of leaves, providing very little shade. On different occasions, five separate people visit this tree. One man is fleeing from a dangerous animal, one man is starving, one man is hot and looking for shade, one man is searching for fruit to sell at the market, and the last man is looking for a spot to tie up his cattle so that he may visit a nearby village.

All five men see the same tree, but each one sees it in different ways. For each one eye-consciousness arises, but this consciousness varies, depending on their aims and intentions in regard to this tree. Similarly, their perceptions of the tree will also differ, according to the aspects of the tree that they look at. Even their feelings (*vedanā*) will differ: the man fleeing from danger will rejoice because he sees a means to escape; the starving man will be delighted because the 3-4 mangos will save him from starvation; the man suffering from heat may be disappointed, because the tree does not provide as much shade as it normally would; the man looking for fruit may be upset because of the paucity of fruit; and the man driving his cattle may be relieved to find a temporary shelter for them.

**Feeling** (*vedanā*) refers to the ‘sensing’ of sense impressions, or of experiencing their ‘flavour’. It refers to the feeling or sensation arising every time there is contact and cognition of sense objects. These feelings may be pleasurable and agreeable, painful and oppressive, or neutral. {17}

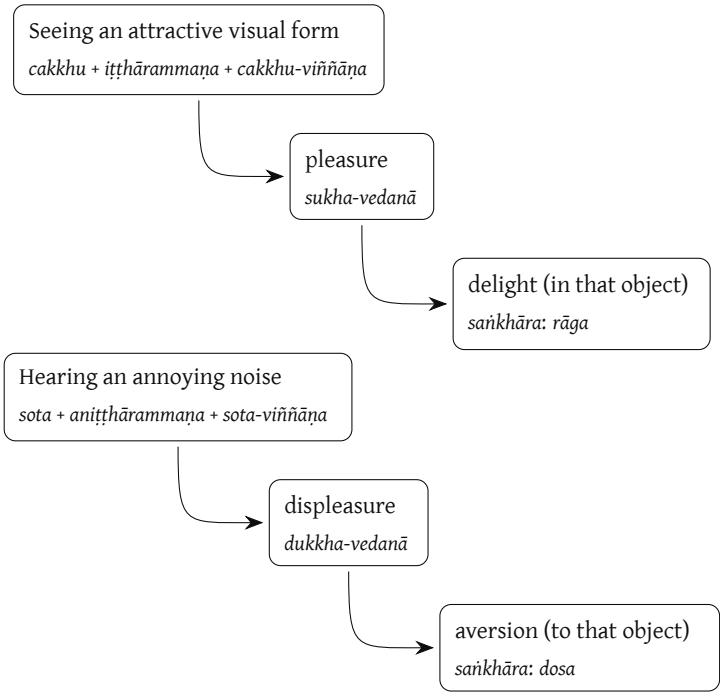
To avoid confusion with the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), it is important to note that feeling (*vedanā*) is an activity at the level of reception – it pertains exclusively to the immediate effect an object has on the mind.<sup>12</sup> It does not pertain to the stage of intention or of acting in response to sense impressions, which is the function of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). For this reason, such terms as ‘like’, ‘dislike’, ‘delight’,

<sup>11</sup>For more on this subject, see chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

<sup>12</sup>*Vedanā* is classified as an ‘effect’ (*vipāka*; fruit of kamma). By itself, it is neither wholesome nor unwholesome.

and ‘aversion’ usually refer to the activity of mental formations, which involves a subsequent level of activity. These terms normally refer to volitional activities or to reactions to sense impressions, as illustrated on Figure 1.1 about mental processes.

Figure 1.1: Feeling (*Vedanā*) and Mental Formations (*Saṅkhāra*)



Feeling (*vedanā*) plays a pivotal role in the lives of sentient creatures, because it is both desired and sought after (in the case of pleasure), and feared and avoided (in the case of pain). Each time there is contact and cognition of a sense object, feeling acts as the juncture, directing or motivating the other mental factors. For example, if one contacts a pleasurable sense object, one pays special attention to it and perceives it in ways that reciprocate or make the most out of that sensation. One then thinks up strategies for repeating or extending one’s experience of this object.

**Mental formations** (*saṅkhāra*) refer to both the factors determining the quality of the mind (the ‘fashioners’ of the mind), with intention (*cetanā*) as chief, and the actual volitional process in which these factors



are selected and combined in order to shape and mould one's thoughts, words, and deeds, resulting in physical, verbal, and mental kamma.

In any case, the traditional analysis of the five aggregates focuses on the components of reality, rather than focusing on the various dynamics in nature that affect human life. For this reason, the description of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) in this context normally only mentions a list of these determining factors (the 'fashioners' of the mind), along with their attributes. As for an explanation of conditioned processes, at which stage these factors reveal themselves and are set in motion, this is reserved for the analysis of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which demonstrates precisely how these factors affect people's lives.

In the teaching of Dependent Origination, mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) are defined in the context of practical application or operative function; they are divided into: *kāya-saṅkhāra* (physical intentional activity; bodily volition); *vacī-saṅkhāra* (verbal intentional activity; verbal volition); and *citta-saṅkhāra* (mental intentional activity; mental volition). This differs from the analysis of mental formations in the exposition of the five aggregates, in which various determining factors are simply presented as a list, e.g.: faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), wisdom (*paññā*), greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), intention (*cetanā*), and concentration (*samādhi*). If one compares these analyses to a motor show, the analysis of the five aggregates is similar to laying out all of a car's parts for people to see, while the analysis of Dependent Origination is like demonstrating the car as it is being driven on the road. {18}

Of all the determining factors of the mind, intention (*cetanā*) is leader or chief. No matter how many mental formations are operative at any one time, intention always participates as the key factor in the process. For this reason, the term *cetanā* is sometimes used alone to represent all of the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). *Saṅkhāra* in this context can thus be defined as: 'intention (*cetanā*), along with associated factors (*sampayutta-dhamma*; 'connected factors'), which shapes the mind as good, bad, or neutral, and which determines thoughts, speech, and physical actions, giving rise to mental, verbal, and physical kamma.'

Besides occasionally representing or defining all mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), the term *cetanā* is also used to define or represent the term ‘kamma’. In this sense, these three terms – *saṅkhāra*, *cetanā*, and *kamma* – all have roughly the same meaning. To offer an analogy, Venerable Mani, the abbot of Majjhima Monastery, goes to receive an offering of Tipiṭaka books. At the formal gathering, the announcement of the honoured guest may state Venerable Mani, or the abbot of Majjhima Monastery, or simply Majjhima Monastery – all three terms express the desired meaning.

Besides its central role, intention (*cetanā*) also reveals the special and distinctive properties of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), which set this aggregate apart from the others. *Cetanā* may be translated as ‘intention’, ‘volition’, ‘purpose’, or ‘deliberation’. The special attribute differentiating mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) from the other mental aggregates is that they can originate spontaneously. The other mental aggregates – of feeling, perception, and consciousness – on the other hand operate or function with sense impressions that are immediately manifesting in the mind. They are associated with and attend to these sense impressions, and they rely on the reception of them in order to function. Mental formations, however, both deliberate over sense impressions and act in response to them.<sup>13</sup>

These explanations may clarify the following questions: Why are feelings of ease and dis-ease classified as sensations (*vedanā*), while the subsequent factors of liking and disliking are classified as mental formations (*saṅkhāra*)? Why are perception (*saññā*; recollection) and mindfulness (*sati*; memory) classified into separate aggregates (*sati* is included among the mental formations – *saṅkhāra*)? Why is wisdom (*paññā*), which, similar to perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), is a form of knowledge, classified as a mental formation (*saṅkhāra*)?

<sup>13</sup>In the doctrine of the threefold life-cycle (*tivaṭṭa*) in relation to Dependent Origination, *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *viññāṇa* are classified as ‘fruits of kamma’ (*vipāka*), whereas *saṅkhāra* is classified as *kamma* itself. This classification of *saṅkhāra* as *kamma* refers exclusively to those times when intention (*cetanā*) is operative. The various mental determinants (within the round of rebirth – *saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*) are classified as mental impurities (*kilesa*).

## 1.2 SAÑÑĀ AND SATI: MEMORY, RECOLLECTION, AND MINDFULNESS

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There tends to be confusion among Buddhist scholars as to which mental factor in the Pali vocabulary corresponds to ‘memory’. *Saññā* is often translated as ‘recollection’, whereas *sati* may be translated as ‘mindfulness’, ‘recollection’, ‘recall’, or ‘memory’.<sup>14</sup> In regard to the latter term, there are some prominent sutta examples, for example the passage praising Ven. Ānanda as foremost among the bhikkhu disciples in ‘remembering the Buddha’s words’. In this context the Buddha uses the term *sati*: ‘Of all my disciples, Ānanda is supreme in memory (*sati*).’<sup>15</sup>

In the formal teachings, there is no confusion about this matter. Memory is not the exclusive function of just one mental factor, but rather it is part of a mental process, within which perception (*saññā*) and mindfulness (*sati*) play the most prominent and important roles.

Both the terms *saññā* and *sati* have overlapping meanings in respect to the concept of ‘memory’. One aspect of perception (*saññā*) has to do with memory, while other aspects are separate from it. This is the same for mindfulness (*sati*): one aspect pertains to memory, while other aspects function apart from the process of memory. {19}

Note these important distinctions between *saññā* and *sati* in the process of memory:

Perception (*saññā*) designates and identifies sense objects. When one encounters such objects again, *saññā* compares their current features with established perceptions, determining any similarities and differences. If one determines that the two (the old perceptions and the new) correspond, this may be called ‘recognition’. If there are differences, one creates additional perceptions. The term *saññā* refers both to the recognition, designation, and identification of objects (the comparison and accumulation of data), and to perceptions themselves (the actual

<sup>14</sup>One aspect of *sati* is recollection – the ability to recall; another aspect is mindfulness.

<sup>15</sup>A. I. 24-5.

data and information created and stored). In this context, *saññā* creates the requisite conditions for memory. The important attribute of *saññā* is that it engages with sense objects immediately present; when these sense objects manifest, *saññā* is able to focus on, identify, or remember them.

*Sati* functions to draw sense objects to attention and to hold them firmly in the mind. It directs and sustains attention to sense objects, preventing them from drifting by or slipping away. These sense objects may be currently manifesting or they may have occurred in the past. The term *sati* thus encompasses such nuances of meaning as: ‘recall’, ‘recollection’, ‘calling to mind’, ‘reflection’, ‘remembering’, and ‘attentiveness’. In the context of memory, it remembers and enables recall. In this sense, *sati* is the opposite of *sammosa*, which means ‘forgetting’ (*saññā* is not paired with forgetting). *Sati* is generated from within an individual, relying on the power of volition, even when sense objects are not immediately manifest. Because it is a volitional response to sense objects it is classified as a mental formation (*saṅkhāra*).

*Saññā* records and notes sense objects; *sati* draws sense objects to attention. Both a healthy perception – the ability to identify things clearly, to designate things in a well-ordered and structured way, and to integrate and connect things (which relies on attentiveness and understanding) – and a strong recall – the ability to recollect (which relies on clear perceptions, constant mindfulness, and a bright, peaceful, and concentrated mind) – are factors for a good memory.

At one time in the past Robert and Jake knew each other well. Ten years later, they meet again and Robert recognizes Jake and remembers the places they once visited and the activities they once shared. The recognition of the other person is *saññā*, whereas the recollection of past events is *sati*.

On one occasion Greg meets and talks with Karl. A month later, Greg’s friends ask him whom he met and spoke with on that specific date. Greg reflects on the past and remembers that he met with Karl. This recollection is *sati*.

A telephone is located in one corner of a room, and a phone book is located in another. Karen opens the book and finds the number she is

looking for. She makes a note of this number in her mind and then walks to the telephone to dial it. As she crosses the room she keeps this number constantly in her attention. The reading and noting of the number from the book is *saññā*; the recall of that number from the moment she leaves the book is *sati*.

When sense objects become manifest, one is able to perceive them immediately. Yet when they do not manifest, and in the case that they are mind objects (*dhammārammaṇa*; matters inherent in the mind), one can use *sati* in order to draw them forth and focus on them. Moreover, *sati* is able to call perceptions to mind, that is, it can recollect past perceptions to be the objects of attention. *Saññā* is then able to identify, clarify, and consolidate these previous perceptions, or to perceive them in a new way according to one's aims and objectives. {20}

### 1.3 PERCEPTION, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND WISDOM

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Perception (*saññā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are all aspects of knowledge, yet they are part of three distinct aggregates. The first two factors, described earlier in this chapter, constitute an aggregate in themselves, whereas wisdom is classified among the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*).

Wisdom (*paññā*) refers generally to understanding, and more specifically to comprehensive or clear understanding; to a thorough and accurate understanding of the truth. This term *paññā* is defined in many different ways, including: knowledge of causality; knowledge of good and evil; knowledge of right and wrong; knowledge of suitability; knowledge of benefit and harm; knowledge of advantages and disadvantages; thorough knowledge of conditioned phenomena; knowledge of constituent factors; knowledge of causes and conditions; knowledge of origin and destination; knowledge of the interrelationship of things; knowledge according to the truth; genuine knowledge; genuine understanding; knowledge of reality; and knowing how to reflect on, contemplate, analyze, and engage with or manage things and situations.

Simply speaking, wisdom is clear, correct, and genuine understanding. Wisdom possesses an insight into reality and it penetrates into the heart of problems. It supports both perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). In regard to the latter, it broadens and deepens the range of consciousness. Likewise, in regard to the former, it increases the range of perception, because the cognition and apprehension of things is dependent on one's knowledge. This is similar to solving mathematical problems; as long as one cannot solve the initial equations, one has no data or criteria for further calculations. With increased understanding, one possesses the markers or raw material for further perception and analysis.

Wisdom (*paññā*) stands in opposition to delusion (*moha*; 'ignorance', 'misunderstanding'), whereas perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are not contrasted with delusion in this way. Indeed, perception and consciousness may fall prey to delusion. When one is deluded and confused, one's conscious experience and perceptions are equally distorted. Wisdom assists here to rectify both consciousness and perception.

Perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) rely on currently manifesting sense objects in order to function. Images or concepts of these sense objects are thus created and discerned. Wisdom, on the other hand, reflects on sense objects and responds actively to them (wisdom is a deliberative faculty, and is thus classified among the volitional formations – *saṅkhāra*). It links various sense impressions with each other, analyzes their various attributes, compares and considers various perceptions, and discerns cause, effect, interrelationship, and the ways to benefit from things. By doing this, it provides consciousness and perception with wholesome food for engagement.

Ven. Sāriputta once responded to the question on how wisdom (*paññā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) differ. He explained that wisdom knows ('understands'; 'knows clearly') that 'this is suffering', 'this is the cause of suffering', 'this is the cessation of suffering', and 'this is the way leading to the end of suffering'. Consciousness, on the other hand, knows (= discriminative understanding) that 'this is pleasure', 'this is pain', and 'this is neither pleasure nor pain'. Wisdom and consciousness, however, are

intimately entwined and in a sense inseparable. Having said this, there is a distinction in that wisdom is a ‘quality to be trained and developed’ (*bhāvetabba-dhamma*), in order to increase and strengthen it. In contrast, consciousness is a ‘quality to be fully understood’ (*pariññeyya-dhamma*); its nature and its attributes should be truly recognized and understood.<sup>16</sup>

The commentarial texts, including the *Visuddhimagga*,<sup>17</sup> explain the distinction between perception (*saññā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and wisdom (*paññā*) in this way: perception (*saññā*) simply recognizes the properties of a sense object, say that it is ‘green’ or ‘yellow’; it is unable to understand the characteristics of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) also knows the object’s properties (of ‘green’, ‘yellow’, etc.), and it is able to understand the characteristics of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself (it understands according to the counsel and guidance by wisdom). But it cannot deliver one to the actualization of the Path (i.e. to the realization of the Four Noble Truths). Wisdom, however, accomplishes all three: it knows the properties of sense objects, it discerns the three characteristics, and it enables the actualization of the Path.

The commentaries use the analogy of three people who look at the same coin. Perception (*saññā*) is like a young child who simply discerns the shape of the coin – small, large, square, or round – its colour, attractive sheen, and strange markings. He does not know that it is an agreed-upon means of trade and exchange. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is like an adult who discerns the shape, markings, etc. of the coin, and who knows that it is used for trade and exchange, but he does not possess the deeper understanding of whether the coin is genuine or counterfeit, or of what combination of metals were used to mint the coin. Wisdom is like a treasurer, who discerns all of the above data, and in addition possesses expert knowledge, to the extent that he may look at, tap and listen to, smell, taste, or weigh the coin in his hands, and know everything about it, including where and by whom it was made.

<sup>16</sup>M. I. 292-3.

<sup>17</sup>Vism. 436.

Moreover, wisdom does not always arise. It may happen that only perception and consciousness arise, devoid of wisdom. Yet when wisdom arises alongside these other two qualities, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other.

When Jāli and Kaṇhā<sup>18</sup> sought a hiding place, they walked backwards into the lotus pond, convinced that their pursuer would think that they had only recently come out of the pond. This line of thinking on their part may be referred to as wisdom (*paññā*). Later, Vessantara saw their footprints and knew immediately that they had walked backwards into the pond. This was because there were only prints leading away from the pond and none leading towards it, and the impression in the prints was deepest at the heels. This understanding may also be referred to as wisdom. The children and their father applied different levels of wisdom and circumspection, which indicates how wisdom (*paññā*) derives benefit from perception (*saññā*).

Prince Siddhattha saw an old person, a sick person, and a human corpse, and as a result he reflected on and discerned the suffering to which everyone is prone, without exception. He then went on to understand how all conditioned things are impermanent, subject to arising, to alteration, and eventually to passing away, and he saw the need to bring to an end the suffering based on these conditions. These are all examples of wisdom (*paññā*). When the Buddha was preparing to establish Buddhism in the Magadha country, he went to visit the matted-hair ascetics of the Kassapa clan, who were revered by the people of Magadha, in order that they gain confidence in and endorse the Buddha's teachings. The insight and intuition behind this line of thinking by the Buddha is also an expression of wisdom.

The term *paññā* is a general term describing the kinds of knowledge mentioned above. There are many different levels of wisdom, for example mundane wisdom (*lokiya-paññā*) and transcendent wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*). There are many other Pali terms indicating specific levels, degrees, or aspects of wisdom, or referring to its specific activities,

<sup>18</sup>Trans.: the children of the bodhisatta Vessantara and his wife Maddi.



qualities, or benefits, for example: *ñāṇa* ('knowledge'), *vijjā* ('true knowledge'), *vipassanā* ('insight'), *sampajañña* ('clear comprehension'), *pariññā* ('thorough knowledge'), *abhiññā* ('supreme knowledge'), and *paṭisambhidā* ('discriminative knowledge'). {22}

#### 1.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AGGREGATES

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The five aggregates are interdependent. The aggregate of corporeality (*rūpa-khandha*) comprises the body, while the four aggregates of mentality (*nāma-khandha*) make up the mind. Human life requires both the body and the mind. When the body and mind function normally and operate in unison, life progresses well. Mental activities, for example, require an understanding of the external world and this understanding relies on sense data (visual forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and tangible objects) entering by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Both the five sense objects and the five sense faculties are material things (*rūpa-dhamma*) and part of the aggregate of corporeality – they are part of materiality.

In this chapter the emphasis is on the mind, considering the body to be similar to a readymade instrument prepared to serve mental activities. The mind is considered to be the focal point of life, and its range of functions is vast, complex, and profound. The mind gives value and meaning to life, and it is directly connected to the teachings by the Buddha presented in this book.

The four aggregates of mentality are intimately related, influencing and conditioning one another. The arising of these four aggregates is ordinarily outlined in the following way:<sup>19</sup>

Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises (similarly with the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, etc). The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there

<sup>19</sup>For the complete sequence of this process, see the following chapter on the six sense spheres.

is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about...

M. I. 111-12.

Here is an example: Gordon hears the sound of a bell (ear + sound + ear-consciousness). He finds the sound pleasant (= *vedanā*). He perceives the sound as ‘melodious’, ‘the ringing of a bell’, and ‘the sound of a melodious bell’ (= *saññā*). He likes the sound and wants to hear it again; he thinks about striking that bell himself; he wants to obtain the bell; he thinks about buying or stealing the bell, etc. (= *saṅkhāra*).

Note the crucial role of feeling (*vedanā*) in this process. Perception (*saññā*) pays particular focus on those objects providing pleasurable sensations. The greater the pleasure, the greater the importance bestowed on the object by perception. In addition, such pleasurable feeling incites people to think and act in order to increase the pleasure. One may describe this as a basic, ordinary, or elementary process.

In this process, feeling (*vedanā*) acts as the incentive, similar to a person who invites one to take something, or to refuse and avoid it. Perception (*saññā*) is similar to a person who gathers and stores data or raw material. Mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) resemble a person who takes this raw material and shapes it in preparation for work. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is similar to the director of the work, aware of everyone else’s activities; it both opens the way for the work to be performed and it receives the results of the work.<sup>20</sup>

One complex aspect of this process is that feeling (*vedanā*) does not act as a catalyst for the other aggregates in a one-sided way. The other aggregates, too, have an influence over feeling. Take the example of a single piece of music that one person listens to and finds delightful, whereas another person listens to it and feels depressed. Similarly, the

<sup>20</sup>The commentaries, including the *Visuddhimagga*, provide the following analogies: the body is like a bowl, feeling is like staple food, perception is like the side dishes of food, mental formations are like the cook, and consciousness is like the consumer of the food. Similarly: the body is like a prison; feeling is like the punishment; perception is like the offence; volitional formations are like the magistrate inflicting the penalty; and consciousness is like the prisoner. See: *Vism.* 479; *CompT.*: *Samuccayaparichedavaṇṇanā*, *Sabbasaṅghavaṇṇanā*.

same person may listen to a song at one time and feel elated, while at another time he may feel disturbed by it. {23}

A general principle is that those things that one likes and finds pleasure in correspond to one's desire. When one encounters them one is happy. Inversely, those things one dislikes conflict with one's desire; when one encounters these things, one suffers. The mental formations, say of liking, disliking, desire, and aversion, then condition another round of feeling. Here, perception is also engaged, that is, mental formations condition perception, which in turn influences feeling.

Here is an example: a person may see someone whom he admires behave in a particular way and perceive that behaviour as lovely or endearing. And he may witness other behaviour by someone he dislikes and perceive it as annoying or abhorrent. Later he may encounter others exhibiting such behaviour, which he has previously perceived as either endearing or annoying (= *saññā*), and as a result feel either delighted or distressed (= *vedanā*), and either approve of or be angered by it (= *saṅkhāra*).

This interrelationship between the aggregates can be even more complex. Take for example a work project or study lesson that is difficult and demanding. Performing the task alone may involve much turmoil and discomfort, causing one to be disinclined from engaging with it. Yet, if there are particular incentives, one may be more interested and determined to do the work or to pursue the lesson. These incentives may be pleasurable sensations in the present, for example the method of learning is fun and entertaining, or they may be elaborate matters associated with perceptions of future pleasure, say of gaining a reward, achieving success, or deriving some benefit, either for oneself or for others. These perceptions are dependent on various mental formations, for example craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and wisdom (*paññā*), which then lead to further perceptions by bestowing meaning, value and importance to the work or study. Moreover, one now experiences pleasure while performing the deed. Although one may feel physical discomfort, one's mind is imbued with joy, making one more eager to do the work or to complete the lesson.

When the school bell rings in the late afternoon, the students hear the sound (= *viññāṇa*). Having heard this sound every day, they may feel neutral about it (= *vedanā*). All of them identify the sound as the bell denoting the end of the school day (= *saññā*). Some children may be delighted (*sukha-vedanā* + *saṅkhāra*), because they ache from sitting all day and may now go out and play (= accompanying perceptions). Other children may be sad (*dukkha-vedanā* + *saṅkhāra*), because they must interrupt a useful and valuable lesson, or because they must return to unkind and intimidating guardians (= accompanying perceptions).

This entire process, beginning with consciousness, is an intricate inter-relationship of causes and conditions, which together create people's personalities and determine each person's unique fortune and destiny. Volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), represented by intention (*cetanā*), are the agents which shape and mould the process, and in this context *saṅkhāra* is the technical name for volitional action (*kamma*). Inversely, *kamma* is the informal title for volitional formations, representing them when they are actively operative. It is the term used when referring to the crucial role that volitional formations play, e.g.: 'It is *kamma* that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior';<sup>21</sup> 'beings exist according to their *kamma*.'<sup>22</sup> {24}

### 1.5 THE FIVE AGGREGATES AND CLINGING TO THE FIVE AGGREGATES

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In the Buddha's elucidation of the Four Noble Truths, encapsulating the essence of Buddhism, there is a noteworthy reference to the five aggregates found in the teaching on the first noble truth, on suffering.

At the beginning of the Buddha's explanation of the first noble truth, he defines suffering by citing various examples and circumstances, which are easily recognizable and a part of people's everyday lives. At the end of this discussion, however, he summarizes the entirety of suffering into

<sup>21</sup>M. III. 203.

<sup>22</sup>Sn. 118-19.

the single phrase: ‘the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*) are suffering’:

Monks, this is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, clinging to the five aggregates is suffering.

*Vin. I. 10.*

Here, let us look at the distinction between the term *khandha* by itself as opposed to the term *upādāna-khandha*, by examining these words of the Buddha:

Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates and the five aggregates subject to clinging. Listen attentively.

And what are the five aggregates? Whatever kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near.... These are called the five aggregates.

And what are the five aggregates of clinging? Whatever kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, that is tainted (*sāsava*; accompanied by mental taints), that is a foundation for clinging (*upādāniya*)... These are called the five aggregates of clinging.

*S. III. 47-8.*

Monks, I will teach you the foundations for clinging, and clinging itself. Listen...

Form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is a foundation for clinging. The desire and lust (*chanda-rāga*; delight or intense desire culminating in attachment) for form ...

feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is the clinging there.

S. III. 167.

This distinction between the five aggregates and the five aggregates of clinging is an important principle required for a deeper study of Buddha-Dhamma. {25}

## 1.6 PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Ordinarily, human beings are inclined to believe that they possess a true and lasting self, in some form or another. Some people attach to their mind as the ‘self’;<sup>23</sup> some believe that something exists separate and yet somehow connected to the mind, which acts on another level to be responsible for and to control the body and mind. The exposition of the five aggregates is intended to reveal how that which is called a ‘being’, ‘person’, or ‘self’ – when it is closely examined and analyzed – is simply comprised of these five components. There is no residual essence or substance existing separate from these five. And even these five aggregates exist within an interdependent relationship. They do not exist independently; they are not autonomous. Therefore, these aggregates, too, do not function or exist as a stable, substantial ‘self’.

In sum, the teaching on the five aggregates refers to the principle of selflessness (*anattā*; ‘nonself’, ‘not-self’). Human life consists of a convergence of various elements or parts; there exists no substantial ‘self’ as unifying principle or centre-point of these parts. None of the aggregates (components, etc.) exist as a stable, lasting ‘self’, and no such self exists apart from them.<sup>24</sup> When one gains insight into this truth, one lets go

<sup>23</sup>Note the Buddha’s words: ‘It would be better, monks, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self this body composed of the four great elements rather than the mind. This is because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four, five years, for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, for a hundred years, or even longer. But that which is called ‘mind’ (*citta*), ‘mentality’ (*mano*), or ‘consciousness’ (*viññāṇa*) arises and ceases perpetually, by day and by night’ (S. II. 94-5).

<sup>24</sup>See: S. III. 3-5, 16-18, 110-15.

of one's attachments to self. This principle of nonself is clarified in the teaching on Dependent Origination in relation to the five aggregates.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, when one understands that the five aggregates exist in an interrelated and interdependent manner, one does not develop the wrong views of either annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) or eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). Moreover, this understanding also leads to a correct understanding of the workings of kamma. Again, the teaching on Dependent Origination explains this interrelationship and interdependence in more depth.

Examining things by separating them into the five aggregates helps to train one's thinking abilities and it nurtures the disposition to analyze the truth. When one encounters or engages with something, one does not look simply at surface appearances; instead, one inclines towards investigation and inquiry of deeper truths. And crucially, this examination leads to an objective discernment of things, to seeing things 'as they are'. This is in contrast to a subjective understanding, by which one relates to things by way of craving and grasping (*taṇhā-upādāna*), and sees things according to one's preferences and aversions. An objective understanding is the goal of Buddha-Dhamma and of this teaching on the five aggregates. Rather than relating to things by way of attachment, craving, and grasping, one relates to them by way of wisdom.

In any case, the Buddha normally did not teach about the five aggregates in isolation. In most cases, the five aggregates are the chief factors of consideration within the context of other principles and teachings, which act as the criteria for contemplating and determining the nature and function of these aggregates. The five aggregates need to be examined in relation to other principles, say of nonself (*anattā*), in order to fully appreciate their value on a practical level. The benefits of such contemplation will become clear in subsequent chapters. {26}

<sup>25</sup>See chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

## 1.7 APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL DETAILS IN REGARD TO THE FIVE AGGREGATES

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### RŪPA: BODY; PHYSICAL FORM; MATERIALITY

The Abhidhamma divides *rūpa* into twenty-eight factors:

1. Four primary elements (*mahābhūta-rūpa*; referred to simply as the four ‘elements’ – *dhātu*): earth (*paṭhavī-dhātu*; element of extension; solid element); water (*āpo-dhātu*; element of cohesion; liquid element); fire (*tejo-dhātu*; element of heat or radiation); and wind (*vāyo-dhātu*; element of vibration or motion).
2. Twenty-four derived material qualities (*upādā-rūpa*; derivative materiality; matter resulting from the four primary elements):
  - The five sense bases: eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāṇa*), tongue (*jivhā*), and body (*kāya*).
  - The four sense objects: form (*rūpa*), sound (*sadda*), smell (*gandha*), and taste (*rasa*). Tangible objects (*phoṭṭhabba*) are not included here, because they are equivalent to *paṭhavī*, *āpo*, and *vāyo*, above.
  - Femininity (*itthatta*).
  - Masculinity (*purisatta*).
  - Physical basis of mind (*hadaya-vatthu*).
  - Bodily intimation or gesture (*kāya-viññatti*).
  - Verbal intimation; speech (*vacī-viññatti*).
  - Life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*; vitality; vital force).
  - Space element (*ākāsa-dhātu*).
  - Physical lightness (*rūpassa lahutā*).
  - Physical pliancy; elasticity (*rūpassa mudutā*).
  - Physical adaptability; wieldiness (*rūpassa kammaññatā*).
  - Physical growth or enlargement (*rūpassa upacaya*).
  - Physical continuity (*rūpassa santati*).



- Decay (*jaratā*).
- Disintegration (*aniccatā*).
- Edible food; nutriment (*kavaḷiṇkārahāra*).

Note that the term *hadaya-vatthu*, which is translated as ‘heart’, is considered the locus of the *citta*, yet this interpretation is expressed in later texts; it does not occur in the Tipiṭaka.

#### VEDANĀ: FEELING; SENSATION

- Threefold division: pleasure (*sukha*; physical and mental); pain (*dukkha*; physical and mental); neutral feeling (*adukkhamasukha*; neither pleasurable nor painful; it is sometimes referred to as *upekkhā*).
- Fivefold division: physical pleasure (*sukha*), physical pain (*dukkha*), happiness (*somanassa*), unhappiness (*domanassa*), neutral feeling (*upekkhā*).
- Sixfold division (according to its origin doorway): feeling stemming from contact by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

#### SAÑÑĀ: PERCEPTION

It is divided into six factors, according to the pathway of cognition:

1. Perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*), e.g. of ‘black’, ‘red’, ‘green’, or ‘white’.
2. Perception of sound (*sadda-saññā*), e.g. of ‘loud’, ‘faint’, ‘base’, or ‘high-pitched’.
3. Perception of scent (*gandha-saññā*), e.g. of ‘fragrant’ or ‘malodorous’.

4. Perception of flavour (*rasa-saññā*), e.g. of ‘sweet’, ‘sour’, ‘bitter’, or ‘salty’.
5. Perception of tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba-saññā*), e.g. of ‘soft’, ‘hard’, ‘coarse’, ‘fine’, ‘hot’, or ‘cold’.
6. Perception of mental objects (*dhamma-saññā*), e.g. of ‘beautiful’, ‘revolting’, ‘constant’, or ‘impermanent’.

#### SAÑKHĀRA: VOLITIONAL FORMATIONS

The Abhidhamma divides the mental concomitants (*cetasika*) into fifty-two factors. If one compares this division with the teaching of the five aggregates (*khandha*), the mental concomitants comprise feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and volitional formations. Of the fifty-two factors, one of them is feeling and another is perception; the remaining fifty factors are all volitional formations. These fifty factors are subdivided as follows: {27}

1. Eleven mental factors common to both the wholesome and the unwholesome (*aññasamāna-cetasika*). (If one includes *vedanā* and *saññā* here, these constitute thirteen factors; these two factors are excluded here because they are not volitional formations):
  - A. Five universal mental factors (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa-cetasika*; those arising in every mind moment): contact (*phassa*), intention (*cetanā*), one-pointedness (*ekaggatā* = ‘concentration’ – *samādhi*), life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*), and mental application (*manasikāra*). (With *vedanā* and *saññā*, these constitute seven factors.)
  - B. Six ‘particular’ mental factors (*pakiṇṇaka-cetasika*; those factors common to both the wholesome and the unwholesome, yet they do not arise in every mind moment): applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), determination (*adhimokkha*), effort (*virīya*), joy (*pīti*), and enthusiasm (*chanda*).

2. Fourteen unwholesome mental factors (*akusala-cetasika*), arising along with unwholesome mind states:
  - A. Four universal unwholesome factors (*sabbākusalasādhāraṇa-cetasika*; those factors always present in unwholesome mind states): delusion (*moha*), shamelessness (*ahirika*), lack of moral dread (*anottappa*), and restlessness (*uddhacca*).
  - B. Ten particular unwholesome factors (*pakiṇṇaka-akusala-cetasika*): greed (*lobha*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), conceit (*māna*), hatred (*dosa*), jealousy (*issā*), stinginess (*macchariya*), worry (*kukkucca*), sloth (*thīna*), torpor (*middha*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*).
3. Twenty-five beautiful mental factors (*sobhaṇa-cetasika*), arising along with wholesome and indeterminate (*abyākata*) mind states:
  - A. Nineteen universal beautiful mental factors (*sobhaṇasādhāraṇa-cetasika*): faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), conscience (*hiri*), moral dread (*ottappa*), non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa* = ‘lovingkindness’ – *mettā*), equanimity (*tatra-majjhataṭṭā*; sometimes referred to as *upekkha*), tranquillity of the mental body (*kāya-passaddhi*; tranquillity of the collection of mental concomitants), tranquillity of mind (*citta-passaddhi*), lightness of mental body (*kāya-lahutā*), lightness of mind (*citta-lahutā*), pliancy of mental body (*kāya-mudutā*), pliancy of mind (*citta-mudutā*), adaptability of mental body (*kāya-kammaññatā*), adaptability of mind (*citta-kammaññatā*), proficiency of mental body (*kāya-pāguññatā*), proficiency of mind (*citta-pāguññatā*), rectitude of mental body (*kāyujukatā*), and rectitude of mind (*cittujukatā*).
  - B. Six particular wholesome factors (*pakiṇṇakasobhaṇa-cetasika*): right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) – collectively called the three factors of abstinence (*viratī-cetasika*); compassion (*karuṇā*) and appreciative joy (*muditā*) – together called the two boundless states (*appamaññā-cetasika*); and wisdom (*paññā*).

In the suttas, volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) are normally defined as the six kinds of volition (*sañcetanā*; ‘intention’, ‘thought’), pertaining to: form (*rūpa-sañcetanā*), sounds (*sadda-sañcetanā*), smells (*gandha-sañcetanā*), tastes (*rasa-sañcetanā*), tangible objects (*phoṭṭhabba-sañcetanā*), and mental objects (*dhamma-sañcetanā*).<sup>26</sup>

### VIÑÑĀṆA: CONSCIOUSNESS

It is divided into six factors, according to the pathway by which it originates: awareness of objects by way of the eye (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), the ear (*sota-viññāṇa*), the nose (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*), the tongue (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), the body (*kāya-viññāṇa*), and the mind (*mano-viññāṇa*).

The Abhidhamma refers to the consciousness aggregate as *citta*, and it divides the *citta* into either 89 or 121 types of consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

- Divided according to the state or level of consciousness: fifty-four sense-sphere states of consciousness (*kāmāvacara-citta*), fifteen fine-material states of consciousness (*rūpāvacara-citta*), twelve immaterial states of consciousness (*arūpāvacara-citta*), and eight transcendent states of consciousness (*lokuttara-citta*; these may be divided into more detail, resulting in forty transcendent states of consciousness).
- Divided according to the quality of mind: twelve unwholesome states of consciousness (*akusala-citta*), twenty-one wholesome states of consciousness (*kusala-citta*; the detailed analysis results in thirty-seven), thirty-six kamma-resultant states of consciousness (*vipāka-citta*; in the detailed analysis – fifty two), and twenty functional states of consciousness (*kiriya-citta*). It is unnecessary in this presentation to list all of these various states of consciousness, and it may even cause confusion for the reader. {28}

<sup>26</sup>E.g.: S. III. 60-61.

<sup>27</sup>Trans.: for more information on the terms *citta*, *viññāṇa*, and *mano* see the Special Appendix at the end of this book.

## 1.8 APPENDIX 2: COMMENTARIAL EXPLANATION OF PERCEPTION

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The commentaries describe the following function and attributes of perception (*saññā*): its unique attribute is *sañjānana* (recognition; remembering). Its function is to establish a sign as a key for memory, so that in the future one knows that ‘this is such-and-such’; this function is similar to a carpenter who marks a piece of wood. Its result is an attachment to those established signs; this is similar to a blind man who touches an elephant and consequently identifies an elephant with that part of its body that he has touched. Its ‘footprint’ (*padatṭhāna*) – the object as it appears – resembles how a fawn sees a scarecrow and believes it to be a real human being (Vism. 462). In comparison to Western psychological terms, *saññā* encompasses ‘perception’, ‘conception’ (as ‘mental representation’), and ‘recognition’, and to a certain degree, but not exclusively, to ‘memory’.



Sāla blossoms from the Sāla tree.  
The Buddha was born under a Sāla tree.



The Temple of the Emerald Buddha or Wat Phra Sri Rattana Satsadaram or Wat Phra Kaew  
Na Phra Lan Road, Grand Palace, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok, Thailand

## CHAPTER 2

# SIX SENSE SPHERES

### *Pathways for Contacting and Experiencing the World*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Although human beings are made up of the five aggregates, which can be further subdivided into numerous subsidiary factors, generally speaking, in everyday life, people do not directly engage with these aggregates. Many of these component factors making up human life exist and function without people's knowledge, and even if they are aware of them, people often do not give them much thought. In respect to the body, for example, many physical organs function without the knowledge of the person involved, who often does not care to know. People may only take an interest in these functions when there arises some abnormality or impairment. This is similarly the case in regard to mental factors.

People generally leave the study and analysis of the body as the responsibility of medical scholars and biologists, and they leave the study of the mind up to Abhidhamma scholars and psychologists. For the majority of people, the importance or meaning of life centres around their everyday engagement and interaction with the world. The importance of life for most people lies in their relationship to the world.

This engagement or relationship can be divided into two parts or systems, both of which rely on specific 'doorways' (*dvāra*; 'channel') for making contact with the world:

1. Cognition and experience of the world by way of the six sense doors (*phassa-dvāra*; ‘doorways of sense contact’; ‘sense bases’): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These sense doors cognize various properties and attributes of the world, namely, the six sense objects (*ārammaṇa*): forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and mental objects.
2. Behaviour and response to the world relying on the three channels of action (*kamma-dvāra*): the body (*kāya-dvāra*), speech (*vacī-dvāra*), and mind (*mano-dvāra*), resulting in physical actions (*kāya-kamma*), verbal actions (*vacī-kamma*), and mental actions (*mano-kamma*).

Note that in the context of active engagement in everyday life, the term *dvāra* (‘sense doors’) in the first system is most often referred to in the scriptures by the term *āyatana*, which means ‘sphere of cognition’ or ‘path of cognition’. For this reason, in this analysis here, the term *āyatana* is used instead of *dvāra*.

In regard to the second system, the entire engagement here pertains to the fourth aggregate – the aggregate of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) – which was discussed in the previous chapter. The myriad volitional formations, which can be classified as wholesome, unwholesome, and neutral, manifest and function when they are selected, induced, and authorized by intention (*cetanā*) – their leader and representative – to behave or act by way of body, speech and mind, resulting in physical deeds, speech, and thoughts. {29}

In this context, volitional formations are reclassified in three ways: (1) according to the chief or representative factor (i.e. of intention); (2) according to the pathway by which they are expressed; and (3) according to the specific action performed, as shown on Figure 2.1.

In the previous chapter on the five aggregates, volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) as the factors determining the quality and attributes of the mind have already been discussed. In chapters 4 and 5 of *Buddhadhamma*, covering the process of human life and human activities, a detailed explanation of volitional formations will be presented in regard to their role in shaping behaviour and responding to the external world. In this present



Figure 2.1: Intention and Action

<i>Kāya-saṅkhāra</i>	+	<i>kāya-sañcetanā</i>	+	<i>kāya-dvāra</i>	→	<i>kāya-kamma</i>
Bodily volition	+	intentions (expressed) by way of the body	+	physical channel	→	physical actions
 <i>Vacī-saṅkhāra</i>	 +	 <i>vacī-sañcetanā</i>	 +	 <i>vacī-dvāra</i>	 →	 <i>vacī-kamma</i>
Verbal volition	+	intentions (expressed) by way of speech	+	verbal channel	→	verbal actions
 <i>Mano-saṅkhāra</i>	 +	 <i>mano-sañcetanā</i>	 +	 <i>mano-dvāra</i>	 →	 <i>mano-kamma</i>
Mental volition	+	intentions (expressed) by way of the mind	+	mental channel	→	mental actions

chapter, the focus is thus restricted to the first system above, namely, the nature and proper functioning of the six sense doors.

## 2.2 NATURE OF THE SIX SENSES

The term *āyatana* literally means ‘link’ or ‘sphere’. In this context it refers to ‘cognitive link’, ‘sphere of cognition’, ‘source of awareness’, or ‘doorway of perception’. There are six such doorways: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.<sup>1</sup>

One may then ask, ‘To what are these senses linked?’ The answer is that they are linked to the world, to the external environment. Yet the world only reveals limited parts or aspects of itself to human beings, depending on people’s faculties or instruments of cognition, that is, depending on the six senses mentioned above. For this reason, each one of the six senses is paired with a specific ‘object of awareness’ in the external world. {30}

These objects of awareness are also referred to by the term *āyatana*, because they too act as a cognitive link or as a source of awareness. Yet,

<sup>1</sup>On the commentarial analysis of the sense spheres see Appendix 2.

as opposed to the six internal senses (internal *āyatana*) just mentioned, these objects exist in the external world (external *āyatana*).

Generally speaking, these six external sense objects – visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and mental objects – are referred to by the term *ārammaṇa*, which literally means ‘something that detains the mind’ or ‘something that holds attention’. Simply speaking, they are ‘objects of attention’.

When an internal sense base (*āyatana*; ‘sphere of cognition’) comes into contact with an (external) object of attention (*ārammaṇa*), an awareness specific to that individual sense sphere arises.<sup>2</sup> When the eye comes into contact with forms, the awareness of ‘seeing’ arises; when the ear contacts sounds, the awareness of ‘hearing’, etc. This awareness is called ‘consciousness’ (*viññāṇa*): the awareness of sense objects.

There are thus six kinds of consciousness, corresponding to the six sense faculties and the six sense objects: eye-consciousness (i.e. seeing); ear-consciousness (i.e. hearing); nose-consciousness (i.e. smelling); tongue-consciousness (i.e. tasting); body-consciousness (i.e. touching); and mind-consciousness (i.e. awareness of mental objects):

1. Eye (*cakkhu*) is the sphere for cognizing form (*rūpa*), giving rise to seeing (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*).
2. Ear (*sota*) is the sphere for cognizing sound (*sadda*), giving rise to hearing (*sota-viññāṇa*).
3. Nose (*ghāṇa*) is the sphere for cognizing odours (*gandha*), giving rise to smelling (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*).
4. Tongue (*jivhā*) is the sphere for cognizing tastes (*rasa*), giving rise to tasting (*jivhā-viññāṇa*).
5. Body (*kāya*) is the sphere for cognizing tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*), giving rise to tactile awareness (*kāya-viññāṇa*).

<sup>2</sup>Normally, the term *dvāra* is paired with *ārammaṇa*, and the term ‘internal *āyatana*’ is paired with ‘external *āyatana*’. In this exposition, however, the internal sense spheres will be referred to as *āyatana*, and the external sense objects as *ārammaṇa*.

6. Mind (*mano*) is the sphere for cognizing mental objects (*dhamma*),<sup>3</sup> giving rise to awareness of mental objects (*mano-viññāṇa*).

This can be expanded as:

- 6 sense bases (internal *āyatana*): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.
- 6 sense objects (external *āyatana*): form (visible objects), sound (audible objects), smell (odorous objects), taste (sapid objects), touch (tangible objects), mind-objects (cognizable objects).
- 6 kinds of consciousness: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind-consciousness.

D. III. 243-4.

Although the arising of consciousness is dependent on the contact between a sense base and its respective sense object,<sup>4</sup> the fact that a sense object becomes manifest to a sense base does not invariably result in consciousness. Other accompanying factors, such as receptivity, determination, and interest must also be present.<sup>5</sup> For example, while a person is asleep, agitated, absentminded, focused on an activity, or highly concentrated, various visual forms and sounds within range of potential awareness are neither seen nor heard. {31} Similarly, when one is focused on writing a letter or a book, one may not be aware of the contact between one's body and the chair or between one's fingers and the pen. In such cases, when sense bases and sense objects are in contact, but without the arising of consciousness, 'cognition' is not yet said to have occurred.

Cognition arises when all three factors are present: a sense base (*āyatana*), a sense object (*ārammaṇa*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The technical term in Pali for the union of these three factors is *phassa*

<sup>3</sup>To avoid confusion, these mental objects are usually referred to as *dhammārammaṇa*, instead of simply *dhamma*, which is a term used in many different contexts and which has multiple nuances of meaning.

<sup>4</sup>M. I. 258-9.

<sup>5</sup>M. I. 190.

(alternatively, *samphassa*). Although this term literally means ‘contact’, in Buddhism it refers specifically to the coming together or convergence of these three factors. In this context *phassa* may be translated as ‘cognition’. This contact or cognition is divided into six kinds, according to the specific sense sphere involved, i.e.: eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*), ear-contact (*sota-samphassa*), nose-contact (*ghāna-samphassa*), tongue-contact (*jivhā-samphassa*), body-contact (*kāya-samphassa*), and mind-contact (*mano-samphassa*).

This contact is a vital stage in the wider cognitive process. Once contact with an object has occurred, other mental and physical dynamics follow in its wake. To begin with, there is a feeling (*vedanā*) in response to that object, followed by recognition, associated thinking, and various actions of body, speech, and mind.

The feelings or sensations (*vedanā*) arising immediately after contact with an object are of special interest in this analysis of people’s interaction with the world. The term *vedanā* refers to sense experience, to experiencing the ‘flavour’ of sense impressions. These sensations are either pleasurable, painful, or neutral.

If classified according to the pathways of cognition, there are six kinds of feeling, corresponding to the six sense bases: feelings arising from eye-contact, feelings arising from ear-contact, etc.<sup>6</sup> If classified according to the quality of feeling, however, there are three kinds:

1. *Sukha*: pleasurable, easeful, comfortable, agreeable.
2. *Dukkha*: painful, uncomfortable.
3. *Adukkhamasukha* (also referred to as *upekkha*):<sup>7</sup> neutral; neither pleasant nor painful.

<sup>6</sup>Six kinds of feeling (*vedanā*): *cakkhu-samphassajā vedanā*, *sota-samphassajā vedanā*, *ghāna-samphassajā vedanā*, *jivhā-samphassajā vedanā*, *kāya-samphassajā vedanā*, and *mano-samphassajā vedanā* (S. IV. 232).

<sup>7</sup>Note that *upekkhā* in this context of *vedanā* differs from *upekkhā* in the context of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), e.g.: *upekkhā-brahmavihāra*, *upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*, etc.

This latter division is sometimes expanded into five kinds of feeling:

1. *Sukha*: physical pleasure.
2. *Dukkha*: physical pain.
3. *Somanassa*: mental pleasure; joy.
4. *Domanassa*: mental pain; sorrow.
5. *Upekkhā*: neutral feeling; neither pleasure nor pain. {32}

The cognitive process up to this point can be outlined as follows:

Figure 2.2: The Cognitive Process (Simple Form)

<i>Āyatana</i>	+	<i>ārammaṇa</i>	+	<i>viññāṇa</i>	=	<i>phassa</i>	→	<i>vedanā</i>
Cognitive pathway	+	object of awareness	+	awareness	=	cognition	→	sensation of the object

The objects of awareness (*ārammaṇa*) are equivalent to those aspects of the world apparent to human beings by way of the sense bases (*āyatana*). The awareness of these objects is necessary for people to engage with the world and to survive.

Feeling (*vedanā*) is an essential factor in this process, indicating to people both what is dangerous and should be avoided, and what is supportive and should be sought out. Feeling thus promotes a comprehensive understanding of things.

For unawakened people, however, the role of feeling does not end here. Feeling is not merely one factor in the cognitive process which enhances knowledge and enables them to live a virtuous life. For them, feeling also implies that the world provides them with some form of compensation or reward for engaging with it. This reward is the pleasure and delight (referred to as *sukha-vedanā*) derived from sense objects.

If people seize onto feeling in this manner, they depart from the natural cognitive process and provide another dynamic the opportunity to take over. Feeling becomes a principal agent giving rise to subsequent factors

within this new dynamic. The natural cognitive process functions in conjunction with this new dynamic, but it is distorted by its force and deviates from the truth.

This new dynamic unfolds very easily. Basically, if contact with a sense object provides pleasure (*sukha-vedanā*), a desire (*taṇhā*) for that object arises. This desire leads to attachment and latent clinging (*upādāna*). One is unable to lay down the object, even though in truth it is impossible to appropriate it, since it has already passed one by and vanished. At this stage, one is mentally preoccupied, creating various ideas and conceptions on how one may possess the pleasurable object, and planning how to obtain it. Finally, one performs various physical and verbal actions in order to reach one's desired goal and to access the pleasurable feelings.

Conversely, if contact with a sense object leads to painful or uncomfortable sensations (*dukkha-vedanā*), one is discontent and annoyed. One desires to escape from or to eliminate the object (= *taṇhā*). One is preoccupied and fixated on that object (= *upādāna*) in a negative sense, predisposed towards aversion, fear, and avoidance. One reacts further by yearning for and obsessing over pleasurable feelings, pursuing those things one believes will provide pleasure.

This new dynamic produces a complex and desperate cycle of joy and sorrow, which is concocted by human beings themselves and which spins around repeatedly, beginning with this link of feeling (*vedanā*). This is one interpretation of the 'cycle of rebirth' (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*). People get caught in this whirlpool, and are unable to reach superior states of mind, which are available and attainable as a human being.

The link in the cognitive process following on from contact (*phassa*) is thus highly significant. One may say that this is the critical or turning point in the process. Feeling (*vedanā*) plays a crucial role at this stage. The subsequent factors in the cognitive process depend on the kind of role that feeling plays at this point. Here, there are a couple of matters to consider: {33}

First, the link following on from contact is a critical juncture, which acts as the fork in the road between a pure cognitive process and the so-called 'round of rebirth' (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*).

Within a pure cognitive process, feeling is simply a minor factor, helping to bring about correct and accurate knowledge.

Within the ‘round of rebirth’, however, feeling is a predominant factor, dictating the entire process. It is valid to say that feeling (*vedanā*) shapes all of unawakened peoples’s thoughts and actions – people’s lives are determined by feeling. Within this process, people do not experience sense impressions merely to learn about the world and to engage with it in a healthy way, but they also begin to view the world as something to be consumed.

Technically speaking, within a pure cognitive process, the link of feeling (*vedanā*) is removed or considered inconsequential. Here, cognition is completed with contact (*phassa*). The following stage is referred to as the process of knowing and seeing (*ñāṇa-dassana*), or the process of ‘turning away’ (*vivaṭṭa*), which is the opposite to the ‘round of rebirth’ (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*).<sup>8</sup>

Second, the link following on from contact is a critical juncture in terms of ethical conduct. It is the decisive turning point between good and evil, between wholesome and unwholesome, and between liberation and spinning around in the cycle of rebirth.

At this point we should return to the subject of the sense bases (*āyatana*), because all of the cognitive factors so far discussed rely on and begin with the sense bases. These sense bases thus also play a vital role in the cognitive process. For example, they are the source of feeling (*vedanā*) or the channels enabling the arising of feeling. Human beings aim for and desire feeling, and the sense bases make it possible to experience feeling.

In sum, the sense bases serve human beings in two ways:

1. They are the pathways for experiencing the world; they are the locus where aspects of the world are submitted to human beings. They are the instruments for communication, providing people

<sup>8</sup>‘Turning away’ (*vivaṭṭa*) pertains to solving life’s problems, and will be discussed in section IV: ‘Goal of Life’ and section VI: ‘A Worthy Life’.

with raw data for understanding. They are thus essential for helping people engage successfully with the world, to live well, and to survive.

2. They are the channels for ‘consuming’ the world; they are the doorways that people open in order to experience the sweetness and pleasures of the world and to seek amusement, by seeing sights, hearing sounds, smelling fragrances, tasting flavours, touching tangibles, and fantasizing over agreeable thoughts.

These two functions are connected. The first is the principal or basic function, which is necessary. The second function is secondary; one can say that it is ‘extra’ or ‘excessive’. {34}

In both cases, the sense bases operate in the same way. The difference lies in the factor of intention, whether people aim for knowledge or whether they aim for sensation (*vedanā*).

For unawakened beings, the importance of the sense bases tends to be centred on the second function, of consuming sense impressions. The first function then becomes simply an accessory or accomplice in fulfilling the second. In other words, cognition acts as a servant for consuming the world or for propelling the cycle of rebirth. Ordinarily, people use their senses to gather only that specific knowledge that helps them to obtain and experience delicious and delightful sense objects. They are generally not interested in securing knowledge beyond this function.

Moreover, the physical, verbal, and mental behaviour of unawakened beings is also performed out of service to the cycle of rebirth. That is, people tend to act, speak, and think in order to seek and obtain pleasurable sense impressions.

The more dimwitted people are, the greater is their entanglement with this second function, to the point that people’s entire lives revolve around the six sense bases.

Although the six sense bases are only one part of the five aggregates and do not comprise the entirety of human life (as the five aggregates



do),<sup>9</sup> they play a vital role for people and are highly influential in directing people's lives. One can say that life as ordinary people know it is defined by their engagement with the world by way of the six senses. The six senses give meaning to people's lives. If the six senses do not function properly, life becomes meaningless – the world ends.

The following passage from the Pali Canon provides a concise yet complete description of this process, and helps to integrate the explanations of the five aggregates (from the previous chapter) with the subject here of the six senses:

Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates (*papañca*) over. With what one has mentally proliferated over as the source, diverse and complex perceptions (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) beset a person with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye.

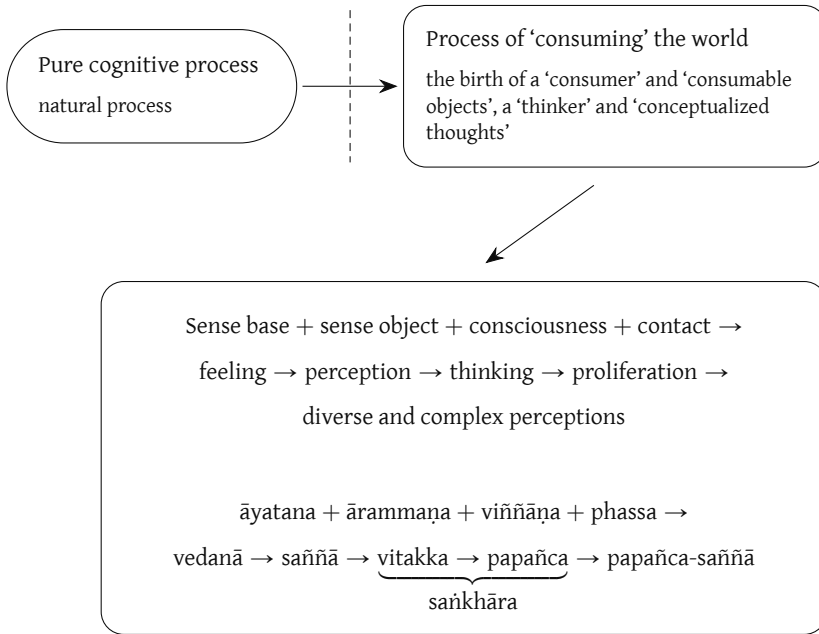
(The same is true for the remaining five pairs of sense bases/sense objects.) {35}

M. I. 111-12.

<sup>9</sup>On the relationship between the six sense spheres and the five aggregates see Appendix 3.

This process can be illustrated in this way:

Figure 2.3: The Cognitive Process



With the arising of diverse and complex perceptions (*papañca-saññā*), there is an increase in elaborate and embellished thinking, giving rise to such defilements as lust, aversion, possessiveness, and jealousy.<sup>10</sup>

#### A. NOTA BENE

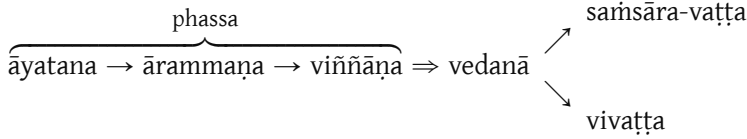
1. The term *papañca* refers to an engagement and entanglement with specific sense objects; it also refers to proliferative thinking driven by the force of craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), or thinking that compensates these three mental impurities. Here, a person conceives of things in terms of 'me' and 'mine', building a sense of self-identity or conceiving of things in line with personal opinions. These thoughts appear in myriad and elaborate ways, leading to various complex perceptions (*papañca-saññā*) that are associated with these mental proliferations.

<sup>10</sup>See: D. II. 277-8.

2. There are two stages of perception (*saññā*): the first stage is initial perception, which perceives those objects that arise naturally on their own. The second stage – *papañca-saññā* – is perception based on mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), which fabricate myriad and elaborate images or concepts in relation to sense objects, as mentioned above.
3. The entire cognitive process can be divided into two parts:
  - A. The first part, from the internal sense bases to feeling, comprises a pure cognitive process; all of the inherent factors arise according to natural causes and conditions. At this stage there is no ‘being’, ‘person’, or ‘self’ involved.
  - B. The latter part, from feeling (*vedanā*) onwards, comprises the process of consuming the world or the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vatṭa*). (In fact, feeling – *vedanā* – can also constitute the initial stage of the process of turning away (*vivatta*), but here the focus is on the round of rebirth.) In this latter process, there are not only natural causes and conditions at work, but there now arises a ‘person’ or ‘being’. A dualistic relationship is established between a ‘consumer’ and the ‘consumed’, between a ‘thinker’ and ‘conceptualized ideas’.
4. The process of consuming the world illustrated above is only one of several ways to depict this process. It has been selected here because it is concise and it corresponds to the subjects presently being explained, i.e. the five aggregates and the six sense bases. Another description of the round of rebirth is the detailed teaching of Dependent Origination, which is a comprehensive model.
5. Strictly speaking, the factors of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and perception (*saññā*) are classified as ‘conascent factors’ (*sahajāta-dhammā*): they arise simultaneously. The linear presentation above is provided for the sake of simplicity.

The cognitive process can be divided into two parts, and the latter part itself can be further divided into either the ‘round of rebirth’ (*saṁsāra-vaṭṭa*) or the ‘process of turning away’ (*vivaṭṭa*), as illustrated on Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Rounds of Rebirth or Turning Away



Another term used to refer to the six internal sense bases (*āyatana*) or sense doors (*dvāra*) is *indriya*, which translates as ‘faculty’ or ‘governing faculty’. This term refers to the predominant or principal agent in a specific action. The eye, for example, is the principal agent in cognizing forms, and the ear is the principal agent in cognizing sounds. The six faculties are: the eye-faculty (*cakkhundriya*), the ear-faculty (*sotindriya*), the nose-faculty (*ghānindriya*), the tongue-faculty (*jivhindriya*), the body-faculty (*kāyindriya*), and the mind-faculty (*manindriya*).

The term *indriya* is generally used when referring to the active engagement of the sense bases, to their operation in everyday life, and in the context of virtuous conduct, for example: ‘restraint of the eye-faculty’. The term *āyatana*, on the other hand, is generally used when referring to specific factors within a causal process (e.g.: ‘dependent on the eye and visual forms, eye-consciousness arises’), and also when referring to characteristics of the senses (e.g.: ‘the eye is impermanent’).

Another term frequently used for the sense bases when explaining specific factors within a causal process is *phassāyatana*, which translates as the ‘source of contact’ or the ‘origin of contact’.

Alternative terms referring to the external *āyatana* – the sense objects (*ārammaṇa*) – include *gocara* (‘resort’, ‘place for gaining sustenance’) and *visaya* (‘bond’, ‘attachment’, ‘sphere of engagement’).

Another very important term, used only in reference to the first five sense objects, which are highly influential in the process of consuming

the world or in the round of rebirth, is *kāma-guṇa*, translated as: ‘cords of sensual pleasure’, ‘strands of sensual pleasure’, ‘alluring and enticing features’, ‘delicious (or ‘positive’) aspects of sensuality’. This term refers specifically to those forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects that are desirable, attractive, and pleasurable. {37}

## 2.3 BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY

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In the discussion of the cognitive process it is apt to include here a short description of different kinds of knowledge.

According to Buddha-Dhamma, there are many different ways to classify knowledge:

### A. TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

This classification corresponds to the teaching on the five aggregates (*khandha*). Knowledge is a form of mentality (*nāma-dhamma*), and various aspects of knowledge are found in three of the ‘aggregates of mentality’ (*nāma-khandha*), namely the perception aggregate (*saññā-khandha*), the volitional formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*), and the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-khandha*). There are three distinct kinds of knowledge classified according to the aggregates: perception (*saññā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

**1. Perception (*saññā*):** This refers to all forms of knowledge within the domain of the perception aggregate, that is, perception along with knowledge stemming from perception. This includes the gathered and stored perceptions that become the raw material for thought and enable recognition, remembering, understanding, and contemplation.

According to the objects noted or perceived, perception is divided into six kinds: perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*), perception of sound (*sadda-saññā*), perception of smell (*gandha-saññā*), perception of taste (*rasa-saññā*), perception of tangible objects (*phoṭṭhabba-saññā*), and perception of mind objects (*dhamma-saññā*; perception of thoughts).<sup>11</sup>

According to how perceptions are formed, they can be roughly divided into two stages:

1. Basic or initial perception: direct perception of the features and characteristics of things as they are, for example one perceives green, white, black, red, hard, soft, sour, sweet, round, flat, long, and short.<sup>12</sup> This also includes perceptions linked to conventional designations (*paññatti*), for example: ‘cat’, ‘desk’, and ‘chair’.
2. Overlapping or supplementary perception: perception resulting from mental conceptualization,<sup>13</sup> or perception in accord with various levels of knowledge and understanding, for example one perceives something as beautiful, revolting, despicable, impermanent, or nonself. This supplementary or secondary perception may be further subdivided into two kinds:

A. Perception resulting from unwholesome mental proliferation (*papañca-saññā*); muddled or convoluted perception stemming from the elaborate embellishment by craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*). The commentaries refer to it as ‘defiled perception’ (*kilesa-saññā*): perception tinged with mental defilement.<sup>14</sup> {38} It is perverted by

<sup>11</sup> See the appendix in Chapter 1.

<sup>12</sup> This is ‘perception by way of the five sense doors’ (*pañcadvārika-saññā*): perception of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles (see: MA. IV. 20). The subsequent kinds of perception (below) are exclusively perception by way of the mind-door.

<sup>13</sup> An example of perception resulting from mental conceptualization: ‘When he is established in supreme perception (the most subtle and refined perception = *ākiñcaññāyatana*) it occurs to him: “Thinking and deliberating is worse for me, lack of thought and deliberation is better. If I were to think and conceptualize, these perceptions [that I have attained] would cease, and coarser perceptions would arise in me. Suppose I were not to think or conceptualize?” (D. I. 184-5).

<sup>14</sup> E.g.: MA. II. 74; SA. II. 382.

defilement and thus deviates from the path of knowledge. Rather than fostering understanding, it breeds greed, hatred, and delusion, and it distorts or obstructs understanding. Examples of this kind of perception include: perceiving those features one considers despicable; perceiving those features that answer to covetousness; perceiving those attributes that feed a sense of self-importance; perceiving attributes in others whom one considers inferior; and perceptions of ultimate ownership and control.

- B. Perception resulting from wholesome thinking; perception springing from correct understanding. This perception is referred to as wholesome perception (*kusala-saññā*), perception conducive to knowledge (*vijjābhāgiya-saññā*), or by other similar terms. It fosters the development of wisdom and the growth of wholesome qualities. Examples of this kind of perception include: perceiving those attributes that foster friendship; and perceiving those attributes that reveal the state of causality, the state of impermanence, the state of nonself, etc.

Arahants<sup>15</sup> have perception, but it is perception free from mental taints (*āsava*), free from defilement (*kilesa*).<sup>16</sup> Arahants are able to identify proliferative perception (*papañca-saññā*) as experienced by unawakened people, or as they themselves used to experience it before their full awakening, but they do so simply for the sake of knowledge or in order to benefit others, for example when helping others to solve their problems. With these perceptions by arahants, there is no sense of being personally disturbed or affected. General Dhamma practitioners can model their own behaviour on this conduct by the arahants.

**2. Consciousness** (*viññāṇa*): All knowledge that is part of the consciousness-aggregate (*viññāṇa-khandha*); the principal form of all knowledge and awareness, which is the constant function of the mind. Consciousness is aware of all mental activity, as explained in Chapter 1.

<sup>15</sup>Trans: *arahant*: a fully awakened person.

<sup>16</sup>See: M. III. 108.

**3. Wisdom (*paññā*):** This is the principal form of knowledge contained within the volitional formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*). This factor too was already explained at length in chapter 1.<sup>17</sup> Besides this chief form of knowledge, there are many other factors within the group of volitional formations that are related to the principle of knowledge and understanding. These factors are related to wisdom, either by supporting it, by acting as intermediary factors in wisdom development, or by acting as criteria for revealing the presence, absence, diminishment, or increase of wisdom. Most notably, these factors are:<sup>18</sup>

- **Faith (*saddhā*):** belief; conviction; confidence; inspiration. Although faith is not itself a form of knowledge, it can act as a gateway to knowledge. Faith implies accepting the knowledge of others, trusting in others' wisdom, and being willing to rely on other people's knowledge, or other sources of knowledge, as a personal guide. If the person endowed with faith is able to reflect and to apply an initial reserve of wisdom, faith can lead to an understanding of the truth. This is particularly valid when the other person's knowledge, or the other source of knowledge, is accurate and genuine, and when there is a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) to advise in how to properly apply wisdom. On the contrary, however, if a person is gullible – that is, he is unable to apply wise reflection – and the people (along with other sources of information) he associates with are misguided, and he is without virtuous friends or has evil-minded friends, the results may be the opposite. He may be led to greater misunderstanding and delusion.<sup>19</sup> {39}

<sup>17</sup>For a detailed classification of the various kinds of wisdom (*paññā*), see: Vism. 438-42. For more on this subject of wisdom, see chapter 16: 'Path Factors of Wisdom'.

<sup>18</sup>According to the Abhidhamma, wisdom (*paññā*), faith (*saddhā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and delusion (*moha*) are 'mental concomitants' (*cetasika*) and are classified as part of the volitional formation aggregate (see: Comp.: Cetasikaparicchedo). For the reasoning behind this classification, see Chapter 1.

<sup>19</sup>For more on the subject of faith (*saddhā*), see Chapter 14.



- **View** (*diṭṭhi*): knowledge according to one's own notions and view-points. *Diṭṭhi* is an important stage in the development of wisdom. It follows on from a dependence by faith on other people's knowledge, at which stage one arrives at one's own personal understanding or reasoned discernment. View (*diṭṭhi*) and faith (*saddhā*) are often closely related, or they are two aspects of a single matter: the entrusting oneself to others' knowledge and the willingness to follow them (with devotion) is faith; the adoption of those aspects of knowledge or of others' advice, and identifying them as one's own is 'view'. The important attribute of view is adhering to something as one's own.<sup>20</sup>

The knowledge classified as 'view' (*diṭṭhi*) ranges from the irrational, to the moderately rational, to the highly rational. When view is developed to the point of correct knowledge and understanding – that which corresponds with reality – it is called 'right view' (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and is designated as 'wisdom' (*paññā*).<sup>21</sup> When one develops wisdom to the point of clearly discerning the nature of things, one no longer needs to seize this understanding as one's own. This is because the truth exists in a neutral, objective way; it does not depend on anyone's assertions or affirmations. It lies beyond the stage of 'view'.

Because view tends to be linked with personal attachments, it often produces harmful effects. If one's attachment is strong and unyielding, despite one's views being very close to the truth, they will end up being an impediment, preventing one from realizing the truth.

- **Delusion** (*moha*; ignorance): *moha* is a synonym for *avijjā*; both of these terms refer to an ignorance of the truth and a lack of understanding in regard to reality. This ignorance is the opposite of wisdom (*paññā*), particularly the specific form of wisdom called 'true knowledge' (*vijjā*). One can say that delusion is the basic state

<sup>20</sup>Terms related to *diṭṭhi* include: *abhinivesa* ('adherence'), *parāmāsa* ('taking hold'), and *upādāna* ('grasping', which on a deeper level is conditioned by craving – *taṇhā*); see: Vbh. 149.

<sup>21</sup>E.g.: Vbh. 124, 250.

of existence for human beings, who are encouraged to dispel it by way of true understanding (*vijjā*), or by way of wisdom development.

Although one may study an extensive amount of technical knowledge ('arts and sciences'), and apply this knowledge in various enterprises, if it does not help one to understand things as they truly are – does not lead one to a true discernment of the conditioned world – it remains on the level of formal learning (*suta*): 'that which has been transmitted'; 'that which one has heard'. It is not yet true wisdom. It is unable to dispel ignorance or delusion, and it is unable to solve the basic predicament of life. It may solve some problems, but occasionally it breeds new ones. Take the example of someone who desires light and goes off in search of large quantities of kindling and fuel. No matter what this person does with these items, say by arranging them in various decorative patterns, as long as he has not ignited a flame, no light will shine forth.

Wisdom must be generated, cultivated, and gradually developed. There are many stages or levels of wisdom, and there are numerous important Pali terms used to refer to wisdom: either to specific stages of wisdom, specific attributes of wisdom, or specific origins of wisdom. Here is a list of some of these terms: *pariññā* ('thorough knowledge'), *ñāṇa* ('clear knowledge'), *vijjā* ('true knowledge'), *aññā* ('gnosis'), *abhiññā* ('supreme knowledge'), *buddhi* ('intelligence'), *bodhi* ('awakening'), and *sambodhi* ('full awakening'). {40}

The distinction between perception (*saññā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and wisdom (*paññā*) was explained in chapter 1. There is, however, one point to reiterate here:

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a *pariññeyya-dhamma*: it is something to be recognized and understood; our only task is to understand it as it is. We have no responsibility beyond this, because no matter what we do, consciousness functions according to its own nature.

Generally speaking, perception (*saññā*) is also a *pariññeyya-dhamma*: something to simply understand as it is.<sup>22</sup> Perception resulting from unwholesome mental proliferation (*papañca-saññā*), or ‘defiled perception’ (*kilesa-saññā*), however, is a *pahātabba-dhamma*: something to be abandoned or eliminated.<sup>23</sup> Perception supportive to understanding and to fostering wholesome qualities is a *bhāvetabba-dhamma*: something to be cultivated, increased, and perfected.<sup>24</sup>

Wisdom (*paññā*) is a *bhāvetabba-dhamma*: something to be trained and developed, until it can be used to completely dispel delusion and ignorance.<sup>25</sup>

## B. PATHWAYS OF COGNITION

According to Buddha-Dhamma, ‘contact’ (*phassa*) is the source of knowledge: all forms of understanding arise as a result of contact, or they arise at the point of contact (see Note 2.1).<sup>26</sup> That is, knowledge is dependent on cognition, whereby data passes through the six ‘spheres’ (*āyatana*) or doorways (*dvāra*) of cognition: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

If one considers the six sense spheres as the starting points of cognition, one can classify knowledge into two kinds:

1. Knowledge obtained by way of the five sense doors (*pañca-dvāra*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. This refers to basic forms of knowledge, i.e. knowing visual forms (including colours), sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*; these can be summarized

<sup>22</sup>See: Ps. I. 23.

<sup>23</sup>See: A. III. 447; cf.: A. IV. 352-3, 358; Ud. 37; Ps. I. 57-8, 78, etc. Perception that is a *bhāvetabba-dhamma* – something to be cultivated – is sometimes referred to as perception conducive to knowledge (*vijjābhāgiya-saññā*; see: A. III. 334), perception conducive to eliminating defilement (*nibbedhabhāgiya-saññā*; see: SA. II. 392), wholesome perception (*kusala-saññā*), or unimpaired perception (*aviparīta-saññā*; for the last two terms see: Nett. 126).

<sup>24</sup>See previous footnote.

<sup>25</sup>Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a *pariññeyya-dhamma*, wisdom (*paññā*) is a *bhāvetabba-dhamma*; see: M. I. 292.

<sup>26</sup>See, e.g.: S. III. 59-60, 63-4; S. IV. 68-9; A. III. 413; A. IV. 338-9, 385; Ps. I. 57.

## NOTE 2.1: CONTACT AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Technically speaking, contact (*phassa*) is not a condition for the knowledge referred to as ‘consciousness’ (*viññāṇa*), because consciousness is one of the factors involved for the arising of contact. For this reason, these sutta passages cited above do not state that *phassa* is the cause for the arising of the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-khandha*); rather, they state that materiality and mentality (*nāma-rūpa*) is the cause for its arising. The expression in English, ‘contact is the source of all knowledge’, is still valid, however, since the term ‘source’ can refer both to ‘cause’ and a ‘place from which something is obtained’.

as: ‘earth’ (*paṭhavī*): the state of solidity; ‘fire’ (*tejo*): heat or temperature; and ‘wind’ (*vāyo*): movement, vibration, and tension). {41}

2. Knowledge obtained by way of the mind door (*mano-dvāra*),<sup>27</sup> i.e. knowing mind objects (*dhammārammaṇa*; or *dhamma*, for short). This refers to all of those things known and reflected upon by the mind. For the sake of clarity, the Abhidhamma divides these into five kinds:<sup>28</sup>

- A. The feeling aggregate (*vedanā-khandha*). (This refers to feeling as something that is known by the mind. The following four factors should be understood in the same way.)
- B. The perception aggregate (*saññā-khandha*).
- C. The volitional formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*).
- D. *Anidassana-appaṭigha-rūpa*: invisible, intangible form included in the classification of mind objects. This is also referred to as refined form (*sukhuma-rūpa*), and it is comprised of sixteen factors: the element of cohesion (*āpo-dhātu*); femininity (*itthī-bhāva*); masculinity (*purisa-bhāva*); physical basis of the mind (*hadaya-rūpa*); life-faculty (*jīvitin-driya*); material quality of nutrition (*āhāra-rūpa*; nutritive essence – *ojā*); space (*ākāsa*); bodily communication (*kāya-viññatti*); verbal communication (*vacī-viññatti*); the three

<sup>27</sup> Knowledge obtained by ‘mind-contact’ (*mano-samphassa*).

<sup>28</sup> Vbh. 71-72; Dhs. 169; Vism. 483-4.

qualities of alterability (*vikāra-rūpa*): levity (*lahutā*), softness (*mudutā*; malleability), and wieldiness (*kammaññatā*); and the four material qualities of salient features (*lakkhaṇa-rūpa*): growth or enlargement (*upacaya*), continuity (*santati*); decay (*jaratā*); and disintegration (*aniccatā*).

E. The unconditioned element (*asaṅkhata-dhātu*), i.e. Nibbāna.

Later Abhidhamma texts present a more detailed analysis of mind objects (*dhammārammaṇa*), dividing them into six kinds:<sup>29</sup>

1. Five sense organs (*pasāda*), i.e. the clarity or sensitivity which acts as the cognitive medium in regard to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body.
2. Sixteen kinds of refined materiality (*sukhuma-rūpa*), mentioned in the previous list (D).
3. Heart (*citta*; ‘mind’).
4. Mental concomitants (*cetasika*); this corresponds to the feeling aggregate, perception aggregate, and volitional formations aggregate mentioned in the previous list.
5. Nibbāna.
6. *Paññatti*: established names, labels, and designations, for example: ‘earth’, ‘mountain’, ‘car’, ‘person’, ‘North’, ‘South’, ‘cave’, ‘pond’, ‘island’, ‘peninsula’, etc. These names and designations may refer to things that truly exist or to things that only exist in the imagination. Whether the things they refer to exist or not, however, these names and designations are timeless and indestructible. A hole going deep into a mountain is called a ‘cave’. Wherever and whenever such a hole appears, it is consistently called a ‘cave’. The term ‘cave’ refers to only this specific phenomenon. The actual

<sup>29</sup>Comp.: Pakiṇṇakaparicchedo, Ālambanaśaṅgaho; CompT.: Pakiṇṇakaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Ālambanaśaṅgahavaṇṇanā.

cave itself (and every cave), however, is subject to caving in or being filled in; it is subject to change and transformation.

Similarly, that which is called ‘perception’ arises and passes away, and is subject to disintegration, but the label ‘perception’ does not disappear. Wherever and whenever such a phenomenon arises, it is consistently called ‘perception’ (if there is a conventional agreement to use this term). The body is subject to decay, but the term ‘body’ remains constant. Wherever such phenomena arise, they are referred to by such designations. Those people who do not understand this subject of conventional designations may be puzzled or confused when they encounter such phrases as ‘feeling is impermanent’ or ‘perception is impermanent’; they are unable to distinguish whether impermanence here refers to the actual phenomenon or to its designation. {42}

Such highly technical explanations may be difficult to understand. On some occasions, it is especially difficult to distinguish between certain kinds of knowledge obtained by way of the mind-door and knowledge obtained by way of the five senses. Yet these distinctions are very important. For example, when one hears someone else speaking, the knowledge by way of the five senses (in this case, the ‘doorway’ of the ear) is simply an awareness of sound – one simply hears a sound. One does not yet understand the meaning of the words. Subsequent understanding is knowledge arising at the mind-door. Likewise, when one sees a rooftop, the knowledge by way of the five senses (the ‘doorway’ of the eye) is simply an awareness of a shape or colour. Knowing the condition of ‘covering’ and ‘sheltering’, and knowing that the object is a roof, is achieved at the mind-door.

Knowledge by way of the mind, or the knowledge of mental objects (*dhammārammaṇa*), encompasses a very wide range. It includes both the mental awareness of data obtained by way of the five senses and knowledge exclusive to the mind itself. To clarify this matter, here is another format for classifying the knowledge obtained by way of the mind-door (*mano-dvāra*):

1. Objects (i.e. ‘emotions’) specific to the mind, e.g.: love, anger, confusion, mental clarity, happiness, unhappiness, grief, depression, loneliness, delight, courage, fear, etc.
2. Conceptions pertaining to the past, of objects that were cognized by way of the five senses.
3. Conceptions associated with materiality (*rūpa-dhamma*) cognized by way of the five senses, yet not made aware of by the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) specific to each of these senses. These include ‘designations’ (*paññatti*) and conceptions of the relationship between various material phenomena, for example: the function of coherence, expansion, and the state of interrelationship and interdependency.
4. Thoughts, imaginations, justifications, and judgements created as a result of emotions (A.), conceptions pertaining to the past (B.), and conceptions of the relationship between various material phenomena, along with designations (C.).
5. Insight or exceptional knowledge that pervades a luminous mind. For example, when one discerns the true relationship between various factors, a clear understanding arises and one sees into the law of interrelated conditions (or ‘law of relativity’). This knowledge is referred to as *ñāṇa*. An example is *abhiññā* (‘supreme knowledge’).
6. The Unconditioned, i.e. Nibbāna.

Note that in the scriptures, the preferred classification of knowledge obtained by way of the cognitive doorways is fourfold:<sup>30</sup> {43}

1. *Diṭṭha*: ‘the seen’, i.e. all visible objects (*rūpārammaṇa*) and knowledge obtained by way of seeing and watching.

<sup>30</sup>This classification is found frequently; important passages include: S. IV. 73; Vbh. 429; Nd. I. 55. See also: D. III. 135 = A. II. 23-4; A. II. 25 = It. 121-22; M. I. 135-6; M. III. 261; S. III. 202-203; A. V. 318, 353-8; A. V. 321-22. Found as compound words at: M. II. 231-32; Sn. 209-210; Nd. I. 9, 50-51, 53-4, 133-4, 189-90, 203-204, 227, 245, 247, 333-4; Nd. II. 16. As a threefold classification of *diṭṭhi*, *suta* and *muta*, e.g.: S. I. 202-203; Sn. 155, 175-6; Nd. I. 95-6, 106, 110-11, 315; Nd. II. 28.

2. *Suta*: ‘the heard’, i.e. sounds and knowledge obtained by way of hearing and listening.
3. *Muta*: ‘the experienced’, i.e. odours, tastes, and tangibles, or those things cognized by way of the nose, tongue, and body.
4. *Viññāta*: the ‘realized’, i.e. mind objects (*dhammārammaṇa*): all things known by way of the mind.

The first three factors constitute knowledge by way of the five senses. This threefold division is made because seeing and hearing are critical sources of knowledge and involve an extensive range of activity; these two factors are thus distinguished from the rest. The three remaining factors, pertaining to the nose, tongue, and body, share a common attribute: here, cognition is accomplished when the sense objects – odours, tastes, and tangibles – literally make contact with the respective sense base. This differs from the eye and the ear, which cognize objects that do not ‘touch’ the sense base (visual objects rely on light and sounds rely on waves as the means of conveying information.)<sup>31</sup>

Technically speaking, the knowledge obtained by way of the five senses is very limited. In this context, however, this knowledge is defined in a broad, general sense: *diṭṭha* refers both to that which is seen and to all knowledge dependent on the eye and on seeing, including the mind’s interpretation of this visual data. Yet this interpretation of data still remains on a direct and basic level, without any additional embellishment. *Suta* refers to that which is heard and to all knowledge derived from hearing. This includes speech and language, which the mind has interpreted on a basic level, but which has not yet undergone additional conceptualization. *Muta*, too, should be understood in this way. Technically speaking, this knowledge pertaining to the five senses – *diṭṭha*, *suta*, and *muta* – extends as far as ‘perception by way of the five senses’

<sup>31</sup>The eye (*cakkhu*) and the ear (*sota*) cognize objects that have ‘not reached (the sense bases)’: *appattavisayaggāhika/appattagāhika*. The nose (*ghāṇa*), tongue (*jivhā*), and body (*kāya*) cognize objects that ‘reach (the sense bases)’: *sampattavisayaggāhika/sampattagāhika*. See: Comp.: *Rūpaparicchedo*, *Rūpavibhāgo*; CompT.: *Rūpaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Rūpavibhāgavaṇṇanā*; *VismT.*: *Khandhaniddesaṇṇanā*, *Rūpakkhanda-kathāvaṇṇanā*.



(*pañcadvārika-saññā*). All knowledge beyond that is encompassed by the term *viññāta*: knowledge dependent on the mind door.

### C. WISDOM DEVELOPMENT

The knowledge corresponding to and required for wisdom development is referred to as knowledge ‘to be developed’ (*bhāvetabba-dhamma*). Because consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is a form of knowledge simply ‘to be understood’ (*pariññeyya-dhamma*; ‘to be recognized’), it is not included as a factor in this context.

There are three kinds of knowledge pertaining to wisdom development. According to stages of development, or to the potency of wisdom and understanding, they are ordered in this sequence:

1. **Perception** (*saññā*): knowledge derived from perceiving, remembering, and identifying the attributes of things. This knowledge is recorded in the mind. It acts as a model for comparison and as raw material for thinking and for subsequent understanding. This perception can be divided into two kinds, as described earlier (see: A. Nature of Knowing).

The perception arising in the normal cognitive process – both basic perception and the perception accompanying the growth of understanding in wisdom development – is simply a matter of either knowing or not knowing. This is true even if one is referring to various levels of perception, say from indistinct to lucid perception, from partial to complete perception, or from false to correct perception. This matter thus pertains directly to knowledge and the development of knowledge. This is in direct contrast to the excessive or immoderate perception known as ‘proliferative perception’ (*papañca-saññā*) or ‘defiled perception’ (*kilesa-saññā*), which invariably obstructs and distorts knowledge. {44}

2. **View** (*diṭṭhi*): reasoned understanding; truth on the level of conceptualization; knowledge mixed with cherished thoughts and opinions. Here, a person draws conclusions of some kind, and attaches to specific viewpoints as his or her own. This knowledge may

originate from an external source, but it has passed through a screening process and is adopted as one's own, regardless of how logical or reasonable this knowledge may be. It can even be illogical. Examples of view include: eternalism (*sassata-dit̥ṭhi*; the view of an eternal soul); annihilationism (*uccheda-dit̥ṭhi*); and the view of non-causality (*ahetuka-dit̥ṭhi*).

3. **Direct knowledge** (*ñāṇa*): profound knowledge; gnosis. The term *ñāṇa* is a synonym of *paññā* ('wisdom'), but its definition tends to be more restricted. That is, it refers to specific functions and fruits of wisdom, for example: *kammasakata-ñāṇa* (the insight into how beings are the owners of their intentional actions); *atītaṃsa-ñāṇa* (profound knowledge of the past); *saccānulomika-ñāṇa* (knowledge in harmony with the truth); *ṭhānāṭṭhāna-ñāṇa* (knowledge of the possible and the impossible); and *nānādhimuttika-ñāṇa* (knowledge of the disposition, traits, and beliefs of various beings). *Ñāṇa* refers to a pure and radiant knowledge that arises spontaneously in the mind and discerns a particular quality as it really is.

Although there are many levels of *ñāṇa*, including mistaken knowledge or incomplete knowledge, they can all be referred to as 'pure' or 'genuine' forms of knowledge, because they have not yet been adulterated by self-identification or self-attachment. Occasionally *ñāṇa* arises as a consequence of reasoned thought, but this knowledge exists independent of such thought, because it connects with some aspect of reality that truly exists. This is one distinction between *ñāṇa* and *dit̥ṭhi*. The knowledge referred to as *dit̥ṭhi* relies on personal beliefs and logical reasoning, whereas *ñāṇa* makes contact with external aspects of reality that truly exist.<sup>32</sup>

On a basic level, perception (*saññā*) is the raw material for all thinking and subsequent knowledge. For this reason, both view (*dit̥ṭhi*) and direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) rely on perception.

<sup>32</sup>CompT.: Cetasikaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Akusalacetasikavaṇṇanā outlines this distinction between *dit̥ṭhi* and *ñāṇa*: 'An attribute of *dit̥ṭhi* is the belief: "Only this is true; all else is invalid." *Ñāṇa* knows things objectively; *dit̥ṭhi* forsakes the objective truth and apprehends things subjectively.'

It is fairly obvious how view arises from perception. The very perception or discernment of something urges one to establish an opinion about it. Although perceiving the features of things is useful in everyday life, perception is selective and often acts to conceal or eclipse other features of these objects. If people fail to examine these dynamics, they may be deceived by perception or allow it to obstruct wisdom. This is the case for many people. The causes for wrong view to arise include false perceptions and also an incorrect application of perception.

The following passages from the Pali Canon describe how view arises as a consequence of perception:

An arahant does not possess even minor views arising from and produced by perception, pertaining to the seen, the heard, and the experienced. To wit: view has perception as its leader and principal agent, and it discriminates things according to perception. An arahant, free from mental taints, possesses no view produced by perception, created by perception, fashioned by perception, pertaining to the seen, etc.<sup>33</sup> {45}

*Nd. I. 110-11 (explaining: Sn. 156-8)*

There are not many diverse truths in the world, except as a consequence of perception (resulting in diverse views).

*Sn. 173.*

The arising of direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is also dependent on perception:

Perception arises first, Poṭṭhapāda, then knowledge, and from the arising of perception comes the arising of knowledge.

*D. I. 185.*

The passage: ‘From this you have not perceived the least sense,’ may be explained thus: ‘You have not perceived those things you have engaged with or accomplished, nor have you perceived the

<sup>33</sup>cf. UdA. 373, which states: ‘*Saññā* is the *nimitta* (‘sign’; ‘point of origin’) of proliferative view (*ditṭhi-papañca*).

characteristics, the causes, or the effects. “From this” means “from internal peace”, “from spiritual practice”, or “from Dhamma teachings”. From where else will you obtain knowledge?”

*Nd. I. 193 (explaining: Sn. 165-6).*

A person may watch falling leaves and consequently develop insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and discern the impermanence of all things. This knowledge relies on numerous perceptions as its source, for example: perceptions of life and the sustenance of all things; perceptions of aging and decay; perceptions of deterioration, death, and the ending of things; and perceptions of ‘above’ and ‘below’. The ability to see the relationship between these various perceptions gives rise to knowledge. Or take an example of worldly knowledge (*lokiya-ñāṇa*): when Isaac Newton observed the apple falling from the tree, he developed the insight into gravity. This insight relied on myriad perceptions, for example: perceptions of ‘falling’; perceptions of convergence; perceptions of space and force; and perceptions of attraction, mobility, release, suspension, linearity, trajectory, etc. The ability to clearly see the relationship between these various perceptions gave rise to this insight into gravity.

Direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is able to give rise to view (*diṭṭhi*), and superior forms of view tend to arise as a consequence of previously accessed knowledge. A clear example of this from the suttas is the story of the Brahma god named Baka, who was able to recall the birth of beings for an expanse of time that appeared infinite. He observed the countless births and deaths of other beings, while he himself remained the same. He thus developed the view that the abode of Brahma is permanent and eternal, and that Brahma is the creator of all things.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Newton, after his discovery of gravity, used this insight to further observe natural phenomena, but his vision and understanding was not comprehensive. He was still stuck at or deceived by certain things. Knowledge and insight is thus susceptible to the attachment referred to as ‘view’ (*diṭṭhi*).

Conversely, view (*diṭṭhi*) supports the arising of knowledge (*ñāṇa*). Many views result from contemplation and are highly logical and reasonable. They become established as beliefs in the minds of intelligent

<sup>34</sup>See: M. I. 326-9.

individuals and philosophers. For this reason, if one does not attach to these views in an unyielding way, and one is able to listen to others and to apply wise reflection, there is a good chance that a deeper knowledge will arise, paving the way to spiritual progress and removing any obstacles in the path. {46}

When view (*diṭṭhi*) or direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) arises, new perceptions (*saññā*) are formed accordingly. *Diṭṭhi* and *ñāṇa* thus give rise to perception (*saññā*), which acts as the raw material for further contemplation and understanding. The difference here is that view tends to create false perceptions, whereas direct knowledge helps to create accurate, correct perceptions and to dispel false perceptions.<sup>35</sup>

The three kinds of knowledge – *saññā*, *diṭṭhi*, and *ñāṇa* – embodied in wisdom development are related to the three methods the Buddha described for generating wisdom:<sup>36</sup>

1. *Cintāmayā-paññā*: wisdom arising from one's own reflection and reasoning.
2. *Sutamaya-paññā*: wisdom arising from learning or the transmission of knowledge from others.
3. *Bhāvanāmayā-paññā*: wisdom arising from engaging in spiritual practice and cultivation. (See Note 2.2)

Besides these three chief methods, there exist numerous other means for developing wisdom. Especially in relation to the third method, these important activities include: listening (*savana*); inquiry and review (*paripucchā*); conversation, discussion, and debate (*sākaṇḍhā*); observing and watching (*passana*); scrutiny (*nijjhāna*); wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*; *yoniso-upaparikkhā*); evaluation (*tulanā*); examination, investigation, and analysis (*vīmaṃsā*); experimentation and selection (*vijaya*);

<sup>35</sup>Compare with this passage from the Pali Canon: 'Whoever speculates by relying on the view of existence (*bhava-diṭṭhi*) and the view of non-existence (*vibhava-diṭṭhi*) is devoid of knowledge of cessation, [and] this is the cause for human beings to harbour perverted views (*saññā-viparīta*)'; see: Ps. I. 159.

<sup>36</sup>D. III. 219-20; Vbh. 324-5.

## NOTE 2.2: FACTORS OF GENERATING WISDOM

In the suttas these three factors are named but not explained. When explaining the first two factors, the Abhidhamma focuses on *kamassakatā-ñāṇa* (the knowledge of the personal ownership of intentional action) and *saccānulomika-ñāṇa* (knowledge in harmony with the truth), i.e. it focuses on insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), which arises as a result of engaging in work and technical discipline. The Abhidhamma equates the third factor with *samāpannassa-paññā* (the wisdom of one who possesses or accomplishes), which the commentaries define as the ‘wisdom of one who is endowed with concentrative attainment (*samāpatti*)’, i.e. the wisdom arising from concentration (*samādhi*). See: VbhA. 413; VismT.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Paññāpabhedakathāvaṇṇanā. But if one defines this term in a general sense, it can mean the ‘wisdom of one who applies himself’, the ‘wisdom of one who practises’, or the ‘wisdom of one who earnestly engages in an activity’. See Appendix 1.

repetition (*āsevana*); cultivation (*bhāvanā*); and continuous and devoted practice (*bahulī-karaṇa*).<sup>37</sup>

Reflection (*cintā*), learning (*suta*), and training (*bhāvanā*) help to generate, improve, and fine-tune perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

The learning imparted by others (*suta*), thoughts and reflections (*cintā*), and wisdom arising from practical application (*bhāvanā*) are all forms of knowledge inherent in an individual. The distinct and concrete knowledge manifesting in a person’s mind, however, are the three forms of knowledge described earlier: perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*). One can say that perception, view, and direct knowledge are the end results of learning, thinking, and practical training.

Perception (*saññā*), view (*diṭṭhi*), and direct knowledge (*ñāṇa*) have a powerful impact on people’s lives. Perception is highly influential in the cognitive process, in discerning and comprehending the world, and in generating other forms of knowledge. View, from religious beliefs and various ideologies, to personal values, acts as the guideline for people’s

<sup>37</sup>These supplementary factors are found dispersed throughout the scriptures. Many of them are mentioned as supports for realizing truth at M. II. 174.

entire range of behaviour and way of life. Direct knowledge is the most pristine and profound form of knowledge – the fruit of the highest wisdom accessible to human beings. It is able to cleanse the innate character of people, and to create or change people’s worldview (*loka-dassana*) and outlook on life (*jīva-dassana*). Its effects on people’s behaviour and conduct is more lasting and definite than the effects produced by view (*diṭṭhi*).

These forms of knowledge discussed above are related to the classification of knowledge explained in the next section. {47}

#### D. HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This heading refers to the knowledge pertaining to human social affairs, including: communication, imparting of information, research, symbolism, means of showing respect, social affiliations, and the transmission of a society’s heritage, which is the possession of all people and marks the advancement of a particular civilization. This form of knowledge can be divided into three kinds:<sup>38</sup>

1. *Suta* (or *suti*): knowledge that has been heard, learned, or transmitted. It can be subdivided into two kinds:
  - A. Knowledge heard, taught, or transmitted among human beings (in Pali this knowledge is referred to as *suta*). Buddhism considers this knowledge and learning to be of vital importance. In the context of wisdom development, it is referred to as the ‘instruction by others’ (*paratoghosa*; literally, the ‘utterance by others’). Wholesome instruction is given great emphasis in the teachings, as a basis and condition for right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).<sup>39</sup> This knowledge (*suta*) includes formal schooling, news by way of the media, book- or textual

<sup>38</sup>This classification accords with: Sn. 164-5 and Sn. 207-208; explicated at Nd. I. 187-8 and Nd. II. 26. These references are in verse form, and these three factors are listed in the order of *diṭṭhi*, *suti* and *ñāṇa*. Here, they have been reorganized to accord with the preceding section (C).

<sup>39</sup>See chapter 13, on the preliminary stage of spiritual training (factor #1: virtuous friendship).

knowledge, and recorded history. Even the suttas in the Tipiṭaka are a form of such knowledge. (Most of the suttas begin with the phrase, ‘Thus have I heard’ – *evaṃ me sutam*.)

B. The knowledge that some religions proclaim has been revealed and disclosed by a supreme divinity. The brahmins, for example, believe that the Vedas were directly transmitted by Brahma. In Pali, this form of knowledge is usually referred to as *suti*, corresponding to the Sanskrit *śruti*. In Buddhism, however, this knowledge is not considered to hold any unique distinction and it is thus included in the term *suta*. In light of wisdom, it is not attributed any special value; its difference lies purely in its content.

2. *Diṭṭhi*: views; opinions; theories; doctrines; beliefs. This refers to particular conclusions one draws about things. This understanding is associated with personal attachments and affinities, and it has the potential to create a sense of separation from others. Although this factor has been discussed above, here the focus is on its role in a social context. When personal beliefs extend outwards, and people declare or proclaim their views, others may adopt these beliefs, giving rise to factionalism and the creation of institutions or schools of thought.

There are many Pali synonyms for the term *diṭṭhi* (Sanskrit: *dṛiṣṭi*). The most important ones are: *khanti* (‘compatible idea’, ‘acceptable principle’); *ruci* (‘cherished idea’, ‘pleasing principle’); and *laddhi* (‘acquired idea’, ‘dogma’, ‘tenet of practice’, ‘way of practice considered beneficial’, ‘religious belief’).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup>E.g.: Nd. I. 64-5, 105, 162, 169-70, 310-11. The most frequent grouping of these terms is that of *diṭṭhi*, *khanti* and *ruci*, e.g.: Vin. I. 69-70; it occurs in many passages of the Mahānidāsa. These three terms are sometimes accompanied by the terms *ajjhāsa* (‘preference’) and *adhippāya* (‘purpose’, ‘opinion’), e.g.: Nd. I. 64-5; Nd. II. 43, 50. The largest collection of these synonyms includes: *diṭṭhi*, *khanti*, *ruci*, *ādāya* (‘accepted belief’), *dhamma-vinaya* (‘doctrine and discipline’), *pāvāna* (‘fundamental teaching’), *brahmacariya* (‘supreme teaching’), and *satthu-sāsana* (‘teaching of the Master’), e.g.: Nd. I. 40, 156; Nd. II. 9, 20; Vbh. 245-6 (in these cases the reference is to Buddhism).



3. *Ñāṇa*: gnosis; direct knowledge; insight; pure knowledge; knowledge in accord with truth; wisdom resulting in a specific truth; comprehensive knowledge of a specific matter. *Ñāṇa* is the highest form of human knowledge and is of vital importance. Both in its mundane and transcendent forms, *ñāṇa* is the driving force for the development of ‘noble qualities’ (*ariya-dhamma*) in human beings. The supreme *ñāṇa* is referred to as *bodhi* or *bodhiñāṇa*: ‘enlightenment’, ‘awakening’. The Buddha realized ‘perfect, complete awakening’ (*sammāsambodhi-ñāṇa*), giving rise to Buddhism as the source of great vision for the world. {48}

There exist other, miscellaneous classifications of knowledge in the scriptures, in which various kinds of knowledge mentioned above are combined into groups, for example this group of five factors:

1. *Itiḥa (+ anussava) itikirā paramparā*: knowledge derived from spoken information, news reports, listening, education, and transmission.
2. *Piṭaka-sampadā*: standard scriptural knowledge.
3. *Takka naya ākāraparivitaka*: knowledge derived through reasoning, including applied logic (*takka*), deductive thinking (*anumāna*), and reasoned reflection.
4. *Diṭṭhi-nijjhānakkhanti*: knowledge that is considered compatible with one’s views or which one endorses as part of one’s personal beliefs.
5. *Sayamabhiññā (or sakkhi-dhamma)*: knowledge stemming from personal realization (*atta-paccakkha*). Knowledge derived from discerning the truth: from insight into the truth. This knowledge has been reflected upon with wise judgement; it has been clarified and made manifest.

## 2.4 ACCURATE AND DEFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Although Buddhist epistemology is an extensive subject, here we will look at only two more aspects, pertaining to correct and incorrect knowledge.

### A. TWO LEVELS OF TRUTH

Students of Buddhism may experience confusion about the subject of truth. On the one hand, they hear such teachings as: do not associate with fools, associate with the wise; a foolish person has these attributes, a sage has these attributes; be content with what one has, do not covet the possessions of others; one is one's own refuge; and one should offer mutual support. Other teachings, on the other hand, state: discern according to truth that the body is simply the body; it is not a 'being', a 'person', a 'self', 'me', 'you', 'him' or 'her'; it does not belong to us; it is not lasting and substantial; all things are nonself (*anattā*). These people then see these teachings as contradictory, or else they get confused and due to a limited understanding practise in an unbalanced, incorrect way. At times when they should speak or act according to a basic, conventional understanding of the world, they attach to teachings on ultimate truth, causing all sorts of confusion and even harm for themselves and others.

As an attempt to prevent such confusion and erroneous behaviour, the Abhidhamma divides the truth (*sacca*) into two levels:<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup>This concept of the two levels of truth began to take shape as a clear notion in the Kathāvatthu, although this text does not yet provide a clear distinction of terms. The term *sammati-sacca* is mentioned at Kvu. 311, whereas the terms *sacchikattha-paramattha* ('real and absolute') and *paramattha* are mentioned at Kvu. 1-69. A clear description and distinction of these terms occurs at PañcA. 12, 84. They are mentioned in many other sources, e.g.: MA. I. 217 = SA. II. 13; DhA. III. 403; [Saṅgaṇī Mūlaṭṭikā: 165, 280]; [Saṅgaṇī Anuṭṭikā: 328]; VismṬ.: Brahmavihāraniddesavaṇṇanā, Pakiṇṇakakathāvaṇṇanā; UdA. 396; ItA. I. 162; CompṬ.: Paccayaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Paññattibhedavaṇṇanā. [Trans.: In the Dictionary of Buddhism, in the alphabetical list of Pali terms at the end of the book, the venerable author acknowledges both spellings of *sammati* and *sammuti* as valid. In the main text of the dictionary, however, he only uses *sammati*, e.g.: *sammati-sacca*, *sammati-desanā*, etc. In his Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology (Thai edition only), he only provides the spelling of *sammati*. Moreover, in Sir Monier Monier-Williams's A Sanskrit English Dictionary, only *sammati* is provided. Although the Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary greatly favors *sammuti* (it includes *sammata* as a past participle), and has no mention of *sammati*, I decided to go exclusively with *sammati* in this book.]

1. Conventional truth (*sammati-sacca*): another name for this is *vohāra-sacca*: ‘rhetorical truth’, ‘vernacular truth’. This refers to consensual truth: to those things that have been mutually agreed upon and to common designations. These designations are used as tools for communication, for the sake of convenience and benefit in everyday life. Examples include the designations: ‘person’, ‘animal’, ‘good person’, ‘bad person’, ‘table’, ‘chair’, and ‘book’, and the common words ‘water’ and ‘salt’. {49}
2. Absolute truth (*paramattha-sacca*): to the extent that this truth can be articulated in words, the descriptions are intended for fully comprehending things as they really are. The aim here is to give rise to the supreme benefit of penetrating the ultimate truth (*sacca-dhamma*), an understanding which dispels all attachments, delusions, and defilements, fosters a proper relationship to things, brings about a freedom from suffering, and leads to true purity, peace, and happiness.

Examples of absolute truths include: mentality (*nāma-dhamma*), corporeality (*rūpa-dhamma*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the mind (*citta*), mental concomitants (*cetasika*), material form (*rūpa*), Nibbāna, contact (*phassa*), intention (*cetanā*), one-pointed attention (*ekaggatā*), the life faculty (*jīvitindriya*), etc. A comparison to modern science is the analysis of water or salt. For scientists, the terms ‘water’ and ‘salt’ may be deemed inadequate, ambiguous, or misleading. For more accuracy, they thus define water as Hydrogen Oxide (H<sub>2</sub>O) and common salt as Sodium Chloride (NaCl). (Note that this comparison does not correspond completely to the description here of absolute truth, but it shows how even in other branches of knowledge certain aspects of truth are distinguished from people’s ordinary understanding and definitions.)

In any case, the Abhidhamma, which assigns specific technical terms to these concepts of conventional and ultimate truth, cites passages from the suttas to substantiate its claim. This shows that these concepts existed from the beginning. Most likely, at the time of the Buddha, there was a basic understanding of these concepts, and it was thus unnecessary to

establish unique descriptive terms for them. The key sutta passage cited in this context is a teaching by Bhikkhunī Vajirā:

Māra, how can you believe in a being and hold [such] a view? This is purely a mass of formations; here, no being can be found. Just as with the combination of various parts, the term ‘wagon’ ensues, so too, with the five aggregates the conventional term ‘being’ ensues.

*S. I. 135; cited at Kvu. 86-7.*

In relation to everyday spiritual practice, there are many passages by the Buddha emphasizing an understanding of conventional and absolute truths. The Buddha encouraged people to recognize language merely as a means of communication, without attaching to conventions or becoming enslaved by language. Here are two examples:

An arahant with taints destroyed may say, ‘I speak this way, and they speak to me this way.’ Skilful, knowing the world’s parlance, he uses such terms as mere expressions.

*S. I. 14.*

These are worldly terms, expressions, manners of speech and designations. The Tathāgata uses these, but does not attach to them.

*D. I. 202.*

Note that the Abhidhamma describes the suttas – the Suttanta Piṭaka – as a vernacular teaching (*vohāra-desanā*), because the majority of its subject matter is comprised of conventional language. In contrast, the Abhidhamma describes itself as an absolute teaching (*paramattha-desanā*), because the majority of its content is a direct presentation of absolute truths.<sup>42</sup> {50}

## B. THREE ABERRATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Pali term *vipallāsa* refers to aberrant or errant knowledge – knowledge that deviates from the truth. It is fundamentally flawed, leading

<sup>42</sup>VinA. I. 21; DA. I. 19; DhsA. 21, 56; MA. I. 217 = SA. 13.

to misunderstanding, delusion, self-deception, and an incorrect attitude and conduct vis-à-vis one's life and all things. It is an impediment, shielding one from discerning reality (*sacca-bhāva*). There are three kinds of aberrant knowledge:

1. *Saññā-vipallāsa*: aberrant perception; wrong or defective perception.
2. *Citta-vipallāsa*: aberrant 'mind'; wrong or defective thought.
3. *Diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*: aberrant view; wrong or defective view.

Examples of aberrant perception include: someone frightened by a piece of rope, perceiving it as a snake; animals encountering a scarecrow and seeing it as a real person guarding a field; someone completely disorientated, seeing north as south, south as north; and someone fleeing from the light of a flashing sign, perceiving it as a fire.

Examples of aberrant mind include: an insane person thinking grass is food; a deranged person paranoid of others, thinking they plan to do him harm; someone seeing a moving shadow in the dark and imagining it to be a ghost; and the story of Chicken Little, who, after an acorn hit her on the head, thought that the sky is falling.<sup>43</sup>

Aberrant view generally arises as a consequence of aberrant perception and aberrant mind. When one perceives something incorrectly, one views it incorrectly. Similarly, when one thinks in deviant and errant ways, one's views and beliefs are accordingly mistaken. When one wrongly perceives a rope as a snake, one may come to the conclusion that this particular location is teeming with snakes. When one perceives the land as extending out evenly, in a straight line, one believes that the earth is flat. When one thinks that an external, conscious force is required to manage and control things, one develops the belief that gods are responsible for thunder, lightning, earthquakes, rain, and floods.

<sup>43</sup>Trans: the author uses the Thai version of this story, of a rabbit who panics after hearing a coconut fall on the ground, thinking the world is coming to an end.

These examples are relatively simple, and one can say that they pertain to unusual situations. In the Pali Canon and in other Dhamma teachings, however, these aberrations are examined on a refined and fundamental level. They focus not merely on the false understanding by select individuals or groups, but more importantly on deviant forms of understanding that almost everyone is subject to, often unconsciously. People tend to be dominated by these fundamental or subtle deviations. Here, the three aberrations mentioned above are combined as a single group:

Monks, there are these four aberrations of perception, aberrations of mind, and aberrations of view. What four?:

1. The aberration of perception, mind, and view that takes the impermanent to be permanent.
2. The aberration of perception, mind, and view that takes what is suffering to be pleasurable.
3. The aberration of perception, mind, and view that takes what is nonself to be self.
4. The aberration of perception, mind, and view that takes what is unattractive to be attractive.<sup>44</sup> {51}

*A. II. 52; Ps. II. 80.*

These aberrations of perception, mind, and view impede spiritual development, and their elimination is thus an important target of wisdom practice. Those methods of developing knowledge described earlier all help to dispel these aberrations. Most effective for this task is an investigation into causes and conditions and a detailed and mindful analysis of the building blocks of conditioned reality.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>In the Abhidhamma *vipallāsa* is referred to as *vipariyesa* (Vbh. 376; this alternative term has its source in the suttas, at S. I. 188-9; cf.: SA. I. 271; NdA. I. 163; DhsA. 253). At VinT.: Dutiyapārājikaṃ, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā, it states that these three aberrations are placed in order of power, from weaker to stronger.

<sup>45</sup>See Chapter 15 on the preliminary stage of spiritual practice (factor #2: wise reflection).

## 2.5 THE BUDDHA'S WORDS ON THE SENSE SPHERES

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*(The expression 'Buddha's words' here refers to the 'sayings of the wise, with the Buddha at the helm' (buddhādivacana) , that is, the teachings in the Tipiṭaka by the Buddha, the chief disciples, and subsequent learned and wise individuals. This brief heading is used for the sake of simplicity. The references indicate which passages are by the Buddha's disciples.)*

Monks, I will teach you the all.<sup>46</sup> Listen carefully. And what is the all? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, the mind and mental phenomena. This is called the all.

S. IV. 15.

'Venerable sir, it is said, "the world, the world." In what way, might there be the world or the description of the world?'

'Where there is the eye, Samiddhi, where there are forms, eye-consciousness, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness, there the world exists or the description of the world. Where there is the ear ... the mind, where there are mental phenomena, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind-consciousness, there the world exists or the description of the world.'

S. IV. 39-40.

'Monks, I say that the end of the world cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling. Yet I also say that without reaching the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering.'

[Ven. Ānanda spoke]: 'I understand the detailed meaning of this synopsis, which the Buddha recited in brief without a detailed exposition, as follows: by whatever means people perceive the world as the world, and consider the world to be the world – this is called the 'world' in the Noble One's Discipline.

'And by which means do people people perceive the world as the world, consider the world to be the world? It is by way of the eye ...

ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... and mind that people perceive the world as the world, consider the world as the world.'

*S. IV. 95.*

Monks, I will teach you the origin and the passing away of the world. Listen closely....

And what is the origin of the world? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, becoming; with becoming as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. This is the origin of the world.

In dependence on the ear and sounds ... the nose and odours ... the tongue and tastes ... the body and tactile objects ... the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises.... This is the origin of the world. {52}

And what is the passing away of the world? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This is the passing away of the world.

In dependence on the ear and sounds ... the nose and odours ... the tongue and tastes ... the body and tactile objects ... the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises.... This is the passing away of the world.

*S. IV. 87.*



‘Venerable sir, it is said, “Māra, Māra,”.... It is said, “a being, a being,”.... It is said, “suffering, suffering”.... In what way might there be Māra or the description of Māra ... a being or the description of a being ... suffering or a description of suffering?’

‘Where there is the eye, Samiddhi, where there are forms, eye-consciousness, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness ... the mind, where there are mental phenomena, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind-consciousness, there Māra exists or the description of Māra ... a being exists or the description of a being ... suffering exists or the description of suffering.’

S. IV. 38-9.

When the eye exists, the arahants designate pleasure and pain. When the eye does not exist the arahants do not designate pleasure and pain. When the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind exists, the arahants designate pleasure and pain. When the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind does not exist, the arahants do not designate pleasure and pain.

S. IV. 123-4.

Monks, the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is impermanent ... subject to stress (*dukkha*) ... nonself. The cause and condition for the arising of the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is also impermanent. As the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind has originated from what is impermanent ... *dukkha* ... nonself ... how could it be permanent ... inherently pleasurable (*sukha*) ... self?

Forms ... sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tangibles ... mind objects are impermanent ... *dukkha* ... nonself. The cause and condition for the arising of forms ... sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tangibles ... mind objects are also impermanent. As forms ... sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tangibles ... mind objects have originated from what is impermanent ... *dukkha* ... nonself ... how could they be permanent ... inherently pleasurable ... self?

S. IV. 129-32.

Suppose, monks, that the rice seedlings have ripened and the watchman is negligent. If a bull fond of rice enters the paddy field, he might indulge himself as much as he likes. So too, the uninstructed worldling who does not exercise restraint over the six bases for contact indulges himself as much as he likes in the five cords of sensual pleasure.

*S. IV. 195-6.*

Monks, these six bases for contact – if untrained, unguarded, unprotected, unrestrained – are conveyers of suffering.... These six bases for contact – if well-trained, well-guarded, well-protected, well-restrained – are conveyers of happiness. {53}

*S. IV. 70.*

‘How is it, friend Sāriputta, is the eye the fetter of forms or are forms the fetter of the eye? Is the ear the fetter of sounds ... the nose the fetter of odours ... the tongue the fetter of tastes ... the body the fetter of tangible objects ... the mind the fetter of mental phenomena or are mental phenomena the fetter of the mind?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, the eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both the eye and forms: that is the fetter there.... The mind is not the fetter of mental phenomena nor are mental phenomena the fetter of the mind, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both: that is the fetter there.

‘If the eye were the fetter of forms or if forms were the fetter of the eye, this living of the holy life could not be actualized for the complete destruction of suffering. But since the eye is not the fetter of forms nor are forms the fetter of the eye – but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both is the fetter there – the living of the holy life can be actualized for the complete destruction of suffering....

‘The Blessed One has an eye, the Blessed One sees forms with the eye, yet there is no desire and lust in the Blessed One; the Blessed One is well liberated in mind. The Blessed One has an ear ... nose ...

tongue ... body ... mind, yet there is no desire and lust in the Blessed One; the Blessed One is well liberated in mind.'

S. IV. 162-5.

'Although, venerable sir, I am old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage, let the Blessed One, the Well Farer, teach me the Dhamma in brief. Perhaps I may understand the meaning of the Blessed One's statement, perhaps I may become an heir to the Blessed One's statement.'

'What do you think, Māluṅkyaputta, do you have any desire, lust, or affection for those forms cognizable by the eye that you have not seen and never saw before, that you do not see and would not think might be seen?'

'No, venerable sir.'

'Do you have desire, lust, or affection for those sounds cognizable by the ear ... odours cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tangibles cognizable by the body ... mind objects cognizable by the mind that you have not known and never knew before, that you do not know and would not think might be known?'

'No, venerable sir.'

'Here, Māluṅkyaputta, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and known by you: in the seen there will be merely the seen; in the heard there will be merely the heard; in the sensed<sup>47</sup> there will be merely the sensed; in the known there will be merely the known.

'When, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and known by you, in the seen there will be merely the seen, in the heard there will be merely the heard, in the sensed there will be merely the sensed, in the known there will be merely the known, then, you will not exist by way of that.<sup>48</sup> When you do not exist by way of that, you will not exist therein.<sup>49</sup> When you do not exist therein, then there will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two.<sup>50</sup> This itself is the end of suffering.'

‘I understand, venerable sir.... Having seen a form with muddled mindfulness, attending only to the pleasing signs, one experiences it with infatuated mind, and remains tightly holding to it. {54}

‘Many feelings flourish within, originating from visible form, and one’s mind becomes disturbed by covetousness and distress. For one who accumulates suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be far away.

‘Having heard a sound ... having smelt an odour ... having tasted a flavour ... having felt a tangible ... having known a mental phenomenon with muddled mindfulness.... For one who accumulates suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be far away.

‘When firmly mindful, one sees a form yet does not attach to form. With a mind uninfatuated, one experiences feelings without enslavement to the sense object.

‘One fares mindfully in such a way that even as one sees the form and while one experiences a feeling, suffering is exhausted, not built up. For one not accumulating suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be close by.

‘When firmly mindful, one hears a sound ... smells an odour ... tastes a flavour ... feels a tangible ... knows a mental phenomenon, yet does not attach to mental phenomena.... For one not accumulating suffering thus, Nibbāna is said to be close by.’

S. IV. 72-5.

<sup>46</sup>‘The all’ = ‘everything’, ‘entirety’.

<sup>47</sup>Trans: the ‘sensed’: tastes, odours, and tangibles.

<sup>48</sup>The commentaries explain: ‘one is not dominated by greed, hatred, and delusion’.

<sup>49</sup>The commentaries explain: ‘one is not caught up in the seen, etc’.

<sup>50</sup>There will be neither this existence (*bhava*), another existence, or an existence between the two.

In what way is one ‘with sense doors unguarded’? Here, having seen a form with the eye, someone is intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells without having set up mindfulness, with a limited mind, and he does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind, that liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. Having heard a sound ... having smelt an odour ... having tasted a flavour ... having felt a tangible ... having known a mental object, he is intent upon a pleasing object and repelled by a displeasing object....

In what way is one ‘with sense doors guarded?’ Here, having seen a form with the eye, someone is not intent upon a pleasing form and not repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells having set up mindfulness, with a measureless mind, and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind, that liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states within cease without remainder. Having heard a sound ... having smelt an odour ... having tasted a flavour ... having felt a tangible ... having known a mental object he is not intent upon a pleasing object and not repelled by a displeasing object.<sup>51</sup>

*S. IV. 119-120.*

And how, monks, does one dwell diligently? If one dwells with restraint over the eye faculty, the mind is not distracted by forms cognizable by the eye. If the mind is not distracted, gladness is born. When one is gladdened, rapture is born. When the mind is uplifted by rapture, the body becomes tranquil. One tranquil in body experiences happiness. The mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated. When the mind is concentrated, phenomena become manifest. Because phenomena become manifest, one is reckoned as ‘one who dwells diligently’. (The same is true for the remaining five sense faculties.)

*S. IV. 78-9.*

Ānanda, how is there the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One’s Discipline? Here, when a bhikkhu sees a form with the eye ... hears a sound with the ear ... smells an odour with the

nose ... tastes a flavour with the tongue ... feels a tangible with the body ... knows a mental object with the mind, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable.

He understands thus: ‘There has arisen in me what is agreeable, there has arisen what is disagreeable, there has arisen what is both agreeable and disagreeable. But that is conditioned, gross, dependently arisen. This subsequent state is peaceful and sublime, that is, equanimity.’ {55} The agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in him cease, and equanimity is established.

Just as a man with good sight, having opened his eyes might shut them or having shut his eyes might open them, so too concerning anyone at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One’s Discipline the supreme development of the faculties....

*M. III. 299.*

Bhikkhus, when one discerns the eye as it actually is, when one discerns forms as they actually are, when one discerns and sees eye-consciousness as it actually is, when one discerns eye-contact as it actually is, when one discerns as it actually is the pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings that arise with eye-contact as condition, then one is not caught up with the eye, with forms, with eye-consciousness, with eye-contact, with the pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings that arise with eye-contact as condition.

When one abides unattached, unobsessed, uninfatuated, realizing danger, then the five aggregates affected by clinging are not accumulated in the future; and one’s craving – which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and searches for

amusement in this or that – is abandoned. One’s bodily and mental worries are abandoned, one’s bodily and mental torments are abandoned, one’s bodily and mental fevers are abandoned.

Such a person experiences bodily and mental pleasure. The view of a person such as this is right view. His intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his mindfulness is right mindfulness, his concentration is right concentration. His bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified earlier. Thus this Noble Eightfold Path comes to fulfilment in him by development. (The same applies to the remaining five sense bases.) {56}

*M. III. 288-9.*

## 2.6 PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The sense bases (*āyatana*) constitute the critical juncture between the wholesome and the unwholesome. One path leads to heedlessness, immorality, and an indulgence in worldly things. Another path leads to comprehensive knowledge, skilful actions, and liberation.

If people fail to develop a proper understanding and conduct in relation to the sense bases, they tend to be enticed or seduced into indulging in worldly things. They spend most of their energy on seeking pleasing forms, sounds, fragrances, tastes, and bodily contacts, along with related amusements, to minister to their desires. As a result, they increase greed, hatred, and delusion, and cause trouble and turmoil for themselves and others.

It is fairly obvious how conflict, maltreatment, exploitation, and oppression, along with other unresolved social problems, are largely a consequence of dissolute or unrestrained lifestyles, in which people are lured into a path of gratifying the senses, until this behaviour becomes intensified and habitual.

<sup>51</sup>At S. IV. 198-200, the questions are posed: ‘How is there non-restraint’ and ‘How is there restraint?’; the reply is the same as above.

Many people never receive any reminders or encouragement to reflect on their behaviour and on how they cater to sense desire. They never consciously practise sense restraint and as a result they become increasingly heedless.

One aspect to resolving this ethical dilemma is to foster an understanding in people as to the proper role and limitations of the sense bases and the related sense objects. Another aspect is to have people train in sense restraint, and in guiding and managing the use of the senses for bringing about true personal and social wellbeing.

The sense bases are the source of pleasure and pain, of happiness and unhappiness, which for most ordinary, unawakened people is directly connected to their principal objectives in life and to the determined effort they make in almost every activity. Pleasure and happiness is actively pursued, and pain and suffering is actively avoided.

After exerting great effort pursuing worldly pleasures, often to the point of exhaustion, many people find themselves disappointed, for many reasons: their desires may remain unfulfilled; when they encounter sweet and delicious experiences, they must also face the bitterness that life offers – sometimes increased pleasure is overshadowed by increased mental pain and affliction, which in the end becomes more costly than the rewards obtained by pleasure – the pursuit of pleasure is then not worth the effort; they may find gratification, but not as much as they had wished; or they reach their target, but discover that happiness continually eludes them. Some people spend their entire lives chasing after true happiness, but never find it.

Many of these disappointed individuals end up in despair, wandering aimlessly through life and ruining the past. Others go to the extreme opposite of seeking sense pleasure, and instead they try to dissociate from life and undergo practices of self-mortification. {57}

The study of the sense bases is intended for a comprehensive understanding of the truth and for developing a correct attitude and relationship to sense pleasure, so that it does not cause harm to oneself and others. At the very least, these teachings provide principles and guidelines for rectifying any problems resulting from engagement with the senses. Besides



offering a cautionary note about how one pursues sense pleasure, one also learns about its limitations and how it stands in relation to other forms of happiness. One is then able to pursue more refined kinds of happiness. Moreover, the way one deals with happiness and unhappiness is directly linked to ethical matters.

The sense bases and their relationship to both the cognitive process and to wisdom development are linked to virtuous conduct from the very start. If one acts incorrectly from the beginning, the entire cognitive process is tainted. The process then caters to the consumption of material things, or it becomes an aspect of the round of rebirth (*samsāra-vatṭa*). This leads to a distorted, biased, clouded, or incorrect understanding. The supportive practice in this context is to establish the mind in equanimity, to keep it even-keeled and impartial, not dominated by likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions.

There are many other practical teachings referring to the sense bases, either directly or indirectly. They are related to different stages of spiritual practice, and they focus on specific problems, say of suffering or unwholesome tendencies, that have the potential to arise on different occasions.

To prevent problems from arising, the teachings reiterate caution and restraint at the initial stage of cognition, when a sense object comes into contact with a sense base. This is the safest course of action.

In the case that problems have already arisen and unskillful mind states have infiltrated the mind, this is difficult to remedy. If one allows enticing and alluring sense objects to take hold of the mind, and one falls under the sway of greed, hatred, and delusion, one may not be able to resist these enticements, and one ends up performing immoral, unwholesome deeds. This is true even if one has a basic awareness of right and wrong. This is the reason such emphasis is given to taking precautions and protecting oneself from the beginning.

A vital spiritual factor for establishing this care and protection is mindfulness (*sati*), which helps to anchor the mind. Mindfulness is like a rope which holds and sustains attention. Mindfulness used at this initial stage of care and protection while receiving sense impressions is connected to

the principle of ‘sense restraint’ (*indriya-saṁvara*), which is also referred to as ‘guarding the sense doors (*gutta-dvāra*)’.<sup>52</sup> Here, mindfulness is fully prepared to receive a sense impression, for example when seeing a visual form by way of the eye. One does not allow attention to fix on those signs and features that give rise to infatuations and resentments, preferences and aversions, and that allow unwholesome states to over-whelm the mind. Sense restraint prevents wrongdoing, wards off suffering, and averts distorted understanding.

Using this principle of sense restraint effectively is not a simple act of will, however. For mindfulness to be well established, fully prepared, and constant, it must be trained and developed. Sense restraint must be repeated, exercised, and continuously applied. This is the meaning of the term *indriya-bhāvanā*: ‘cultivating the sense faculties’. {58}

Those individuals who have cultivated the sense faculties are safe from unwholesome states, from suffering, and from distorted understanding.<sup>53</sup> They are able to prevent these negative qualities from arising. Even if preferences and aversions manage to slip in, they are able to quell them or cast them aside instantly.

Sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*) is classified as part of the stage of morality (*sīla*). The essential factor of mindfulness (*sati*) applied for such sense restraint, however, is classified as part of the stage of ‘concentration’ (*samādhi*). The practice of mindfulness involves constantly channelling the power of the mind and balancing attention, which thus also results in the development of concentration.

Another spiritual factor emphasized in this context is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is classified as part of wisdom (*paññā*). This factor is applied when one has already received a sense object, at which point one contemplates it in order to fully understand it. One contemplates the advantages and disadvantages of various objects, along with the

<sup>52</sup>In full, this is called: ‘guarding the sense doors in regard to the sense faculties’ (*indriyesu gutta-dvāra*).

<sup>53</sup>In regard to being safe from distorted understanding, in this context it refers only to new sources of such distortions; it does not refer to previously accumulated factors such as craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), or view (*diṭṭhi*), which pertain to another stage of spiritual practice.

state of freedom and wellbeing, in which one is not dependent on them. The positive and negative aspects of conditioned phenomena then do not determine our happiness or our fate. {59}

## 2.7 APPENDIX 1: THREE KINDS OF WISDOM

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In truth, there is only one kind of wisdom, that is, the natural phenomenon of understanding reality, of penetrating into the truth of things as they really are. Wisdom, however, is frequently separated into many different kinds, according to the level of wisdom, to its specific function, or to the specific source of understanding.

The three kinds of wisdom here refer to a classification connected to the source of understanding:

1. *Sutamaya-paññā*: wisdom stemming from listening, reading, and learning.
2. *Cintāmayā-paññā*: wisdom stemming from reflection and contemplation.
3. *Bhāvanāmayā-paññā*: wisdom stemming from further spiritual cultivation.

These three kinds of wisdom are only seldom mentioned in the Tipiṭaka, but they are frequently referred to in later texts. Because there is some confusion about the meaning of these terms, it is useful to examine some of the scriptural explanations.

In most presentations of these three kinds of wisdom, *sutamaya-paññā* is placed as the first factor, but in the original texts, both in the suttas<sup>54</sup> and in the Abhidhamma,<sup>55</sup> *cintāmayā-paññā* comes first. An exception to this is the Nettipakaraṇa, which in the Burmese Theravada tradition is

<sup>54</sup>D. III. 219-20.

<sup>55</sup>Vbh. 310.

included in the Tipiṭaka (as part of the Khuddaka Nikāya in the Suttanta Piṭaka); here, *sutamaya-paññā* is the first factor.<sup>56</sup> In the commentaries and sub-commentaries, these three factors are increasingly referred to as: *sutamaya-ñāṇa*, *cintāmayā-ñāṇa*, and *bhāvanāmayā-ñāṇa* ('knowledge', arising by way of study, contemplation, and spiritual cultivation, respectively).

This is the order that they are presented in the original Tipiṭaka:

1. *Cintāmayā-paññā*: wisdom arising from contemplation; wisdom arising from wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) established within an individual.
2. *Sutamaya-paññā*: wisdom arising from learning; wisdom arising from the instruction by others (*paratoghosa*).
3. *Bhāvanāmayā-paññā*: wisdom arising from spiritual practice; wisdom arising from applying the previous two kinds of wisdom and engaging in devoted reflection and meditation.

The discrepancy between having either *sutamaya-paññā* or *cintāmayā-paññā* as the first of the three factors depends on whether the focus is primarily on exceptional individuals, or whether it is on the practice by general, ordinary individuals.

In the case where *cintāmayā-paññā* is placed first, the examination begins with an individual referred to as a 'great man' (*mahāpurisa*), that is, with the Buddha (or with a 'Silent Buddha' – *paccekabuddha*). Such a person has discovered and revealed the truth without relying on the instructions and teachings by others. He is able to apply wise reflection himself, investigating, linking, and following up on experiences in a comprehensive way, until he fathoms the truth. From *cintāmayā-paññā*, he moves directly to *bhāvanāmayā-paññā* (he needs not rely at all on *sutamaya-paññā*).

<sup>56</sup>In this text the terms are also spelled slightly differently, as: *sutamayī-paññā*, *cintāmayī-paññā*, and *bhāvanāmayī-paññā*.

When the focus is on ordinary people, however, *sutamaya-paññā* is placed at the beginning. Generally speaking, people study and obtain formal knowledge, teachings, and information, which rouses faith and confidence. They examine and inspect these teachings, leading to an understanding of them, which is referred to as *sutamaya-paññā*. Based on this formal learning, they evaluate and contemplate it deeper, giving rise to a clear discernment of causality and of the interrelationship of things. This is *cintāmaya-paññā*. When they actively and determinedly apply these two initial kinds of wisdom and further investigate phenomena, knowledge (*ñāṇa*) arises and they realize the truth. Here the path (*magga*) gives rise to fruition (*phala*). This stage is referred to as *bhāvanāmaya-paññā*. {60}

Note that for many people, although they obtain a great deal of information (*suta*), they do not necessarily develop wisdom (*paññā*). So in regard to the first factor, only some individuals apply their learning to give rise to wisdom comprised of learning (*sutamaya-paññā*).

In the Vibhaṅga of the Abhidhamma, *bhāvanāmaya-paññā* is defined as *samāpannassa-paññā*, which literally means the ‘wisdom of one who endeavours’ or the ‘wisdom of one who has reached fulfilment’. (The term *samāpanna* may be variously translated as ‘accompanying’, ‘endeavouring’, ‘completion’, or ‘fulfilment’. It can be used in both a positive and a negative sense, for example: ‘accomplished in the rules of training’; ‘related to going forth (*pabbajjā*)’; ‘full of envy and greed’; ‘engaging in enjoyment and play’; ‘accompanied by sorrow and lamentation’; ‘brimful with a swift flowing current’.

In the context of Dhamma teachings, however, when this term is used on its own, it generally refers to accessing the concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*). The commentary to the Vibhaṅga explains: ‘The wisdom of one endowed with the concentrative attainments, and occurring within such attainments, is called “consisting of cultivation”.’<sup>57</sup> This appears to be a very narrow definition. Other texts, however, including the Paramatthamañjūsā, explain that the aforementioned definition is only an example. The essential meaning of the term *bhāvanāmaya-paññā*

<sup>57</sup>VbhA. 412.

focuses on a clear discernment of the truth, which refers to ‘Path wisdom’ (*magga-paññā*) operative within insight meditation (*vipassanā*).

There exists an explanation of *bhāvanāmayapaññā* in the texts that encompasses the concentrative attainments, yet spans a broader range of meaning. This explanation considers the term *appanā* (‘absorption’), which refers to the concentration lying at the heart of *jhāna*. One example from the *Visuddhimagga* states: ‘Wisdom achieved by the power of cultivation reaching absorption is called “endowed with cultivation”’.<sup>58</sup> This explanation is linked to the passage above, referring to diligent contemplation of all phenomena, which is equivalent to insight meditation (*vipassanā*). When insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) reaches an adequate degree of clarity, the mind reaches concentrative absorption (i.e. *jhāna*). This clear discernment and steady, focused attention is able to purify and eliminate those festering and constrictive qualities known as the defilements (*kilesa*). The mind is thus released from some or all of these defilements. This realization which brings about such transformation is *bhāvanāmayapaññā*, equivalent to ‘Path knowledge’ (*magga-ñāṇa*).

In the *Nettipakaraṇa*, these three kinds of wisdom are linked to the classification of the four kinds of individuals. Here, the spiritual assets of the first three kinds of individuals, those who are ‘trainable’ (*veneyya*), are examined, before these individuals advance to *bhāvanāmayapaññā*. Those people endowed with both *sutamaya-paññā* and *cintāmayapaññā* are called ‘of quick understanding’ (*ugghaṭitaññū*): they understand instantly; they gain insight by even hearing a single outline of a teaching. Those endowed only with *sutamaya-paññā* are called *vipacitaññū*: they understand when they are given an explanation. Those individuals devoid of both of these kinds of wisdom are *neyya*: those who should be guided with teachings and training in order to gain understanding. Those who have not reached the stage of *neyya* and are *padaparama* (‘one whose highest attainment is the word’) are not included here.

Compiling these various references, one may summarize this subject of the three kinds of wisdom as follows:

<sup>58</sup>Vism. 439.

Those exceptional individuals (*acchariya-puggala*), comprising the Buddhas and the Silent Buddhas, are true sages; their wisdom surpasses that of other people. Ordinary people live in specific environments and have various experiences for decades, centuries, and generations, and yet their knowledge and understanding remains limited. A Buddha arises, however, and he is able to apply wise reflection and see things from a perspective that others are unable to see. Through investigation he is able to penetrate the profound underlying truth of things, gain an intuition into things that others do not recognize, make new discoveries, develop new understanding, and finally access a truth that no one else has realized.

The wisdom arising from one's own ability to apply wise reflection is referred to as *cintāmaya-paññā*, which the Buddhas and Silent Buddhas possess, without needing to rely on the instructions by others. (Indeed, no one exists who would be able to provide them with such instruction.) This is the wisdom unique to such exceptional people. They are able to pass over the initial stage of *sutamaya-paññā*. If such unique individuals endowed with *cintāmaya-paññā* do not arise, revolutionary discoveries of truth and the breaking out of the limitations of wisdom are not possible. People then simply pass on their traditional yet restricted knowledge.

Ordinary people, who do not possess *cintāmaya-paññā* derived entirely from their own ability to apply wise reflection, must rely on the teachings and instructions by others. The starting point for them is generating *sutamaya-paññā*. {61}

Ordinary people must develop all three kinds of wisdom:

1. *Sutamaya-paññā*: knowledge derived from formal learning. When one is not yet able to rely entirely on one own reflective abilities, one must seek out a teacher, who in the scriptures is referred to as a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), for example the Buddha, awakened beings, and other wise individuals, for instruction and guidance. One is then able to comprehend the truth at one level.
2. *Cintāmaya-paññā*: knowledge derived from reflection, from the ability to contemplate. When one acquires knowledge from formal

learning and generates wisdom consisting of such knowledge (*sutamaya-paññā*), one trains in wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), leading to vast, profound, and thorough understanding, which can be applied in one's investigation of the truth.

3. *Bhāvanāmayapaññā*: knowledge derived from spiritual cultivation. This re-fers to practical application, whereby one acts from direct experience. Here, one relies on the first two kinds of wisdom and furthers one's spiritual development by applying wise reflection in regard to all phenomena, until one realizes the wisdom established as the Path (*magga*) and one attains fruition (*phala*).

Note here that *bhāvanāmayapaññā* relies and follows on from *sutamaya-paññā* and *cintāmayapaññā*. One does not spontaneously generate *bhāvanāmayapaññā* without a basis of knowledge, or access it simply by sitting in meditation and attaining the jhānas. Most people are not even able to generate *cintāmayapaññā* without a foundation of formal learning (*suta*). (And as mentioned earlier, many people acquire formal learning but do not transform it into wisdom – *sutamaya-paññā*.)

Wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is the chief agent in this process. One can say that it is the essential factor in the development of all three kinds of wisdom. This is true even for those exceptional individuals like the Buddha, who begin with *cintāmayapaññā*, without requiring formal instruction from others (*paratoghosa*). A Buddha begins with an inherent and exceptional talent for wise reflection, giving rise to profound wisdom. Ordinary people apply formal learning and then contemplate phenomena in order to grow in wisdom, until they develop *bhāvanāmayapaññā*, at which stage wise reflection truly comes to the fore.

As mentioned above, this threefold division of wisdom is found only seldom in the Tipiṭaka. Ven. Sāriputta presented this classification in order to highlight the sources by which wisdom arises.

The factor constantly emphasized by the Buddha is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is the means of practice by which wisdom is generated. When wise reflection is present, these three kinds of wisdom may arise and reach fulfilment.



In sum, of those people who receive information and external knowledge:

- Some people only acquire facts and information, without developing any sort of wisdom.
- Some people are able to contemplate and examine that information, and generate *sutamaya-paññā*.
- Some people establish *sutamaya-paññā*, and then reflect and inquire further, generating *cintāmayā-paññā*.
- Some people rely on *sutamaya-paññā* and *cintāmayā-paññā* as a basis, and then develop wisdom further through wise reflection, generating *bhāvanāmayā-paññā*. {62}

## 2.8 APPENDIX 2:

### COMMENTARIAL ANALYSIS OF THE SENSE SPHERES

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The commentators provide many different nuances of meaning for this term *āyatana*, including: the point of transmission for the mind (*citta*) and mental concomitants (*cetasika*), i.e. the locus of their active engagement; the point of expansion for the mind and mental concomitants; the agents behind the continuation of the protracted suffering in the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-dukkha*); the source; the domain; the point of convergence; etc.<sup>59</sup>

Note that the internal physical senses pertaining to movement, balance, etc., which are referred to as somesthesia (kinesthetic, vestibular, and visceral senses), are not added here as additional senses (*āyatana*). Although these additional senses are not explained in the scriptures, it is reasonable that they were excluded because some of their aspects are included in the fifth sense, referred to as 'body' (*kāya*). More importantly,

<sup>59</sup>See: Vism. 481-2; CompT.: Samuccayapariṇchedavaṇṇanā, Sabbasaṅgahavaṇṇanā.

however, these additional senses function exclusively on a physiological level, by maintaining a normal physical state of operation; they have unique attributes and are confined to the inner life of human beings. Although they are necessary supports, their value is fixed; they are unable to promote increased benefits in regard to awareness and experience of the world, to knowledge and understanding, or to ethics. For this reason, they are not included in the definition and context of *āyatana*.

## 2.9 APPENDIX 3:

### THE SIX SENSE SPHERES AND THE FIVE AGGREGATES

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All six internal sense bases (*āyatana*) are incorporated in the five aggregates; there are exceptions to this, however, in regard to the six external sense objects (*āyatana*):

The first five pairs of *āyatana* (*cakkhu-rūpa*, *sota-sadda*, *ghāna-gandha*, *jivhā-rasa*, and *kāya-phoṭṭhabba*) are part of the *rūpa-khandha*.

The sixth internal *āyatana* (*mano*; the mind) is part of the *viññāṇa-khandha*.

The sixth external *āyatana* (*dhamma*; *dhammāyatana*) are part of four aggregates: three kinds of *nāma-khandha* (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*) and the *rūpa-khandha*, in particular those refined material forms (*sukhuma-rūpa*), e.g.: the element of space (*ākāsa-dhātu*), femininity, masculinity, levity, flexibility, continuation, decay, expansion, physical transformation, etc. The exception here is Nibbāna, which transcends the five aggregates (*khandha-vinimutta*).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup>See: Vbh. 70-72.





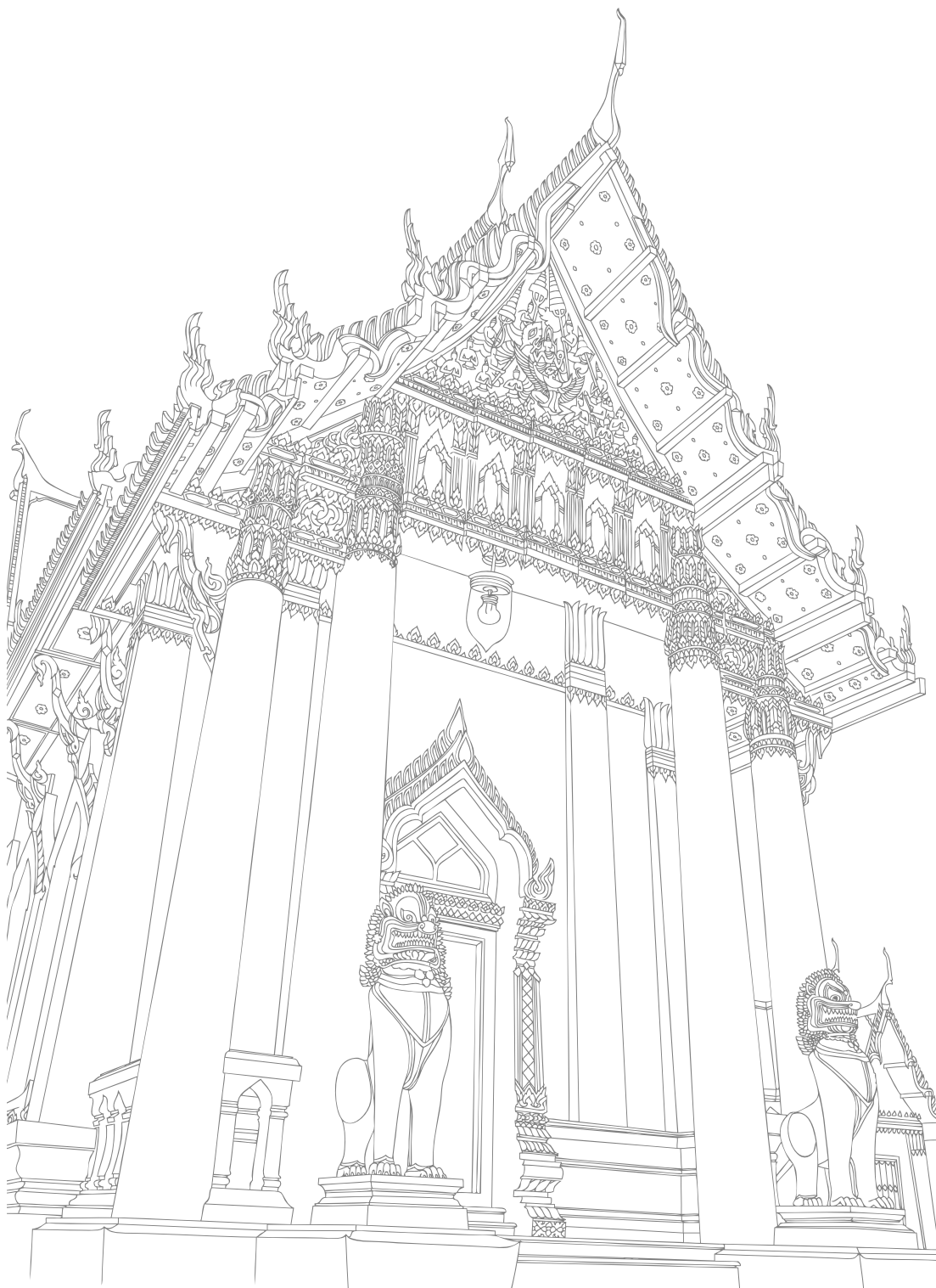
# SECTION II.

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## ATTRIBUTES OF LIFE

### Chapter 3

### *Three Characteristics*



Wat Benchamabophit Dusitwanaram or Marble Temple  
Rama 5 Road, Dusit, Bangkok, Thailand

# CHAPTER 3

## THREE CHARACTERISTICS

### *Tilakkhaṇa*

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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The primary Buddhist tenet that all things can be separated into component parts is not intended to suggest a static world of composite objects. Rather, all things are seen to exist in the form of a stream. Each constituent element of that stream comes into being in dependence on other elements in an unbroken flow of appearance and decline. No single element has an independent fixed identity; they are all impermanent and unstable. Indeed, the fluid nature of phenomena is possible owing to the interdependence and insubstantiality of their components.

This stream of conditioned phenomena is naturally steady (*dhātu*), naturally stable and certain (*dharmatṭhiti*), and it is part of a natural order (*dhamma-niyāma*).<sup>1</sup> It does not rely for its existence on a god, religion or prophet. {63} In Buddha-Dhamma the role of a Teacher<sup>2</sup> is that of discovering and explaining this truth to others.

The Buddha presented the teaching of the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*)<sup>3</sup> to describe this natural law of flux (See Note 3.1). The teaching is outlined in this way:

<sup>1</sup>For the Abhidhamma classification of natural laws see Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>Trans.: the Buddha.

<sup>3</sup>Also known as ‘signs’ or ‘marks’.

Whether Tathāgatas<sup>4</sup> appear or not, this truth (*dhātu*) exists as constant and stable ... that is:

All conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent....

All conditioned phenomena are dukkha<sup>5</sup>....

All things (*dhamma*) are nonself....

Having fully awakened to and penetrated to this truth, a Tathāgata announces, teaches, clarifies, formulates, reveals, and analyzes it: that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, all conditioned phenomena are dukkha, and all things are nonself.

A. I. 286.

Definitions of the three characteristics are as follows:

- **Aniccatā:** impermanence, instability, and inconstancy; the condition of arising, deteriorating, and disintegrating.
- **Dukkhatā:** state of *dukkha*; the condition of oppression by birth and decay; the inherent stress, resistance and conflict within an object due to alteration of its determinant factors, preventing it from remaining as it is; the internal imperfection of things, which prevents true satisfaction for someone whose desires are influenced by craving (*taṇhā*), and causes suffering for a person subject to clinging (*upādāna*).
- **Anattatā:** the condition of *anattā* – nonself; the condition of things being void of a real abiding self that owns or controls phenomena.<sup>6</sup>

The Pali adjectival terms for these characteristics are *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*, respectively. The abstract noun forms are *aniccatā*, *dukkhatā*,

<sup>4</sup>Trans: *tathāgata*: a Buddha; here used in the plural.

<sup>5</sup>Trans: the word *dukkha* is notoriously difficult to translate. The most common translations include: suffering, unsatisfactoriness, stress, pain, and misery. Many misunderstandings have arisen by translating the second characteristic as: ‘everything is suffering’ or ‘life is suffering’. For the different contexts in which the term *dukkha* is used, see below. Please note that when I use the terms



## NOTE 3.1: DEPENDENT ORIGATION AS LAW OF FLUX

Another key teaching by the Buddha is on Dependent Origination (*paṭi-casamuppāda*). This teaching describes the law of flux from a different angle and illustrates the same truth. The Three Characteristics shows the properties of all things, properties that correspond with the relationship outlined in Dependent Origination. Dependent Origination describes the conditioned flow of phenomena, revealing the three characteristics.

[Trans.: see chapter 4 on Dependent Origination. As a teaching I have capitalized ‘Three Characteristics’, but when referring to these three signs as attributes of nature, I have not.]

and *anattatā*. As characteristics they are known as *anicca-lakkhaṇa*, *dukkha-lakkhaṇa*, and *anatta-lakkhaṇa*. The commentaries occasionally refer to the three characteristics as ‘universal characteristics’ (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*).<sup>7</sup> {64}

All conditioned things exist in a state of flux, made up of interdependent conditioning factors, which arise and pass away in unbroken succession: things are impermanent. Because of their instability and causal dependence, conditioned things are subject to stress and friction, revealing an inherent imperfection. And all things, both conditioned things and the Unconditioned, exist according to their own nature; they possess no self that acts as owner or governor of phenomena.

Human beings too are comprised of constituent elements. The ‘building-blocks’ for human beings are the five aggregates; nothing else

‘stressful’ and ‘under stress’ in this context I am referring to the pressure and tension inherent in all things.

<sup>6</sup>Trans: note that I have translated *anattā* as ‘nonself’, ‘not-self’, or ‘selfless’, according to the context. The Pali *attā* (Sanskrit *ātman*) is most often translated as ‘self’ or ‘soul’; I have used both, again according to the context. The words ‘selfless’ and ‘selflessness’ here should not be confused with the standard English definition of being altruistic. The author here has used the English translation ‘soullessness’.

<sup>7</sup>That is, all conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*) are universally impermanent and unending; all things (*dhamma*), both conditioned things and the Unconditioned, are universally not-self.

exists besides the five aggregates.<sup>8</sup> When we examine the five aggregates in turn, we see that each one is impermanent. Being impermanent, they are dukkha; they are distressing for one who grasps them. Being dukkha, they are selfless. They are selfless because each aggregate arises from causes and conditions; they are not independent entities. Furthermore, they are not truly subject to a person's control or ownership. If one were to truly own the five aggregates, one would be able to control them according to one's will and prohibit them from change, for example from debility or disease.

A key teaching by the Buddha describing the three characteristics in the context of the five aggregates is as follows:

'Bhikkhus, the body is not-self. If the body were self it would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of the body: "May my body be this way; may it not be that way." But because the body is not-self, the body leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of the body: "May my body be this way; may it not be that way."

'Feeling is not-self.... Perception is not-self.... Volitional formations are not-self.... Consciousness is not-self. For if consciousness were self it would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of consciousness: "May my consciousness be this way; may it not be that way." But because consciousness is not-self, consciousness leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of consciousness: "May my consciousness be this way; may it not be that way."

'What do you think, monks, is the body permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, venerable sir.'

'Is that which is impermanent oppressive or easeful?'

<sup>8</sup>On the five aggregates (*khandha*) see Chapter 1. The five aggregates constitute all worldly things, and as a group they are synonymous with *saṅkhāra* – conditioned phenomena – of the Three Characteristics.

‘Oppressive, venerable sir.’

‘Is what is impermanent, oppressive and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘What do you think, monks, are feelings permanent or impermanent?’.... ‘Is perception permanent or impermanent?’.... ‘Are volitional formations permanent or impermanent?’.... ‘Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?’....

‘Is what is impermanent, oppressive and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Therefore, monks, you should see any kind of physical form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formation ... consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, coarse or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this is not I, this is not my self.”’ {65}

S. III. 66-8.

Many scholars have tried to prove that the Buddha acknowledged a self existing apart from the five aggregates. They claim that he only repudiated a self within conditioned phenomena and that he affirmed an Ultimate Self. Moreover, they explain that Nibbāna<sup>10</sup> is the same as *ātman/attā*: Nibbāna is the Self. I will elaborate on this matter in Chapter 6, on Nibbāna.

Here, let it simply suffice to say that all things exist according to their own inherent nature, which conflicts with the concept of a static,

<sup>9</sup>Trans: here, *dukkha* is contrasted with *sukha*, which is usually translated as happiness or pleasure. The term *sukha* has other definitions, including: ‘fluent’, ‘smooth’, ‘convenient’, ‘easy’, and ‘easeful’. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates this passage as: ‘Is that which is impermanent painful or pleasant?’ See Chapter 11 on Happiness.

<sup>10</sup>Sanskrit: *nirvāṇa*.

controlling essence or ‘self’. Things exist as they do precisely because they do not possess such a self. (If a self were to exist and to interfere, things would not be able to exist as they do.)

Most people, especially those who have grown up in a culture espousing a ‘self’ or ‘soul’, tend to seek out and seize some concept of a fixed identity. Acting in this way satisfies a hidden, unconscious need. When their self-identification as one or more of the five aggregates becomes untenable, they create a new concept of self in which to believe. But the aim of Buddha-Dhamma is not to release one thing so as to grasp another, or to be freed from one thing only to then be enslaved by something else. As mentioned earlier, things exist according to their own nature. Their nature of existence is determined by the characteristic of nonself; if things were to possess a self then by definition they could not exist as they do. {66}

### 3.2 UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS DHAMMA AND SAÑKHĀRA

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#### A. ‘ALL THINGS’ AND ‘ALL FORMATIONS’

In the first and second statements of the Three Characteristics the Buddha states that all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*)<sup>11</sup> are impermanent and dukkha, respectively, but in the third statement he says that all things (*dhamma*)<sup>12</sup> are nonself. This indicates a distinction between the first two characteristics and the third. To understand this distinction one must examine the words *saṅkhāra* and *dhamma*.

The Pali word *dhamma* has an all-encompassing range of meaning, covering all things: everything that exists – past, present and future, both real and imaginary. Material and mental, good and bad, and ordinary and exceptional things are all included within the meaning of this word. In Pali, when a restricted or more specific definition is desired, a modifier

<sup>11</sup>Trans: when referring to *saṅkhāra* of the Three Characteristics, I use the term ‘conditioned phenomena’ or the simpler ‘formations’.

<sup>12</sup>Trans.: Sanskrit: *dharma*. The word *dhamma* has many definitions; the most common are: Ultimate Truth, teaching, doctrine, nature, law, phenomenon, and thing.

may be added to the word *dhamma*, or the object to be defined is divided into sub-categories. Alternatively, the word *dhamma* can be used unmodified within a specific context. For example, paired with *adhamma*, or used to describe moral behaviour, it means merit (*puñña*) or goodness. When it is used with *attha* it means rule, principle, or cause. When *dhamma* is used in relation to study it means the scriptures, the Buddha's discourses.

In the third statement of the Three Characteristics pertaining to non-self, the Buddha uses the term *dhamma* in its broadest sense, referring to all things, without exception. To understand *dhamma* in this context it is helpful to divide things into categories:

- Material things (*rūpa-dhamma*) and immaterial things (*nāma-dhamma*).
- Mundane things (*lokiya-dhamma*) and transcendent things (*lokuttara-dhamma*).
- Conditioned things (*saṅkhata-dhamma*) and the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-dhamma*).
- Wholesome things (*kusala-dhamma*), unwholesome things (*akusala-dhamma*), and neutral things (*abyākata-dhamma*).

Each group above incorporates the entire meaning of *dhamma*, but the group that corresponds with the subject to be studied here is that of conditioned things and the Unconditioned.

All things can be divided into two types:<sup>13</sup>

1. *Saṅkhata-dhamma*: constructed things; things that arise from conditioning factors (*paccaya*); things formed by the merging of such factors. These things are also called *saṅkhāra*, which has the same root and translation. Both *saṅkhata-dhamma* and *saṅkhāra* refer

<sup>13</sup>See, e.g.: Dhs 2, 193, 244; DhA. III. 128. (One manner of defining *saṅkhata-dhamma* in the Abhidhamma, as in this reference, is as follows: wholesomeness in the four planes (*bhūmi*); all unwholesomeness; results (*vipāka*) in the four planes; neutral actions (*kiriya-abyākata*) in the three planes; and all materiality.)

to every kind of condition, material and mental, mundane and supramundane, except Nibbāna.

2. *Asaṅkhata-dhamma*: that which is not constructed; the state that does not arise by being fashioned from conditioning factors and is not subject to them. It is also called *visaṅkhāra*, meaning the state free from conditioned phenomena – the Unconditioned – that is, Nibbāna. {67}

Saṅkhāra is therefore just one aspect of the term dhamma. Dhamma has a range of meaning that embraces both conditioned phenomena and the Unconditioned: *saṅkhata-dhamma* and *asaṅkhata-dhamma*, or *saṅkhāra* and Nibbāna. Applying this interpretation to the Three Characteristics, one sees that the scope of the first two characteristics, *aniccatā* and *dukkhatā*, is narrower than that of the last, *anattatā*. This distinction is summarized as follows:

The characteristics of impermanence and dukkha apply only to conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*) – and to all conditioned phenomena. The characteristic of nonself, however, applies to all things, both the conditioned and the Unconditioned. The Unconditioned – Nibbāna – is thus devoid of the first two characteristics.

In the Pali Canon the Buddha characterizes the conditioned and the Unconditioned in this way:<sup>14</sup>

Signs of the conditioned world (*saṅkhata-lakkhaṇa*):

1. Origination is apparent.
2. Disintegration is apparent.
3. Alteration is apparent.

Signs of the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-lakkhaṇa*):

1. Origination is not apparent.

<sup>14</sup>A. I. 152.

2. Disintegration is not apparent.
3. Alteration is not apparent.

To sum up, the Unconditioned, or Nibbāna, is beyond impermanence and dukkha, but is nonself. As for everything else, that is, all formations, they are impermanent, dukkha, and nonself, as this passage from the Vinaya Piṭaka confirms:

All formations are impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself; Nibbāna and designations are nonself.<sup>15</sup> {68}

*Vin. VI. (Parivāra) 86.*

## **B. SAṄKHĀRA OF THE FIVE AGGREGATES AND SAṄKHĀRA OF THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS**

There are many examples in the Thai language of a single word having several definitions.<sup>16</sup> Some definitions vary only slightly while others vary greatly to the point of appearing unrelated.

Similarly, in Pali there are many individual terms that have a wide range of different meanings. Those people who have studied Pali are able to distinguish and understand these different meanings, even in the case where the word appears several times in a single passage but with different connotations. Such words include:

- *Nāga*: this term can mean a divine serpent, a battle elephant, or an excellent person.
- *Nimitta*: in the Vinaya<sup>17</sup> this term refers to a boundary marker, while in relation to meditation it means a mental image.

<sup>15</sup>Substantiating passages from the commentaries include: *The Deathless is void of self* (*attasuññamatapadam*; Vism. 513); and: *Indeed, Nibbāna is empty of self because it is without self* (*nibbānadhammo attasseva abhāvato attasuñño*; PsA. III. 638-39). For the commentarial analysis of this verse see Appendix 2.

<sup>16</sup>Trans.: of course this is also true in English.

<sup>17</sup>Trans.: the discipline, particularly the monastic discipline.

- *Nikāya*: this term refers to a section of the Suttanta Piṭaka;<sup>18</sup> in other contexts it means a religious faction.
- *Paccaya*: in the Vinaya this term means a basic requisite, for instance, food, while in Dhamma teachings it refers more generally to a ‘cause’ or ‘support’.

Consider the following words as found in different Buddhist texts:

A person knows the *rasa* with the tongue; delicious or not, he does not allow desire or repulsion to overwhelm the mind. Such a person guards the *indriya* of the tongue.

The *indriya* of faith, as *rasa*, causes all accompanying qualities to be radiant, like a water-purifying gem.

In the first passage *rasa* means ‘a taste’ and *indriya* refers to the sense base. In the latter passage *rasa* means a ‘function’, while *indriya* refers to a spiritual faculty. {69}

A monk should perform yoga to realize the state that is free from yoga.

The first *yoga* means ‘spiritual effort’: the development of wisdom. The second *yoga* refers to the defilements that bind beings to suffering in worldly existence.<sup>19</sup>

An ordinary person regards the body, feelings, perceptions, volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness as self, but these five aggregates cannot be self, because all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent, subject to pressure, and not-self.

<sup>18</sup>Trans.: collection of discourses.

<sup>19</sup>Trans.: in Hinduism *yoga* (to ‘yoke’ or ‘join’) refers to the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Spirit.



The first *saṅkhāra* refers solely to one of the five aggregates, whereas the second *saṅkhāra* covers all conditioned things in keeping with the Three Characteristics.

The word that needs explaining here is *saṅkhāra*. The list of aforementioned examples was given simply to demonstrate the important fact that in Pali there are many cases of the same word having two or more distinct meanings, of varying disparity; they can be dissimilar or even contradictory. If one understands this then one does not consider it strange to find the word *saṅkhāra* being used in the texts in many different senses, and one learns to distinguish the meaning accordingly.

The word *saṅkhāra* has at least four definitions, but there are two in particular that need to be understood. These are *saṅkhāra* as one of the Five Aggregates and *saṅkhāra* of the Three Characteristics. Because these two definitions of *saṅkhāra* overlap, they can cause confusion.

1. The Five Aggregates: *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*.
2. The Three Characteristics: all *saṅkhāra* are impermanent, all *saṅkhāra* are *dukkha*, all *dhamma* are nonself.

*Saṅkhāra* as the fourth component of the five aggregates refers to mental factors that shape the mind as wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral. They are the mental qualities led by intention (*cetanā*) that mould and influence thoughts and consequent physical action. They are the agents behind action (*kamma*), the ‘fashioners’ of the mind, for example: faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri*), fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), wisdom (*paññā*), delusion (*moha*), greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*).<sup>20</sup> They are mental qualities (*nāma-dhamma*), existing in the mind along with feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

*Saṅkhāra* of the Three Characteristics refers to constructed things: everything that arises from causes and conditioning factors – material

<sup>20</sup>The Abhidhamma divides *saṅkhāra* into fifty kinds, comprising fifty of the fifty-two mental concomitants (*cetasika*).

or immaterial, physical or mental, live or inanimate, internal or external. They are also called *saṅkhata-dhamma*. Saṅkhāra here includes everything except Nibbāna.

Saṅkhāra of the Five Aggregates has a more limited meaning than saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics; it refers to one part of saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics. {70} Saṅkhāra of the Five Aggregates refers to the agents that determine the quality of the mind, or ‘volitional formations’. As for saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics, it refers to compounded things: things constructed by conditioning factors, or simply ‘formations’. Because volitional formations are themselves constructed things, they are not excluded from the all-inclusive meaning of saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics.

Using the model of the Five Aggregates, one can divide conditioned phenomena into mind and matter, and subdivide the mind into four subgroups – feeling, perception, volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness. Here, saṅkhāra is solely a mental component and just one element of four. Saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics, however, covers both mind and matter. Therefore, saṅkhāra (of the five aggregates) is one kind of saṅkhāra (of the Three Characteristics).

Accordingly, the statements: *Physical form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, volitional formations (saṅkhāra) are impermanent, and consciousness is impermanent, and: All conditioned phenomena (saṅkhāra) are impermanent* are identical in meaning.

The texts occasionally use the term *saṅkhāra-khandha* for saṅkhāra of the Five Aggregates, and *saṅkhata-saṅkhāra*, or simply *saṅkhāra*, for saṅkhāra of the Three Characteristics. The reason these two teachings use the same term, saṅkhāra, is that they describe conditions with similar meanings, having to do with ‘formation’.

### 3.3 SCRIPTURAL DEFINITIONS

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The teachings on the five aggregates (*pañca-khandha*) in chapter 1, and on the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) in chapter 2, emphasize the internal life of human beings. The teaching of the Three Characteristics expands the scope of investigation to cover both the individual person and external objects. It is a study of human beings and the entire world. {73}

The meaning of each of the three characteristics has already been described in a rudimentary way. At this point they will be analyzed in more detail, based on scriptural teachings.

#### A. IMPERMANENCE

The Paṭisambhidāmagga offers a simple definition for *aniccatā*: something is considered impermanent ‘in the sense that it perishes’ (*khaya-aṭṭhena*).<sup>21</sup> All conditioned things exist only momentarily, at a specific time and place, then cease there and then. An object in the past does not exist in the present; an object present now does not exist in the future. Things do not endure in any fixed, immutable way.

Post-canonical texts expand on this definition and offer a range of explanations. For example, at first glance, one sees that a person’s life begins at birth and ends at death. Upon closer inspection, one notices an accelerating rate of birth and decline, of an age period, a year, a season, a month, a day, a few minutes, to the rise and fall of each moment, which is difficult for most people to discern.

Modern scientific discoveries, not least in physics, have helped to reveal and demonstrate impermanence. Many scientific theories, say of the birth and death of stars or of atomic disintegration, illustrate the law of impermanence.

The commentaries define *aniccatā* in many different ways. For example, something is considered impermanent ‘because it is uncertain and unstable’ (*aniccantikatāya*), and ‘because it has a beginning and an

<sup>21</sup>Ps. I. 37; referred to at Vism. 610.

end’ (*ādi-antavantatāya*).<sup>22</sup> A common and frequently used definition is: something is considered impermanent in the sense that ‘it has existed and then ceases to exist’ (*huvā abhāvattthena*).<sup>23</sup> Additional wording is sometimes added to this phrase, for example: something is considered impermanent ‘because it arises, passes away, and becomes otherwise’ (*uppādavayaññathattabhāvā huvā abhāvato vā*).<sup>24</sup>

A detailed list of definitions is as follows. There are four reasons why something is considered impermanent:<sup>25</sup> {74}

1. *Uppādavayappavattito*: because it arises and disintegrates; it rises and ceases; it exists and then ceases to exist.
2. *Vipariṇāmato*: because it is subject to change; it is continually altered and transformed.
3. *Tāvakālikato*: because it is temporary; it exists momentarily.
4. *Niccaṭṭikkhepato*: because it is inconsistent with permanence; the changeability of a conditioned object is inherently in conflict with permanence; when one accurately observes the object no permanence is found; even if someone tries to regard it as permanent, it refuses to accommodate that person’s wishes.

## B. DUKKHA

### 1. Introduction

The Paṭisambhidāmagga offers a concise definition for *dukkhatā*: something is considered dukkha ‘in the sense that it is subject to danger’

<sup>22</sup>Vism. 611.

<sup>23</sup>Alternatively, ‘it has appeared and then disappears’ (e.g.: Vism. 628).

<sup>24</sup>Alternatively, ‘it has existed and then ceases to exist’ (Vism. 640).

<sup>25</sup>Vism. 618; MA. II. 113; VbhA. 48; The VismṬ.

Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Rūpasattakasammasanā kathāvaṇṇanā states that these four definitions refer only to material phenomena, but the Vibhaṅga Aṭṭhakathā shows that they can be used in regard to all conditioned phenomena. See also: VinṬ. Mahākhandhakaṃ, Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā.

(*bhaya-aṭṭhena*).<sup>26</sup> *Bhaya* can also mean ‘dangerous’ or ‘frightening’. All conditioned phenomena invariably disintegrate and dissolve; they therefore offer no true safety, relief, or assurance. Any such phenomenon is threatened by destruction and disintegration. The object thus creates danger – both fear and a peril – for anyone who attaches to it.

The commentaries elaborate the meaning of *dukkhatā*, including these two frequently used definitions: first, something is considered *dukkha* ‘in the sense that it is under perpetual pressure through arising and disintegration’ (*uppādavaya-paṭipīḷanaṭṭhena*<sup>27</sup> or *uppādavaya-paṭipīḷanatāya*<sup>28</sup>). There is pressure on everything that interacts with that object, and the object itself is under stress from its component elements.<sup>29</sup> Second, ‘because it is a foundation for suffering’ (*dukkha-vatthutāya*<sup>30</sup> or *dukkha-vatthuto*<sup>31</sup>). An object beset by *dukkha* is a basis for suffering, for example by causing pain. Simply speaking, *dukkha* means to cause pain.

The most complete compilation of definitions for *dukkha* in the commentaries is as follows. Something is considered to be *dukkha* for these four reasons:<sup>32</sup>

1. *Abhiṇha-sampatipīḷanato*: because it is continually oppressed; it is subject to constant pressure due to arising and dissolution; there is persistent friction amongst component parts or amongst associated conditions.

<sup>26</sup>Ps1. 37; referred to at Vism. 610.

<sup>27</sup>Vism. 628.

<sup>28</sup>Vism. 611.

<sup>29</sup>VismT. *Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā*, *Cattārisākāra-anupassanakathāvaṇṇanā*. [Trans.: in the first two editions of *Buddhadhamma*, I translated *dukkha* in the context of the three characteristics as ‘subject to pressure’. Having done more research on the terminology used in the field of physics, it seems more accurate to say: ‘subject to stress’. I have therefore replaced the former translation with the latter throughout this third edition.]

<sup>30</sup>Vism. 611.

<sup>31</sup>E.g.: Vism. 502.

<sup>32</sup>Vism. 618; MA. II. 113 (in this reference the first definition is *santāpa* – see below); VbhA. 48.

2. *Dukkhamato*: because it is ‘hard to endure’; it is not durable; it is unable to be sustained in an original state; it is obliged to change, become otherwise, and lose identity as a consequence of arising and ceasing.<sup>33</sup> {75}
3. *Dukkha-vatthuto*: because it is a foundation for suffering; it is foundation for a state of pressure and stress. In relation to human beings, this means that it produces various kinds of affliction, e.g. pain, discomfort and distress.<sup>34</sup>
4. *Sukha-paṭikkhepatō*: because it opposes pleasure (*sukha*; ‘happiness’). The natural conditions of pressure, friction, and instability oppose or obstruct ease and comfort. In order to obtain pleasure, people must strive to regulate certain factors. Essentially, pleasure exists only as a feeling (*vedanā*). The basic condition is that of *dukkha* – pressure, tension and friction – which is an attribute of all formations.

In relation to human beings, this natural characteristic of *dukkha* produces feelings of oppression and stress, which we call ‘pain’ (*dukkha-vedanā*). The reduction of pressure, or the freedom from pain, we call ‘pleasure’ or ‘happiness’. The greater the discomfort (duress, deprivation, yearning, hunger, etc.), the greater the happiness when one is released from it. For example, a person who moves from the hot sun into the shade feels refreshed and cool. Likewise, a person experiencing great pleasure (*sukha-vedanā*) will experience a similarly strong discomfort (*dukkha-vedanā*) when the pleasurable circumstances are disturbed. Even small amounts of discomfort, which are normally not felt as such, may be a torment. A person

<sup>33</sup>The literal translation ‘hard to endure’ appears to refer to feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*), for example pain or suffering, which can be defined as ‘something that is hard for humans to endure’. Actually, this Pali idiom meaning non-durable or unsustainable is a characteristic of all formations, as explained above.

<sup>34</sup>The commentaries and sub-commentaries describe an object marked by *dukkha* as a basis for the 3 *dukkhatā* (see below) and for *saṃsāra-dukkha*; e.g. VinT. Mahākhandhakam, Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā; VismT. Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā (Cattārisākāra-anupassanakathāvaṇṇanā and Rūpasattakasammasanakathāvaṇṇanā).

leaving a comfortably warm room into the cold, for example, may find the temperature extreme, even though those around him are not bothered.

Happiness, or a pleasurable feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), is not an end of *dukkha*. We call an increase or reduction of pressure ‘happiness’ because it creates a feeling of pleasure. But an alteration of this pleasurable tension results in a condition that requires endurance or is intolerable, a condition we call ‘suffering’, that is, we feel pain (*dukkha-vedanā*). In truth only *dukkha* – pressure and stress – exists, which either increases or decreases.

A similar subject is that of heat and cold. Cold does not really exist; there exists only a feeling of cold. The basic condition is heat, which increases, decreases, or is absent. When one says that one is pleasantly cool, one is referring only to a feeling; actually, one is experiencing a degree of heat. If more or less warm than that degree, then one is not at ease. In this sense, pleasure, or to speak in full ‘a feeling of pleasure’, is one level of *dukkha*. Pleasure is dependent on pressure and tension, and necessarily changes and vanishes. In other words, *dukkha*, which is the basic condition, prevents pleasure from being sustainable. {76}

As quoted above, the Paṭisambhidāmagga defines *dukkha* in the context of the Three Characteristics as ‘subject to danger’. In the section explaining the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*), it defines *dukkha* – the first of the Noble Truths – in four ways. Something is identified as *dukkha* in the sense that it is oppressed (*pīḷanatṭha*), constructed (*saṅkhatatṭha*), burns (*santāpatṭha*), and changes (*vipariṇāmatṭha*).<sup>35</sup> These four definitions of *dukkha* can also be used in the context of the Three Characteristics. Definitions one and four (*pīḷanatṭha* and *vipariṇāmatṭha*) have already been described;<sup>36</sup> here are the other two:

<sup>35</sup>Ps. I. 19; Ps. II. 104; referred to at Vism. 494; VbhA. 83. MA. II. 113 classifies *santāpa* as the first of the four meanings above.

<sup>36</sup>Trans: definition 1 of *dukkha* and definition 2 of impermanence above, respectively.

5. *Saṅkhataṭṭha*: ‘in the sense that it is fashioned (*saṅkhata*)’; it is constructed by conditioning factors; it depends on such factors; it is inconstant.
6. *Santāpaṭṭha*: ‘in the sense that it burns’; it burns up, ending in decay and destruction; moreover, it burns someone with defilements, who grasps and clings to the object, causing torment and agitation.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. *Dukkha in the Three Characteristics and Dukkha in the Four Noble Truths*

**1. Primary Classifications of Dukkha:** Although this chapter is dedicated to the subject of the Three Characteristics (*anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*), the discussion of *dukkha* in this context is invariably linked to other teachings pertaining to this term. This is especially true in relation to *dukkha* as part of the Four Noble Truths. Unless this relationship is well understood, it may cause confusion.

Simply speaking, the *dukkha* of the Three Characteristics, which is a condition inherent in nature, in some circumstances becomes the *dukkha* of the Four Noble Truths. When people lack an understanding of this primary, naturally-occurring *dukkha* and deal with it inappropriately, it turns into a personal problem.

The very characteristic of *dukkha* implies that conditioned things are under stress and are unable to sustain themselves in an original shape. When people lack discernment of this natural condition and things do not proceed according to their desires, then dissatisfaction, stress, and affliction arise in their hearts. This is the genesis of *dukkha* as outlined in the Four Noble Truths.

In other words, the *dukkha* of the Three Characteristics is an aspect of nature; it is not possible to cancel or abolish it. One should develop

<sup>37</sup>This is the author’s definition; for the commentarial and sub-commentarial explanation see: PsA. I. 100, 102; VismṬ. *Indriyasaccaniddesa*vaṇṇanā, *Saccavittthāra*kathāvaṇṇanā.



wisdom in order to fully understand it, and in terms of conduct, one should act according to causes and conditions.

Dukkha of the Four Noble Truths, however, we are able to do away with, to put an end to. This is possible by applying wisdom and by skilfully engaging with the dukkha of the Three Characteristics – the dukkha inherent in conditioned phenomena.

The term dukkha appears in another context, referring to the feeling of dis-ease or pain (*dukkha-vedanā*). This term is part of a threefold division, including *sukha-vedanā* (the feeling of ease; physical and mental pleasure) and *adukkhamasukha-vedanā* (neutral feeling; also referred to as *upekkhā*). This form of dukkha is also connected to the dukkha of the Three Characteristics. Because it pertains to feeling or sensation, which is experienced by people immediately, it is easily understood, almost without needing to apply any intelligence. When a branch falls on one's head, one encounters a natural form of dukkha and one experiences pain. Sometimes this pain is almost unendurable.

This kind of dukkha is often easy to rectify. One seeks out a doctor, who stitches the wound and applies antiseptic. One then waits until the wound heals, and the matter is finished. {77}

But if one fails to recognize that the branch fell naturally by its own accord, one may become suspicious of others, thinking: 'Who is harbouring thoughts of ill-will, and has intentionally thrown this branch at me to hurt or kill me?'

This suspicion gives rise to anger, disquietude, and a deep sense of affliction. These thoughts are accompanied by more sensations of displeasure (*dukkha-vedanā*), but the deeper problem rests with the suffering pertaining to dukkha of the Four Noble Truths. The issue may then become intensified and protracted. The suffering (of the Four Noble Truths) deepens and escalates the discomfort (as a sensation), sometimes without end.

This matter of dukkha in the Four Noble Truths is highly significant. It causes all sorts of problems, up to and including waging warfare. One can say that this form of dukkha epitomizes the human predicament.

Nature on its own contains only the dukkha of the Three Characteristics. But when human beings become involved, all three forms of dukkha – dukkha of the Three Characteristics, dukkha of sensation, and dukkha of the Four Noble Truths – merge forces.

In sum, dukkha appears in three key teachings:

1. On feeling/sensation (two versions):

- A. Three *vedanā*: painful feeling (*dukkha*), pleasant feeling (*sukha*), and neutral feeling (*adukkham-asukha* or *upekkhā*).
- B. Five *vedanā*: painful physical feeling (*dukkha*), pleasurable physical feeling (*sukha*), painful mental feeling (*domanassa*), pleasurable mental feeling (*somanassa*), and neutral feeling (*upekkhā*).

Its complete name in this context is *dukkha-vedanā*.

- 2. In the Three Characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. In this context its complete name is *dukkha-lakkhaṇa*.
- 3. In the Four Noble Truths: *dukkha*, *samudaya* ('origin'), *nirodha* ('cessation') and *magga* ('path'). Its complete name is *dukkha-ariyasacca*.

The definitions of dukkha in these three groups overlap; they are different aspects of one truth.

The dukkha with the broadest meaning and is all-inclusive is dukkha of the Three Characteristics, also referred to as *dukkha-lakkhaṇa* or *dukkhatā*. This is the condition of instability, the inability to be sustained in an original shape, due to the pressure, stress and friction from rising and disintegration, as explained above. It is a characteristic of all conditioned phenomena (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), encompassing the same range as impermanence: whatever is impermanent is also dukkha (*yad'aniccam taṃ dukkham*).

The dukkha with the most restricted meaning, and is simply a consequence of the dukkha of the Three Characteristics, is dukkha as feeling, called *dukkha-vedanā*: a feeling of pain. It is a feeling occurring when

pressure reaches a certain level in relation to a person's body and mind.<sup>38</sup> This pain is included in the dukkha of the Three Characteristics, as is all other feeling, both pleasant and neutral. All kinds of feeling – painful, pleasurable, and neutral – are dukkha as determined by the Three Characteristics. {78}

Dukkha in the Four Noble Truths (*dukkha-ariyasacca*) is precisely the dukkha of the Three Characteristics which becomes the foundation or source of human difficulties. Yet these difficulties are created by people themselves.

All formations are under stress, which is the dukkha of the Three Characteristics. These formations (not all of them and not always) cause suffering for human beings who lack understanding and relate to things inappropriately; this suffering is the dukkha of the Four Noble Truths. (These phenomena are oppressive, however, because they themselves are subject to stress, and therefore it is impossible for them to provide true satisfaction to people in any constant or consistent way.)

*Dukkha-ariyasacca* refers specifically to matters connected to the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*).<sup>39</sup> Technically, the dukkha of the Four Noble Truths refers to the suffering arising on account of the sense bases (*indriya-baddha*), that is, suffering pertaining to everyday life. It excludes pressure independent of the sense bases (*anindriya-baddha*), which is classified as dukkha of the Three Characteristics but not of the Noble Truths.

(Note that *dukkha-ariyasacca* is dukkha of the Three Characteristics. *Samudaya* – the cause of suffering – and *magga* – the Eightfold Path – are as well, as they are naturally occurring conditioned phenomena, but they are not *dukkha-ariyasacca*.)

The scope of dukkha in the Four Noble Truths is determined as follows:

<sup>38</sup>See item four above: *sukhapaṭikkhepato*.

<sup>39</sup>Trans.: *upādāna-khandha*, the five groups of clinging, are identical to the five aggregates (*khandha*) mentioned earlier, but this term highlights the aggregates as the objects identified with and clung to by human beings, and which consequently give rise to suffering. See chapter 1.

- Dukkha as the first noble truth is associated with human life and human problems. It arises as a result of the sense faculties (*indriyabaddha*); it does not include dukkha independent of the sense faculties (*anindriyabaddha*). It is not the dukkha mentioned in the passages ‘all conditioned phenomena are dukkha’ (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), and ‘whatever is impermanent is dukkha’ (*yad’aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ*), which refer to the all-inclusive dukkha of the Three Characteristics.
- It originates from a person’s defiled action (*kamma-kilesa*). It is a result of *dukkha-samudaya*; it is a result of craving – *taṇhā*. It refers specifically to matters connected to the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*).
- It is the focus of the duty (*kicca*) related to the first noble truth: *pariññā-kicca*. *Pariññā* is comprehension or knowledge of things as they truly are. To acquire knowledge of and to fully understand personal problems is our responsibility vis-à-vis dukkha of the Four Noble Truths. Dukkha here is confined to this subject of understanding human suffering.
- It emphasizes the significance of the basis of suffering (*dukkha-vatthutāya*) rather than the pressure, tension and friction of arising and falling (*udayabbaya-paṭipīḷanaṭṭhena*), which is the essential meaning of dukkha in the Three Characteristics.<sup>40</sup>

The subject of dukkha in the Four Noble Truths will be explained at more length below. Here, let us examine another teaching, on the three kinds of dukkha (the 3 *dukkhatā*).<sup>41</sup> This is a very important teaching located in three different suttas; it also occurs frequently in the Mahāniddesa and the Cūḷaniddesa. On one occasion it was taught by the Buddha; the remaining passages are by Ven. Sāriputta. In each passage, however,

<sup>40</sup>The important sources for research in this matter are: Yam. I. 174-5; PañcA 167; Vism. 510-13; VismṬ. Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Magganiddesakathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>41</sup>Also known as the ‘3 *dukkha*’; D. III. 216; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56; Vism. 499; VbhA. 93; VinṬ. Dhammacakkappavattanasuttavaṇṇanā; VismṬ. Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Dukkhaniddesakathāvaṇṇanā.

only the three factors are listed, without any explanation (most likely this set of three factors was an important concept during the Buddha's time). The following description relies on the explanations provided in the commentaries. (The order of these factors here also accords with the normal order of the commentaries; the order in the suttas is: *dukkha-dukkhatā*, *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* and *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*.) {79}

The teaching on the 3 *dukkhatā* defines dukkha in the context of the Three Characteristics. It includes dukkha as feeling (*vedanā*), and it also links up with dukkha as found in the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha-dukkhatā*:<sup>42</sup> physical and mental pain, as generally understood, for example aches, discomfort, and fatigue; in other words, 'painful feeling' (*dukkha-vedanā*).
2. *Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*: dukkha resulting from or inherent in change. This refers to pleasurable feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), which in truth is a degree of dukkha. Pleasure is equal to concealed pain, or always has pain furtively in pursuit. Once a feeling of pleasure changes, it transforms into a feeling of pain. In other words, the fundamental inconstancy of pleasure produces pain. (Another explanation is that pleasure is pain, of a particular degree.)
3. *Saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*:<sup>43</sup> dukkha inherent in conditioned phenomena, inherent in everything that originates from causes and conditions. In other words, the five aggregates are dukkha; they are of the nature to be pressured and coerced by the rising and decay of opposing factors, preventing them from remaining in a stable, original state. This third kind of dukkha comprises the dukkha of the Three Characteristics.

**2. The Three Universal Characteristics Act as a Basis for Dukkha in the Four Noble Truths:** As described earlier, the dukkha of the Three Characteristics refers to the conflict and stress inherent in conditioned

<sup>42</sup> Also known as *dukkha-dukkha*.

<sup>43</sup> Also known as *saṅkhāra-dukkha*.

phenomena, preventing them from any lasting stability. All conditioned things – all things that ordinary people know and experience – are subject to this characteristic. Another way of phrasing this is that this pressure and stress is a natural characteristic of the five aggregates (*khandha*).

Every human being, and everything that ordinary people come into contact with, is a conditioned phenomenon and is comprised of the five aggregates. If people lack understanding and deal with things unskillfully, a sense of oppression and affliction arises within themselves, which we call ‘suffering’. This suffering experienced by people is the *dukkha* of the Four Noble Truths. Although it is real for these people, it is not a universal characteristic of all things.

Isolating this *dukkha* of the Three Characteristics is convenient in one sense, but it should not be completely removed from the other two characteristics. That is, one should recognize that all conditioned things are subject to three universal characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*; having arisen, things dissolve and disappear); stress (*dukkha*; all conditions or factors that constitute or associate with an object are under pressure and unable to sustain an original shape); and nonself (*anattā*; things exist according to causes and conditions; things do not possess a ‘self’ or a distinct, abiding essence that is able to own or control things).

In short, all conditioned things are unstable, unreliable, and unenduring.

The arising of suffering (*dukkha*) in the Four Noble Truths is not simply due to the stress (*dukkha*) outlined in the Three Characteristics. Indeed, all three characteristics – *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* – act as a basis for suffering in those individuals who lack a true understanding of them. {80}

All conditioned things (or the five aggregates), including the entirety of what makes up human beings – the body and the mind – are impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself. It is in their nature to be marked by these three characteristics, without any interference by human beings. For this reason the Three Characteristics are distinct from the Four Noble Truths (even though both of these teachings share the factor of *dukkha*).

So at what stage do the five aggregates become part of the dukkha described in the Four Noble Truths? The answer is when they become the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*).

The five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*) are precisely these same five aggregates, but here they are grasped onto by clinging (*upādāna*). Technically speaking, they are ‘accompanied by mental taints (*āsava*) and act as a basis for clinging (*upādāna*).’ One can define this term *upādāna-khandha* as the five aggregates born of clinging, the five aggregates as the point of obsession for clinging, or the five aggregates as the focus of attention for clinging. They pertain directly to ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*). This dynamic is what is being referred to in the first noble truth.

In the following teaching, the Buddha distinguishes between the five aggregates and the five aggregates of clinging:

Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates and the five aggregates subject to clinging. Listen attentively.

And what are the five aggregates? Whatever kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near.... These are called the five aggregates.

And what are the five aggregates of clinging? Whatever kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, that is accompanied by mental taints (*sāsava*), that is a foundation for clinging (*upādāniya*).... These are called the five aggregates of clinging.

S. III. 47-8.

When the Buddha taught the Three Characteristics, he would invariably state that the five aggregates are impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself. The true nature of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness is marked by these three characteristics. He did

not state that the five aggregates of clinging are impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself, because these are already included in the wider classification of the five aggregates. The important point here is that by grasping to the five aggregates, they develop into the five aggregates of clinging and this grasping leads to suffering.

The following is a teaching on the five aggregates in relation to the Three Characteristics:

Monks, form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, volitional formations are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent....

Monks, form is dukkha (it is under stress by its conditioning factors; it is unsustainable) ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is dukkha....

Monks, form is not-self ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is not-self.... Seeing this, the instructed noble disciple lets go of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness. Letting go,<sup>44</sup> he extricates himself.<sup>45</sup> Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there come the knowledge: ‘It is liberated’. He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.’ {81}

*S. III. 21.*

When one clearly understands conditioned things according to the Three Characteristics, the five aggregates of clinging do not arise, or they cease to exist. Instead, one experiences freedom, luminosity, joy, and an end to suffering.

In the sutta on Turning the Wheel of Dhamma (Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta), which was given to the group of five disciples (*pañca-vaggiya*), the Buddha gives a lengthy description of dukkha, the first noble truth. This first noble truth may be defined as:

<sup>44</sup> *Nibbidā*: ‘(maintaining) disenchantment’, ‘letting go of attachment’.

<sup>45</sup> *Virāga*: ‘(experiences) dispassion’.



Now this, monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; association with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

S. V. 421-2.

The ending phrase, ‘In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering’ (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*), is the gist of this passage. That is, all the previous statements are summed up by this ending phrase.

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta was the first sutta taught by the Buddha – no one had heard this teaching before this occasion. The group of five disciples would not have been familiar with how the term *dukkha* is defined in Buddhism. We can compare this with how the Buddha taught the first noble truth on later occasions.

At one time in Sāvatthi (indicating that this event occurred a long time after the first sermon), the Buddha explained the Four Noble Truths to the bhikkhus (who would have had a foundation of understanding). Here, in relation to the first noble truth, the Buddha focuses exclusively on the five aggregates of clinging:

Monks, I will teach you suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. Listen carefully.

And what, monks, is suffering? It should be said: the five aggregates subject to clinging. What five? The form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. This is called suffering.

And what monks, is the origin of suffering? It is this craving that leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures,

craving for existence, craving for annihilation. This is called the origin of suffering.

And what, monks, is the cessation of suffering? It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it. This is called the cessation of suffering. {82}

And what, monks is the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is called the way leading to the cessation of suffering.<sup>46</sup>

*S. III. 158-9; S. V. 425*

From this passage we can conclude that the many examples the Buddha used to describe suffering in the First Sermon refer to conditions or situations related to suffering that general people are familiar with. After establishing a basic understanding of the subject matter, the Buddha went on to describe the gist of suffering: the five aggregates of clinging. Had he not provided common examples of suffering first, the listeners, who lacked a foundation of understanding, would have been at a loss.

In other circumstances, or in other Dhamma teachings, the Buddha may very well have presented other familiar examples of suffering to his listeners. Whichever examples the Buddha may have used, however, he would have eventually summed up human suffering as the five aggregates of clinging.

Note this teaching by the Buddha connected to the Four Noble Truths:

Monks, in reference to the statement declared by me: ‘This is the noble truth of suffering’, there are innumerable nuances, innumerable meanings, innumerable interpretations.... In reference to the statement declared by me: ‘This is the noble truth of the path

<sup>46</sup>Here, the term *ariya-sacca* is found at the end of each passage; In S. V. 426 the sutta states that the noble truth of suffering should be defined as the six internal sense bases.

leading to the end of suffering', there are innumerable nuances, innumerable meanings, innumerable interpretations.

Therefore, monks, you should strive in order to understand according to the truth: 'This is suffering ... this is the path leading to the end of suffering.'

S. V. 430.

This passage confirms that all of the Buddha's teachings (the entirety of Buddha-Dhamma) can be summed up by or included in the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. Although some teachings do not specifically refer to the Four Noble Truths, they are still encapsulated by this key teaching. The following quotation from the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta*, which describes the suffering and harmful effects of craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), along with describing a wholesome stage of practice on the noble way (*ariya-magga*) towards the final stage of cessation (*nirodha*), is a case in point:

See here, Mahānāma, before my awakening, while I was still only an unawakened bodhisatta, I too clearly saw as it actually is with proper wisdom how sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering, and much despair, and how great is the danger in them. But as long as I still did not attain to the rapture and happiness that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, I could not declare to be one who would not return in pursuit of sensual pleasures. Yet when I clearly saw as it actually is with proper wisdom how sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering, and much despair, and how great is the danger in them, and I attained to the rapture and happiness that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, I could declare to be one who would not return in pursuit of sensual pleasures. {83}

And what, Mahānāma, is the gratification (advantage) in the case of sensual pleasures? There are these five cords of sensual pleasure. What are the five? Forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for,

desired, agreeable, and pleasant, that are inviting and provocative of lust. Sounds cognizable by the ear ... odours cognizable by the nose ... flavours cognizable by the tongue ... tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and pleasant, that are inviting and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure. Now the pleasure and joy that arises dependent on these five cords of sensual pleasure is the gratification in the case of sensual pleasures.

And what, Mahānāma, is the danger (disadvantage) in the case of sensual pleasure? Here, on account of the craft by which a clansman makes a living – whether counting or accounting or calculating or farming or trading or husbandry or archery or the royal service, or whatever craft it may be – he has to face cold, he has to face heat, he is plagued by contact with horseflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and creeping things; he risks death by hunger and thirst. Now this is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of suffering visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its requirement, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

If no wealth comes to the clansman while he works and strives and makes an effort thus, he sorrows, grieves, and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught, crying: ‘My work is in vain, my effort is fruitless!’ Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasure ... the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

If wealth comes to the clansman while he works and strives and makes an effort thus, he experiences pain and anguish in protecting it: ‘How shall neither kings confiscate it, nor thieves plunder it, nor fire burn it, nor water sweep it away, nor hateful heirs make off and squander it?’

And as he guards and protects his wealth, kings confiscate it, or thieves plunder it, or fire burns it, or floods sweep it away, or hateful heirs make off and squander it. And he sorrows, grieves, and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught, crying: ‘What I had I have no longer! My previous possessions are

no longer mine!’ Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasure ... the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the source, sensual pleasures as the requirement, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders; mother quarrels with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father; brother quarrels with brother, sister with sister, brother with sister, friend with friend. And here in their quarrels, disputes, and arguments they attack each other with fists, clods of earth, sticks, or knives, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasure ... the cause being simply sensual pleasures. {84}

Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause ... men take up swords and shields and buckle on bows and quivers, and they march off to war, both sides engaging in pitched battles. With arrows flying, spears hurled, and swords flashing, some of these soldiers are pierced by arrows, some are lanced by spears, some have their heads cut off by swords, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasure ... the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause ... men take up swords and shields and buckle on bows and quivers, and they charge bastions coated in hot mud. With arrows flying, spears hurled, and swords flashing, some of these soldiers are pierced by arrows, some are lanced by spears, some are splashed with boiling manure, some are hacked by harrows, and some have their heads cut off by swords, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasure ... the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

*M. I. 91-2.*

**3. Myriad Forms of Human Suffering:** One of the main objectives so far in this discussion is to distinguish the dukkha in the Four Noble Truths

from the dukkha in the Three Characteristics, and also to see how these two forms of dukkha are related.

In the previous sections, various attributes or descriptions of suffering have been introduced. Note that these descriptions need not be held too strictly. The Buddha presented them as simple and clear examples for establishing a basic understanding of suffering. Yet many of these kinds of suffering vary according to time and place. (It would be possible to make a list of problems and afflictions that are specific say to the modern era.) Yet, in the end all of these variations on suffering may be summarized by the Buddha's words: 'In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.'

At this point let us look at some of the classifications of dukkha found in the scriptures.

The dukkha most often analyzed in the scriptures is dukkha of the Four Noble Truths, because it concerns human beings directly. We should reflect upon this suffering, to be released from it through Dhamma practice. As for the all-inclusive dukkha of the Three Characteristics, it is illustrated just enough for an accurate understanding of reality. The chief, most frequently mentioned groups of dukkha in the scriptures are listed below:

**The 12 Kinds of Dukkha:** This group elucidates the meaning of dukkha in the Four Noble Truths:<sup>47</sup>

1. Birth (*jāti*): birth is suffering because it is a basis for various kinds of affliction:

- A. *Gabbhokkantimūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering of confinement in the womb: a foetus dwells in a dark, stifling place, full of repugnant substances.

<sup>47</sup>E.g.: D. II. 305; S. V. 421; Vism. 498-501; VismṬ. Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā (from Saccavittthārakathāvaṇṇanā to Pañcupādānakkhandaniddesavaṇṇanā). The divisions of birth's afflictions, #1 a-g, are from the commentaries.

- B. *Gabbhāpariharaṇamūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering of carrying the womb. Whenever the mother moves, or eats hot, cold, or spicy food, it affects the child in the womb. {85}
  - C. *Gabbhāvipattimūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering from misfortunes of the womb, for example ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, or Caesarean operation.
  - D. *Vijāyanamūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering of childbirth, including the pounding, twisting, squeezing and severe pain while exiting the narrow canal.
  - E. *Bahinikkhamanamūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering of emergence into the outside world. The newly born infant, whose skin is sensitive as a wound, feels acute pain when handled and washed.
  - F. *Attupakkamamūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering that results from self-inflicted actions, for example suicide, extreme asceticism, refusing to eat due to resentment, or other self-injurious acts.
  - G. *Parupakkamamūlaka-dukkha*: the suffering caused by others' deeds, for example being assaulted, murdered or imprisoned.
2. Aging (*jarā*): aging weakens the organs. The faculties, e.g. the eyes and ears, function defectively, vitality wanes, and agility is lost. The skin wrinkles; it is no longer fair and lustrous. Memory becomes incoherent and faulty. A person's control, both internal and external, weakens, causing great physical and mental distress.
  3. Death (*marāṇa*): if one has committed bad deeds during the course of one's life, they appear as mental images (*nimitta*) at the time of death. One must be separated from cherished people and things. The constituent parts of the body cease to perform their duties, there may be intense physical pain, and one is impotent to remedy the situation.
  4. Grief (*soka*), for example from the loss of a relative.
  5. Lamentation (*parideva*), for example keening at the loss of a relative.

6. Physical pain (*dukkha*), for example wounds, sprains and sickness.<sup>48</sup>
7. Distress (*domanassa*; anguish), which causes crying, beating one's breast, committing suicide, etc.
8. Despair (*upāyāsa*; frustration), for instance the torment of unmitigated grief.
9. Association with disagreeable people or things (*appiya-sampayoga*), for example the need to engage with a person whom one detests.
10. Separation from cherished people or things (*piya-vippayoga*), for example separation from loved ones or the loss of possessions.
11. Not obtaining what one wants; disappointment (*icchitālābha*).
12. The five aggregates, which are the foundation for clinging (*upādāna-khandhā*). All of the aforementioned suffering stems from the five aggregates as objects of clinging. To sum up, one can say that suffering is the five aggregates of clinging. {86}

### **The Two Dukkha (A):**<sup>49</sup>

1. *Paṭicchanna-dukkha*: concealed, not clearly manifest suffering, for example a latent earache or toothache, or the mind smouldering with the 'fires' of lust and anger.
2. *Appaṭicchanna-dukkha*: overt suffering, for example being pricked by a thorn, whipped, or cut by a knife.

<sup>48</sup>Note that this group of *dukkha* does not include illness (*byādhi*), which normally would follow aging. The commentaries explain that illness is not an inevitable form of suffering: many people have illness, but some may not. Also, illness is included in this factor (#6) of physical suffering (*VismṬ*. *Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Saccavittthāarakathāvaṇṇanā*). In some places of the Canon, however, illness is listed separately in this group of *dukkha*; for such cases see the explanation at *VinṬ*. *Dhammacakkappavattanasuttavaṇṇanā*.

<sup>49</sup>*Vism*. 499; *VbhA*. 93; *PañcA*. 167; *VinṬ*. *Dhammacakkappavattanasuttavaṇṇanā*; *VismṬ*. *Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Dukkhaniddesakathāvaṇṇanā*.



### The Two Dukkha (B):<sup>50</sup>

1. *Pariyāya-dukkha*: indirect or implicit dukkha, i.e. every form of dukkha mentioned above excluding painful feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*).
2. *Nippariyāya-dukkha*: explicit dukkha, which is also called *dukkha-dukkha*: the feeling of pain.

The Mahānidessa and the Cūḷanidessa offer many additional categories of dukkha.<sup>51</sup> For matter of simplicity, they can be sorted into the following groups:

1. Suffering as birth (*jāti-dukkha*), aging (*jarā-dukkha*), illness (*byādhidu-kkha*), death (*maraṇa-dukkha*), sorrow, lamentation, pain, anguish and despair (*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa*).
2. The suffering of hell beings (*nerayika-dukkha*), of animals (*tiracchānayanika-dukkha*), of ghosts (*pittivisayika-dukkha*), and of humans (*mānusaka-dukkha*).
3. The suffering experienced from taking birth in a womb (*gabbhokkantimūlaka-dukkha*), from living in a womb (*gabbheṭhitimūlaka-dukkha*), and from exiting a womb (*gabbhavuṭṭhānamūlaka-dukkha*); the suffering inherent in one who is born (*jātassūpanibandhika-dukkha*); the suffering of one who is born, due to being dependent on others (*jātassaparādheyyaka-dukkha*); self-inflicted suffering (*attūpakkama-dukkha*); and suffering inflicted by others (*parūpakkama-dukkha*).
4. Pain (*dukkha-dukkha*), the dukkha of formations (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*), and dukkha inherent in change (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*).
5. Various kinds of diseases, for example eye and ear diseases; thirty-five kinds of diseases are mentioned.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Nd. I. 17-18, 45-47; Nd. II. 7, 14, 54.

6. Illness resulting from eight causes, including bile, phlegm and wind, or a combination of these causes; illness resulting from changes in the weather and irregular exercise; afflictions due to other people's actions – for example being murdered or imprisoned, and the effects of personal actions.
7. Suffering owing to cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination, wind, sun, flies, mosquitoes and crawling creatures.
8. Suffering resulting from the death of one's mother, father, brother, sister, or child.
9. Suffering due to loss of relatives, loss of possessions, loss through sickness, loss of moral conduct, and loss of cherished views and opinions. {87}

In the Mahādukkhakkhandha and the Cūḷaduikkhakkhandha suttas, the Buddha describes many examples of the 'mass of suffering' (*dukkha-khandha*), the plights afflicting humans because of sense desire.<sup>52</sup> They are summarized as follows:

1. The hardship or even loss of life due to one's occupation.
2. The disappointment experienced when one's labour is in vain.
3. The suffering in trying to protect acquired wealth.
4. The grief that ensues when such protection is unsuccessful and wealth is lost, for example to thieves or fire.
5. The disputes and violence between rulers, between householders, between parents and children, between siblings, and between friends, leading to death or serious injury.
6. The slaughter and severe agony of war.
7. The injury and death resulting from invasion.

<sup>52</sup>M. I. 83-90, 91-5.

8. The committal of crimes, for example burglary or adultery, followed by arrest and conviction, and ending in torture and execution.
9. The performance of physical, verbal and mental misdeeds, leading after death to states of deprivation, perdition, and hell.

More references to dukkha are located throughout the scriptures and commentaries. In some places the descriptions have no specific name (as in the examples of the Mahā- and the Cūḷadukkhakkhandha suttas mentioned above), while in others dukkha is identified by special terms such as *saṃsāra-dukkha*,<sup>53</sup> *apāya-dukkha* (suffering of the lower realms), *vaṭṭamūlaka-dukkha* (suffering through the round of rebirth), or *āhārapariyeṭṭhi-dukkha*,<sup>54</sup> to list just a few.<sup>55</sup> {88}

It would be possible to elaborate much more on this subject of suffering, since human beings encounter so many problems, including the afflictions faced by all living creatures, and suffering specific to certain time periods, regions, and circumstances, but it is not necessary to offer a drawn-out explanation. More important is to realize that the many scriptural descriptions exist to promote an understanding of the true nature of suffering. With this understanding we can respond correctly to it. We acknowledge that we must engage with suffering, rather than resort to evasion, self-deception, or to the denial that either suffering does not exist or that it cannot affect us. Such deception only creates more complex problems and more severe affliction. Our responsibility is rather that of facing and understanding suffering (*pariññā-kicca*), to have victory over it, and to be freed from it: this is the practice of walking

<sup>53</sup>E.g.: Vism. 531; VbhA. 145, 149; in some places of the Cūḷaniddesa printed in Thai script, e.g. Nd. II. 7, one finds this term *saṃsāra-dukkha*, but these are misprints; it should read *saṅkhāra-dukkha*.

<sup>54</sup>These last three kinds of suffering are mentioned frequently in the eight subjects that prompt a sense of urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*), e.g. at Vism. 135; DA. III. 795; MA. I. 298; SA. III. 163; etc.; *āhārapariyeṭṭhi-dukkha* (suffering resulting from the search for food) corresponds to item (A) above. The other two terms are included in the descriptions above, if not directly then indirectly.

<sup>55</sup>On various other forms of dukkha see Appendix 3.

the path leading to suffering's cessation, a cessation both temporary and permanent. {89}

### C. NONSELF

#### 1. *Scope*

As explained earlier the factor of nonself (*anattatā*) has a broader application than the factors of impermanence and dukkha. One sees the difference clearly in the Buddha's presentation:

- *Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*: all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.
- *Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*: all conditioned phenomena are subject to stress.
- *Sabbe dhammā anattā*: all things are nonself.

This teaching indicates that conditioned phenomena (and all conditioned phenomena) are impermanent and dukkha. But something exists apart from such phenomena, which is neither impermanent nor subject to stress. All things without exception, however, are *anattā*: they are nonself. Nothing exists which is a self or possesses a self.

The definition of dhamma encompasses all things. As dhamma includes all things it can be subdivided indefinitely. One can, however, classify things into groups and categories. The division pertinent to this discussion is into conditioned things (*saṅkhata-dhamma*) and the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-dhamma*).

*Saṅkhata-dhamma* refers to things created by conditioning factors (*pacaya*). These things can be simply called *saṅkhāra*, and include all materiality and mentality, constituting the five aggregates. *Asaṅkhata-dhamma*, the Unconditioned, is neither created nor supported by conditioning factors; it is also called *visaṅkhāra*: the state transcending the five aggregates, that is, Nibbāna.

One can describe this law of nature in more detail as follows:

- All conditioned things (the five aggregates) are impermanent.
- All conditioned things (the five aggregates) are dukkha.
- All things, both conditioned things and the Unconditioned, are nonself. {90}

## 2. *Basic Definition*

Anattā can be translated as ‘not-self’, ‘selfless’, or ‘nonself’. The statement ‘all things are anattā’ means that all things exist or proceed according to their own nature. They do not exist as or possess a ‘self’ – a substantial entity – that is able to control things at will. As anattā is a negation of *attā*, to comprehend the characteristic of nonself we must first understand the meaning of *attā*.

*Attā* (Sanskrit – *ātman*) refers to an eternal self or substance, which is the purported essence or core of any particular thing, residing permanently in an object. It is both owner and controller, the essential recipient of experience and agent of action. It is that which lies behind all phenomena, including all life, able to direct things in conformity with its needs and desires.

Some religions elaborate by claiming that a superior ‘Self’ or ‘Spirit’ lies behind all worldly phenomena, reigning over the souls or essence of all living beings and inanimate objects. They claim that this supreme Spirit creates and governs all things, or that it is the source and destination of all things and all life. In Hinduism, for example, it is called *Brahmā* or *Paramātmā*.

The gist of the teaching on anattā is the negation of this fixed abiding self, both mundane and transcendent; it asserts that this self is simply an idea stemming from a misapprehension by unawakened human beings, who do not see the true nature of the world. People create a (concept of) self and superimpose it on reality; this (concept of) self then obstructs them from seeing the truth.

A clear understanding of nonself dispels the misapprehension and dissolves the obscuring (idea of) self. The teaching of nonself bids us to

discern with wisdom that all things, all components of reality, exist and proceed in conformity with their own nature. No hidden, abiding self exists as owner or director; things are not subservient to an internal or external control.

A basic definition of selflessness, both in regard to conditioned phenomena and the Unconditioned, is that all things exist in compliance with their nature, and are not subordinate to an external authority. If a substantial, controlling self were to reside in things, phenomena would not be able to exist and proceed as they do according to their own nature. The very nature of phenomena reveals this characteristic of nonself.

To elaborate on this definition one must examine the distinction between conditioned phenomena and the Unconditioned. The Unconditioned, or Nibbāna, on the one hand, is an absolute truth (*dharmadhātu*),<sup>56</sup> existing independent of conditioning factors. It is neither a being, nor a consciousness, nor a self (*nissatta-nijjīva*); it cannot be possessed or controlled; nor does it act in any sort of creative role. {91}

Compounded phenomena, on the other hand, are dependent on and conform to those factors which act as catalysts or creative agents. These phenomena are void of an inner substance that experiences the formative process or controls the five aggregates, commanding the aggregates to follow desire independent of the laws of cause and effect.

A basic definition in the scriptures for anattā is *avasavattanaṭṭhena* (alternatively, *avasavattanato* or *avasavattito*): ‘something is described as nonself in the sense that it is not subject to control’. No one is able to demand or order that things proceed according to his or her desires (things are not subject to our desires).

### 3. *Implied Definition*

Before proceeding, one should understand that the Buddhist teachings refer to a self solely on a conventional level: the self is a relative truth; it is not believed to be absolute. This is made clear by the Buddha’s statement

<sup>56</sup>Literally ‘elemental truth’.

that a Perfectly Enlightened Buddha does not establish a self as part of his doctrine; he does not regard the self as real:

Seniya, the teacher who does not declare a self as real or true, either in this world or the next, is called the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha.

*Kvu. 68; Pug. 38.*

Consequently, the Buddhist teachings do not concern themselves with the existence of self or engage in a diagnosis of self. Moreover, the Buddha stated:

It is impossible for a person endowed with right view (i.e. a stream-enterer) to grasp any thing (*dhamma*) as self.<sup>57</sup>

*A. III. 438.*

With the realization of the supreme state, no reason remains for an arahant to contemplate a self. This is substantiated by the Buddha's designation of an arahant as one who has 'abandoned the self' or 'discarded the self' (*attañjaho/attañjaha*):<sup>58</sup> an arahant has abandoned the belief in a self, the view of existing as or possessing a self. Some passages describe an arahant as 'having abandoned the self, not clinging to anything' (*attaṃ pahāya anupādiyāno*).<sup>59</sup>

The following passage from the Tipiṭaka summarizes this matter: {92}

All formations are impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself; Nibbāna and designations are nonself.

*Vin. VI. (Parivāra) 86; quoted earlier.*

Although a self does not truly exist, attachment to self does, and most people fervently embrace a notion of a fixed self. The Buddha rejected the validity of such a notion, and encouraged people to abandon the attachment to self. In Buddhism, a substantial self is of no importance; it is

<sup>57</sup>'One endowed with right view': *diṭṭhisampanno*.

<sup>58</sup>Sn. 155.

<sup>59</sup>Sn. 157.

not a matter requiring speculation. Buddhism focuses on the attachment to self or on the concept of self that is the object of such attachment. Buddhism teaches people to release the attachment. With its release one's responsibility is fulfilled, and a fixed stable self no longer has relevance.

To summarize, once a person understands that conditioned things are selfless, the topic of self versus nonself is over. A person who has realized the Unconditioned no longer identifies with anything as a self. Furthermore, any explanation for the selfless nature of the Unconditioned, i.e. Nibbāna, becomes redundant. To elaborate on Nibbāna as anattā is unnecessary for the following reasons:

- The only things that people attach to and are able to attach to as self are conditioned phenomena or the five aggregates.
- All that unawakened people recognize, know, and think about lies within the confines of the five aggregates. Even when speaking of Nibbāna, the Nibbāna they refer to is not the real Nibbāna, but part of the five aggregates. Awakened beings know Nibbāna for themselves and have abandoned any belief in self, so they need not refer to this subject of self. If they do speak, they simply state that arahants have completely 'abandoned the (belief in) self' (*attañjaha*).
- The duty of a teacher in this context is only to prompt people to know and then abandon their misunderstanding which leads them to grasp conditioned things as self.
- Once people are fully aware, abandoning erroneous views and ceasing to grasp the five aggregates as self, they do not search for anything else to cling to as a self, because they have clearly realized Nibbāna, which transcends the five aggregates along with all belief in self. Those who have realized Nibbāna discern by themselves the selfless quality of the Unconditioned; there is no further need to discuss this matter. Transcending the state of an ordinary person (from the level of stream-entry upwards) results in the end of clinging to and doubting about a self; the obligation to discuss the selfless nature of the Unconditioned vanishes automatically. In



other words, for awakened beings, no reference to a self arises to cling to, to doubt over, or to debate about.

The standard scriptural explanations of anattā therefore refer to conditioned phenomena (i.e. the five aggregates), which are of everyday relevance to people and comprise all things that ordinary unawakened people are able to conceive of from their experience. {93}

#### **4. Scriptural Explanation**

As stated above, the common scriptural explanations of anattā focus on conditioned things because these teachings are presented to ordinary, unawakened people and touch upon everyday issues.

Furthermore, those things that ordinary unawakened people are able to conceive of as self are limited to conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*), or limited to the five aggregates. Therefore, the explanations of nonself focus exclusively on the five aggregates. This corresponds with the Buddha's words:

Monks, whichever ascetics and brahmins who regard self in various ways all regard the five aggregates subject to clinging, or a certain one among them. What five?

Monks, the uninstructed, ordinary person ... regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He regards feeling as self ... perception as self ... volitional formations as self ... consciousness as self ... or self as in consciousness. This way of regarding things thus becomes his fixed belief that 'I exist'.

*S. III. 46.*

In other words, (belief in) a self only exists where the five aggregates exist, and exists because of clinging to these aggregates, as explained by the Buddha:

Monks, when what exists, by relying on what, by adhering to what, does such a view as this arise: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self’?....

When there is form, monks, by relying on form, by adhering to form, such a view as this arises: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’ When there is feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, by relying on consciousness, by adhering to consciousness, such a view as this arises: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self.’

*S. III. 203-204.*

At this point let us examine some of the numerous scriptural explanations of nonself. The Paṭisambhidāmagga defines something as anattā in the sense that it is insubstantial (*asāraḥkaṭṭhena*).<sup>60</sup> Insubstantial means to be without essence, to be without a core, and to possess nothing that is truly stable or enduring.

Insubstantial means the absence of an essential, nuclear self (*atta-sāra*), which is thought of as a self (*attā*), an abider (*nivāsi*), an agent (*kāraṇa*), an experiencer (*vedaka*), or an autonomous master (*sayamvasi*). {94} For whatever is impermanent is dukkha; it is unable to prevent its transience or its oppression from rising and falling. How then can it exist as a doer, and so on? Hence, the Buddha said: ‘Monks, if this physical form, for example, were self, surely it would not be subject to affliction.’

*Vism. 610.*

Note that this definition of non-essence or selflessness includes the absence of a creative role or a lack of intrinsic control. If one were to possess a stable enduring self as a core, then one could resist change; one would not be subject to change. Similarly, if one were master over things, one could manipulate possessions according to desire. Reality, however, is not this way. A distinctive feature of the absence of an abiding self is the inability to dominate conditions, and their opposition to desire.

<sup>60</sup>Ps. I. 37, 53; Ps. II. 200; referred to at *Vism.* 610.

Note that Buddha-Dhamma considers even Brahma, God, or whichever supreme creator deity as existing within the conditioned world and confined to the five aggregates, and thus wielding restricted power.

In this sense, the commentaries prefer to define anattā as ‘the inability to control’ or ‘not subject to control’ (*avasavattanaṭṭhena* or *avasavattanato*).<sup>61</sup> Likewise, they explain that no one can force formations into subservience, in defiance of cause and effect, by demanding that arisen phenomena not exist, that existent phenomena not age, and that aging phenomena not perish.<sup>62</sup> They quote the Buddha’s words:

A person cannot in regard to physical form obtain [as wished for]: ‘May form be this way, may form not be that way.’ (Same with the other aggregates.)<sup>63</sup>

*VbhA. 49; VinT.*

When one thoroughly examines the nature of all things, one finds that no fixed and permanent self exists, as is implied by giving things particular names. There is merely a natural process (*dhamma-pavatti*) – a process of conditionality – or a process of materiality and mentality (*khandha-pavatti*), which originates from the confluence of manifold constituents. All of these constituents arise and cease in a continual, intercausal relationship, both within a single isolated dynamic and within all creation. This being so, we should take note of four significant points:

- There is no true, enduring self within any phenomenon, existing as an essence or core.
- All conditioned things arise from the convergence of components.
- These components continually arise and disintegrate, and are co-dependent, constituting a specific dynamic of nature.

<sup>61</sup>Vism. 628, 640; occasionally one finds *avasavattito*.

<sup>62</sup>Vism. 618; VinT. Mahākhandhakaṃ Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā.

<sup>63</sup>Mahākhandhakaṃ Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā refers to the Buddha’s sermon in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta (S. III. 66).

- If one separates a specific dynamic into subordinate dynamics, one sees that these too are co-dependent. {95}

The manifestation and transformation of a dynamic is determined by the relationship of its components. The dynamic proceeds without the intervention by a 'self'. No separate self exists, neither an internal enduring self that resists cause and effect and is able to direct the activity according to its wishes, nor an independent external agent.

Human beings confer names on many of these assemblies and formations, for example 'person', 'horse', 'cat', 'ant', 'car', 'shop', 'house', 'clock', 'pen', 'Mr. Jones', and 'Ms. Smith'. These names, however, are simply conventional labels, established for convenience of communication. The entities do not really exist: they do not have a real self, a separate identity distinct from their collective components. Upon analysis of these entities what remains is each unit or part with its own specific name. It is not possible to find a self within such entities, no matter how deeply one searches.

By giving names to things one creates a provisional self that is superimposed on the true condition. It is superimposed randomly, without any direct relationship to, control over, or affect on that particular dynamic, except when one clings to the conventional designation (clinging is then one component of the process). If names are just conventional labels, arbitrarily superimposed, then it is self-evident that they are powerless.

When elements convene and manifest as particular forms, we assign agreed-upon names to these forms. As long as the components are conjoined, they sustain the particular shape corresponding to a conventional identity. When the components split up, however, or the surrounding conditions are unsupportive, the form disappears. For example, when temperature rises above a certain level, ice melts; the entity called 'ice' vanishes, with water remaining. With a further increase in temperature, water evaporates, turning to steam; that entity of 'water' ceases to be. Likewise, when paper is burned, only ashes remain; the entity called 'paper' is no longer found.

The dynamics of nature occur in line with cause and effect; they do not obey desire, and they are not influenced by these randomly established identities. They do not obey desire because, speaking accurately, desire does not serve an autonomous self; desire is one component within a causal process, and it is not the agent that accomplishes a deed. Desire is only able to produce results when it acts as an impetus, affecting subsequent conditions like effort or action, in conformity with cause and effect.

A distinct, independent self cannot exist; were it to exist, it would not be subject to causality – it would be fixed. It would impede the causal flow, rendering all other elements dispensable. Any fluent dynamic would be nullified. Such a self could interfere with and modify conditions, causing a deviation from causality. In truth, however, all conditioned things proceed according to cause and effect. A separate self does not truly exist, either within a dynamic or externally. The only self that exists is the conventional self, which needs to be understood or else it ends up deceiving and oppressing people. {96}

The basic meaning of *anattatā* – that all things arise as a composition of interrelated parts according to cause and effect, are void of an enduring self, and are without a fixed creative agent – is confirmed by many references in the scriptures, for example:

Just as when a space is enclosed by timber, twine, clay and thatch, it comes to be called a ‘house’, so too, when a space is enclosed by bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be called a ‘body’ (*rūpa*).

*M. I. 190.*

Māra asked Vajirā Bhikkhunī:

Who created this being (person)? Where is the creator of beings?  
Where does a being originate? Where does a being cease?

[Vajirā answered:]

Māra, do you believe in a being? Do you hold [such] a view? This is purely a mass of formations; here, no being can be found. Just as with the combination of various parts, the term ‘wagon’ ensues, so too, with the five aggregates the conventional term ‘being’ ensues. Indeed, there is only dukkha that arises, abides, and passes away. Nothing but dukkha comes to be, nothing but dukkha ceases.

S. I. 135.

Māra asked the same question to Selā Bhikkhunī, who answered:

No one fashioned this shape; no one created this being. Dependent upon causes, it has arisen; with the ending of causes, it ceases. Just as seeds when sown on a field will sprout, owing to both the nutrients in the soil and the moisture within the seeds, so too, these aggregates, elements, and six senses arise dependent upon causes, and cease with the dissolution of those causes.

S. I. 134.

A collection of soldiers, vehicles and weapons is called an army. We call a group of buildings, houses, people and enterprises a city. A hand with fingers placed in a certain position is called a fist. Uncurl the fist and only a hand with fingers remains. Similarly, when one separates a hand into ancillary parts, then it too no longer exists. One can continue to subdivide, but one will be unable to find any static units or elements. The suttas contain only teachings of materiality and mentality (*nāma-rūpa*); there is no mention of a fixed ‘being’ or ‘person’.<sup>64</sup> {97}

There are four principal definitions of anattā compiled by the commentators. Although these definitions are normally used in reference to conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*), they also apply to the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-dhamma*). Something is considered nonself for the following reasons:<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See Vism. 593-5.

<sup>65</sup> Vism. 618; MA. II. 113; VbhA. 48; See also VinṬ. Mahākhandhakaṃ Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā; VismṬ. Maggāmaggañānadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā, Rūpasattakasammasanākathāvaṇṇanā.

- *Suññato*: because it exists in a state of emptiness; it exists according to its own nature. It is without a self as essence or core (*atta-sāra*). It is void of a real identity as ‘person’, ‘I’, ‘him’, or ‘her’. There is no occupant, agent, or experiencer apart from the causal process, or apart from provisional designations. Things exist independently from their assigned or cherished identities, for example ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘object A’ or ‘object B’.
- *Assāmikato*: because it is ownerless; it does not belong to a person or to a self. No separate self exists that possesses phenomena. Phenomena exist according to their inherent conditioned or unconditioned nature.
- *Avasavattanato*: because it is not subject to control; it does not depend on anyone. It is not under anyone’s power and it is not dictated by a ‘self’. A related term used is *anissarato*, translated as ‘not subject to a ruler’ or ‘not subject to the authority by a controlling self’. We have no absolute power over things; we must concur with causes. In some places one finds the term *akāmakāriyato*, translated as ‘unable to do as one pleases’. Things do not obey desires; the mind of desire cannot dictate things. If one wants things to be a certain way, then one must conform to or bring about the proper causes and conditions. Things depend on causes and conditions, not on someone’s power or desire. For example, it is impossible to order something that has arisen to disappear, or to not change, or to not deteriorate.
- *Atta-paṭikkhepato*: because it is inconsistent with or opposes a self. Were a substantial, fixed self to exist, it would conflict with phenomena, causing them to deviate from their own inherent nature. Ordinary people can recognize this from examining conditioned phenomena. The causal process of interrelated components is inherently incompatible with a separate, autonomous self, which would dictate or interfere with that process. Such an isolated self cannot exist. If it were to exist, a causal dynamic could not occur; the course of events would necessarily follow the dictates of self. {98} Furthermore, the law of causality is intrinsically complete; it does not require a controlling agent to intervene.

There are two additional definitions of *anattā*, which, although included within the four points mentioned above, are particularly important and should thus be distinguished. They refer exclusively to conditioned phenomena, highlighting their dynamic nature:

- *Suddha-saṅkhārappuñjato* or *suddha-dhammapuñjato*: Things exist purely as a mass of formations, or as a mass of phenomena (*dhamma*), that is, materiality (*rūpa-dhamma*) and/or mentality (*nāma-dhamma*). Another term used is *aṅgasambhārato*, meaning that things exist as a composition of subsidiary parts. They arise from the gathering together of such parts. They are not absolute enduring ‘units’ or ‘entities’. There is no real ‘being’, ‘person’ or ‘self’ over and above these components. (This definition is already stressed in point 1 above.)
- *Yathāpaccaya-pavattito*: Things exist following causes and conditions. They exist as a collection of interrelated and co-dependent parts. Things do not follow a person’s desires, and no self exists, either as an internal essence or as an external agent, which resists or directs the process. (All four of the above points include this definition, especially points 3 and 4.)

To sum up, all things exist according to their own nature. In the case of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*), they proceed according to specific causes and conditions. If the determinant causes exist, a phenomenon originates in conformity with them. If these causes cease, the phenomenon ceases (to exist in that way). Things do not obey supplication or desire. They are not ‘entities’ or ‘things’ as commonly identified, and they do not belong to anyone. As explained earlier, these definitions of *anattā* presented here focus on conditioned phenomena, which ordinary people engage with and can learn from.

One of the major misunderstandings for people is the belief that a ‘thinker’ exists apart from thinking, a ‘planner’ exists apart from volition, a ‘feeler’ exists apart from feelings, or an ‘actor’ exists apart from actions.



This misunderstanding has trapped many great philosophers, who were therefore unable to realize the truth and be free from the enshrouding influence of self-view. René Descartes, the famous French philosopher, is an example, who after much consideration, postulated, ‘I think, therefore I am.’<sup>66</sup>

The belief in a distinct self or soul is common to unenlightened beings everywhere. This belief seems true and logical through ordinary awareness, but once one thoroughly investigates the premise of self, contradictions appear. {99}

People often posed questions about the self to the Buddha, for example: ‘*Who makes contact (who cognizes)? Who feels? Who craves? Who clings?*’ The Buddha answered that these are unsuitable questions, which stem from a false assumption; they are not consistent with reality. Appropriate questions are: ‘*What is the condition giving rise to contact? What is the condition giving rise to feeling? What are the conditions giving rise to craving and clinging?*’<sup>67</sup>

Just as thought, intention, desire, and feeling are components of a physical and mental process, so too the experience of a ‘thinker’ or a ‘designer’ is a component of this process. All of these components exist in an intercausal relationship. There is simply thought and an experience of a ‘thinker’ (that is, a false belief in a thinker – a thinker does not exist) arising within a single dynamic.

The experience of a thinker is actually a thought pattern; it is one instant in the thought process. The erroneous belief in a thinker arises due to a person’s inability to distinguish the related parts, and to distinguish each momentary event within the continuum.

At the time of ordinary thought, there is no experience of a ‘thinker’; and at the instance of experiencing a ‘thinker’ there is no (other) thought. While thinking of a certain subject, one does not reflect upon a ‘thinker’; and while reflecting upon a ‘thinker’, one does not think about the previous subject of consideration. Thinking of a subject and experiencing

<sup>66</sup>*Cogito, ergo sum* (R. Descartes, 1596-1650).

<sup>67</sup>S. II. 13-14.

a ‘thinker’ (thinking of a ‘thinker’) are actually different moments of thought, which exist in the same dynamic. The ‘thinker’ is just a mental fabrication, which then becomes an object for further speculation during another period of time.

The fallacy mentioned above results from a lack of thorough attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) and is classified as one of the six views mentioned in the following teaching by the Buddha:

When that unenlightened being attends unwisely in this way, one of the six views arises in him:

There arises in him the [fixed] view, as true and established, that

1. ‘I have a self’ ...
2. ‘I do not have a self’ ...
3. ‘I know the self by way of the self’ ...
4. ‘I know nonself by way of the self’ ...
5. ‘I know the self by way of nonself’;
6. or else he has some such view as this: ‘It is this self of mine that dictates, feels, and experiences here and there the fruit of good and bad actions.’

M. I. 8.

It was mentioned earlier how a name assigned to a particular entity is a contrived and arbitrarily superimposed self, which, unless clung to, has no relationship to or effect on the causal dynamic. Although such a self does not truly exist, clinging to an idea of self creates problems. This is because the clinging becomes a part of the dynamic, determining other components, and affecting the dynamic as a whole.

Clinging to a sense of self is an unwholesome factor since it stems from ignorance; it contaminates other elements of the process, interfering adversely with the causal stream. {100} One effect of clinging is that it

produces a conflict within the dynamic, resulting in a feeling of oppression or suffering. People who hold tightly to the conventional self as real are afflicted by this grasping.

Those who fully comprehend conventional labels, on the other hand, do not cling to the idea of a self, seeing merely a causal continuum. These people use whichever term is commonly assigned to a particular object, but they can enhance the dynamic as they please, by acting in harmony with its determining factors. They do not allow craving and clinging to oppress them, thus avoiding the consequent suffering. Such people know how to benefit from conventional labels without suffering the harm of attaching to them.

Another detrimental effect of clinging to a self is the generation of unwholesome mind states, known as ‘defilements’ (*kilesa*). In particular, these include:

- *Taṇhā*: craving; selfishness; the lust for gratification.
- *Māna*: conceit; self-judgement; the yearning for personal power.
- *Diṭṭhi*: the firm grasping to personal opinions; the stubborn, unyielding belief that one’s views represent the truth.

These three defilements intensify both internal and external discord. People who do not see through conventional labels cling to randomly established identities as the truth and allow these defilements to dictate their behaviour, compounding misery for themselves and others. Those who penetrate the relative truth of conventional labels, however, do not cling to them, and are freed from the influence of these defilements. They are not deceived by such thoughts as ‘This belongs to me’, ‘I am this way’, or ‘This is who I am’. They conduct their life with wisdom. A clear understanding of conventional labels, and action in harmony with causes and conditions, is the basis from which true safety and freedom from suffering extends.

Another error that tends to entangle people is vacillation from one extreme opinion to another. Some people strictly believe in the self

as real and permanent; they think that the self makes up the essence of a human being, and that it is not just a conventional entity. Each person, they say, has a real, stable, eternal self; even when a person dies the soul/self/spirit (*ātman/attā*) continues unchanged: the self does not disappear or disintegrate. Some believe that this soul reincarnates, while others believe that it awaits judgement from the highest God for eternal salvation or damnation. Such views fall under the category of eternalism (*sassata-ditṭhi* or *sassata-vāda*): the belief that the self or soul is real and everlasting.

Another group of people believe that such a self exists, that a person exists as a definite identity, but that this self is temporary: it disintegrates. At death, they claim, the self breaks apart and ceases. This view is called annihilationism (*uccheda-ditṭhi* or *uccheda-vāda*): the belief that the self or soul is impermanent; it exists temporarily and then breaks up and vanishes.

Scholars of Buddhist studies may also embrace one of these views if they lack clear understanding. Those who study the law of kamma in connection to the round of rebirth (*samsāra-vaṭṭa*) may hold an eternalist view, regarding the self as permanent. Those who misapprehend the teachings of anattā, on the other hand, may hold an annihilationist view, believing that nothing exists after death. {101}

The common point of misunderstanding for proponents of these two extremes is the belief that a being or person exists as a real, fixed entity. One party believes that this entity is constant and eternal, while the other believes that this entity breaks up and vanishes at death.

Besides these two, there is another group with an even more extreme view, believing that the absence of self means that nothing at all exists. If no one exists, then no one experiences results. Therefore, actions have no consequences, actions are insignificant, and there is no accountability regarding actions. Speaking simply, there is no kamma.

One can divide this last-named kind of belief into three categories. One faction believes that actions are meaningless, or that actions bear no fruit. This is called the doctrine of the inefficacy of action (*akiriya-ditṭhi* or *akiriya-vāda*). Another faction believes that things occur haphazardly, by

chance, without any causes. This is called the doctrine of non-causality or accidentalism (*ahetuka-dīṭṭhi* or *ahetuka-vāda*). The third faction believes that absolutely nothing exists: nothing exists with any value or meaning. This is called nihilism (*natthika-dīṭṭhi* or *natthika-vāda*).

Since all things exist as a causal continuum, originating from the merging of components, there is no self which either endures or disintegrates. In this very instant no ‘person’ or ‘self’ exists; where can one find an enduring or dissolving self? The Buddha’s teaching negates both eternalism and annihilationism.

Since the dynamics of nature consist of interrelated, causally dependent components, how can one claim that nothing exists, or that things occur haphazardly and by chance? The teaching negates the doctrines of nihilism and non-causality.

As dynamics change according to inherent causal factors, each agent within a dynamic produces an effect; none is void of effect. Moreover, results ensue without a need for a ‘recipient’ of such results; results are intrinsic to the dynamic. Notionally, one can say that the dynamic itself is the recipient. These results are more certain than if a stable self were to exist as the recipient, since the self could reject unwelcome results. As the law of causality exists, how can one claim that actions are meaningless or have no results? The teaching negates the doctrine of the inefficacy of action.

The following passages from the Visuddhimagga corroborate the explanations presented above:

Truly, in this world there is only mentality and matter. Here there is no being or person to be found. This mentality and matter is empty. It is fashioned like an instrument (by conditioning factors) – just a mass of instability (*dukkha*) like grass and sticks. {102}

Vism. 595.

Suffering exists, but no sufferer can be found. Actions exist, but no agent. Nibbāna exists, but no one who is quenched. The Path exists, but no wayfarer.

Vism. 513.

There is no doer of a deed, or one who reaps the deed's results; phenomena alone flow on. This is right view. While kamma and fruition (*vipāka*) thus causally maintain their round, as seed and tree succeed in turn, no first beginning can be known. Nor in the future round of births (*saṃsāra*) can an absence of this cycle of kamma and fruition be discerned. Adherents of other sects, not knowing this, have failed to gain self-mastery (*asayaṃvasī* – they are dependent on others because of wrong view). They assume a being (*satta-saññā*), viewing it as eternal or annihilated. They adopt the sixty-two kinds of views, each contradicting the other. The stream of craving bears them on, the mesh of views entangles them. And as the stream thus bears them on, they are not freed from suffering. A disciple of the Buddha, with direct knowledge of this fact, penetrates this deep and subtle void conditionality.

There is no kamma in fruition, nor does fruition exist in kamma. Though they are empty of one another, no fruit exists without the act. Similarly, fire does not exist inside sunlight, a [magnifying] glass, or in cow dung [used for fuel], nor yet outside them, but is kindled by their conjunction. So neither can the fruit be found within a deed, nor without; nor does a deed still persist [in the fruit it has produced]. Kamma of its fruit is void; no fruit exists yet in an act. And still the fruit is born of kamma, dependent on kamma. For here there is no Creator God, no Creator of the round of births; phenomena alone flow on, dependent on the marriage of conditions.<sup>68</sup>

Vism. 602-3

Natural phenomena arise wholly from causes; they are subject to stress, impermanent, unstable and inconstant. All things arise from other things in mutual dependence. There is no personal or external self within this continuum.

Phenomena give rise to other phenomena by the union of causes and conditions. The Buddha taught the Dhamma for the cessation

of causes. With the cessation of causes, the cycle (*vaṭṭa*) is broken, and revolves no more. The sublime life (*brahmacariya*) exists to end all suffering in this way. When no being can be found, there is neither annihilation nor eternity. {103}

*Vismṭ. Paññābhūminiddesaṇṇanā, Bhavacakkakathāvaṇṇanā.*

To summarize, the teaching of *anattā* confirms the following points:

- It negates both the doctrines of eternalism and annihilationism.
- It negates the belief in a supreme God who created the world and governs the destiny of human beings, i.e. theistic determinism (*issaranimmita-vāda*).
- It is consistent with the teaching of *kamma* as defined by Buddha-Dhamma, at the same time negating the following doctrines: the claim that actions have no results (doctrine of the inefficacy of action); the doctrine of past-action determinism (*pubbekatavāda*), for example of the Nigaṇṭhā Order (Jainism); the doctrine of *kamma* involving a soul or a caste system (for example of Hinduism); the claim that things occur by chance, without causes (accidentalism); and the doctrine of nihilism.
- It reveals the supreme state, the final goal (*parama-dhamma*) of Buddhism, which differs from the goal of religions that profess a soul (*attavāda*).

#### D. SUMMARY

The three characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* are linked; they are three facets of the same truth, as is seen in the Buddha's frequent teaching: *Whatever is impermanent is dukkha; whatever is dukkha is nonself (yad'aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad'anattā)*. This passage is often followed by the statement: *Whatever is nonself should be seen with correct*

<sup>68</sup>Trans.: based on Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's translation.

wisdom, as it truly is thus: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’<sup>69</sup> The relationship is also evident in the frequent exchange of questions and answers:

‘Is material form, etc., permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent.’

‘Is what is impermanent oppressive or easeful?’

‘Oppressive.’

‘Of that which is impermanent, oppressive and of the nature to change, is it proper to consider thus: “This is mine, I am this, this is my self?”’

*E.g.: S. III. 68; quoted earlier.*

A brief explanation of the relationship between the three characteristics, and of the fact that they are three aspects of the same truth, can be formulated thus: all things originate by the union of component parts. Each of these parts arises, is sustained, and disintegrates, acting in turn as a condition for the other parts, in perpetual transformation. One can refer to this composite as a ‘causal continuum’, which has the following characteristics:

1. The arising and disintegration of components; the instability of the components or of the entire process: *aniccatā*.
2. The pressure on the components or on the entire dynamic by rise and decline; their being subject to alteration, and their inability to remain in an original state: *dukkhatā*.
3. The absence of a fixed ‘core’ that governs the collection of components, and the requirement for the components to accord with causes and conditions; the characteristic of nonself: *anattatā*. {104}

By observing these three characteristics simultaneously, any object conventionally referred to as a distinct entity is seen as a composite of

<sup>69</sup>E.g.: S. IV. 1.



myriad clustering constituents. These constituents are unstable, continually rising and ceasing. They split up and disperse subject to reciprocal stress and friction, resulting in transformation. They depend upon the relationship of causes and conditions, which control and give form to the particular continuum. None of the components exists as a self; they proceed in line with causality, not in compliance with desire.

Although that which is impermanent is dukkha, and that which is dukkha is nonself, the converse is not always true, that whatever is nonself must be impermanent and dukkha. All conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent, subject to stress, and selfless, yet all things (*dhamma*), both conditioned things and the Unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*), although nonself, need not invariably be impermanent and dukkha. Something exists which is permanent and free of dukkha. The Unconditioned (*Nibbāna*), although selfless, is beyond both impermanence and dukkha.

In this sense, the definitions of the three characteristics as facets of one truth apply to conditioned phenomena, following the explanation of nonself mentioned earlier. Similarly, the selfless quality of the Unconditioned should be understood in conformity with the implied definition described above.

### 3.4 CONCEALERS OF THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

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Although impermanence, dukkha and selflessness are common characteristics to all things and reveal themselves constantly, people generally do not notice them. They are obscured. If one does not pay attention and investigate correctly, one does not recognize the obscuring factors. These factors include:<sup>70</sup>

- Continuity (*santati*): conceals impermanence.
- Movement (*iriyāpatha*): conceals dukkha.
- Solidity (*ghana*): conceals nonself.

<sup>70</sup>Vism. 640; VbhA. 50; VismṬ. Paṭipadāññāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā.

By failing to pay close attention to arising and ceasing, to birth and decay, one allows continuity (*santati*) to obscure the characteristic of impermanence. All things that we experience perpetually rise and pass, but such rising and ceasing occurs in a continuous and rapid way. This rapid succession deceives people into viewing things as stable and unchanging. For instance, the image of oneself or of a friend appears the same as it did shortly before, but as time passes one realizes that change has occurred. In truth, however, transformation happens incessantly, without any visible gap.

An example of this deception is when one perceives a spinning propeller as a single motionless disk. When the speed of rotation slows one sees a propeller with several moving blades. Similarly, when a person quickly waves a torch in a circular motion it appears as a circle of light. Another example is a light bulb, which is seen as a still, bright sphere, but in reality the light results from a rapidly fluctuating electric current. When one applies the proper means, paying careful attention to the rising and ceasing of things, then impermanence – *aniccatā* – becomes clear.

Likewise, with a lack of attention to perpetual pressure, movement (*iriyāpatha*) obscures the characteristic of dukkha. People normally require a span of time to notice instability, an object's inability to maintain or be sustained in an original shape due to stress and friction within its component parts. If in the meantime the object is moved or modified, or the observer is separated from it, the pressure and tension is not obvious. Our experience of things usually occurs in the context of such movement, and so dukkha is not recognized. {72}

Take for example the human body. One need not wait until the body perishes; even in daily life stress exists within the body, preventing a person from remaining still in one particular position. If one must remain in a single posture for long, whether standing, sitting, walking, or lying down, the physical strain steadily increases to the point of pain and exhaustion, until it is unbearable. One must then move, or change posture.<sup>71</sup>

Once the pressure (a consequence of the mark of dukkha) in the body ceases, the feeling of pain (*dukkha-vedanā*) also ceases. (When a feeling

<sup>71</sup>Trans.: *iriyāpatha* ('posture') literally means 'mode of movement'.

of pain vanishes, there usually arises a feeling of ease in its place, which we call 'pleasure'. But this is simply a feeling. In reality there is just an attenuation and absence of dukkha – pressure.) Remaining for long in a single posture hurts and one hastens to shift position. Normally, people continually move to avoid a feeling of discomfort. By evading discomfort, the dukkha, a truth inherent to all conditions, is consequently overlooked.

Similarly, with a failure to separate an object into various elements, the characteristic of nonself is obscured by solidity (*ghana*): something existing as a lump, a mass, or an amalgamated unit. All conditioned things are created by a merging of component elements. Once the elements are separated, that integrated unit called by a specific name no longer exists. Generally, human beings do not discern this truth, it being obscured by the perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*): the recognition or denotation of something as a consolidated entity.

This is consistent with the Thai folk saying: 'One sees the coat, but not the cloth; one sees the doll, but not the plastic.' People may be deceived by the image of a coat, failing to notice the fabric with which it has been tailored. In truth, there is no coat; there are only numerous threads woven into a pattern. If the threads are unravelled the cloth no longer exists. Likewise, a child who only sees a doll is deluded by its image; the plastic, which is the real substance of the doll, is not recognized. If one discerns the truth then there is only plastic; no doll can be found. Even the plastic material originates from the successive formation of component elements. The perception of solidity obscures the characteristic of nonself in the manner shown by these simple examples. If one separates and analyzes the components, the nature of nonself becomes clear. One sees things as anattā.

### 3.5 NONSELF AND NO-SELF

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Many statements by the Buddha in the Suttanipāṭa describe arahants – those who have realized the goal of the holy life – as being without *attā* and *nirattā*.<sup>72</sup> Arahants have neither a ‘self’ nor an ‘absence of self’.

The Mahāniddeśa defines the word *attā* as ‘a belief in self’ (*attadiṭṭhi*) or ‘a belief in an enduring eternal self’ (i.e. an eternalist view). It defines *nirattā* as an adherence to an annihilationist view. Another definition of *attā* is ‘something grasped’, and another definition for *nirattā* is ‘something to be relinquished’.

Therefore an arahant does not believe in a self or in an absence of self (an annihilation of self). An arahant neither clings to anything nor needs to get rid of anything.

The Mahāniddeśa explains further that whoever clings must have something to relinquish, and whoever has something to relinquish must be clinging. An arahant has transcended both clinging and relinquishing.<sup>73</sup>

These explanations by the Buddha and the commentators elucidate the meaning of *anattā*. {105}

Generally, people firmly believe in a self. At a coarse level they view the body as the self, but upon deeper inspection, perceiving that the body cannot be the self since physical change is so obvious, they identify with the mind, or mental qualities, for example feelings, memory, intelligence, and awareness. Indeed, they cling to one of the five aggregates as self, or to a unity of body and mind, that is, to all the five aggregates. Some people are more subtle, reckoning that the body and mind cannot be the self, but that a distinct self – a real, substantial, governing self or soul – abides within or beyond the body and mind.

<sup>72</sup>Alternatively, *attaṃ* and *nirattaṃ*. The Siam Raṭṭha edition of the Tipiṭaka in Thai script has *attā* and *nirattaṃ* in some places, *attaṃ* and *nirattaṃ* in others (see Sn. 154, 168, 180, and related passages at Sn. 157, 213.) In other editions, however, I have found only *attā* and *nirattā*.

<sup>73</sup>Nd. I. 82, 247, 352-53, and see related passages at Nd. I. 90-91, 107-8; Nd. II. 35.

Some philosophers and religious leaders include a concept of self in their pursuit of the ultimate reality. Some profess to have attained or realized this truth – the Supreme Being – called by various names, for example: Paramātman, Brahmā, or God. Many of these philosophers and religious leaders are highly intelligent and skilled, referred to in the scriptures as ‘excellent ascetics and brahmins’ or ‘divine philosophers’, and the conditions they describe are extremely profound. But as long as these conditions still possess a fixed identity, or still pertain to a self, they are not yet the supreme, ultimate Truth, as they are still tainted by attachment.

Ultimate Truth does exist; Buddha-Dhamma is not a nihilistic doctrine. One cannot realize this truth, however, with knowledge obscured and distorted by false perceptions, and with a mind confined by grasping to them. The reason that many philosophers and religious seekers are unable to realize Ultimate Truth, although they clearly know that the self of the body-mind (five aggregates) formerly adhered to is not real, is because they still maintain two kinds of self-deception. These two deceptions, characteristic of unawakened beings, are:

- *Self-identification*: The cherishing of a residual self-image maintained since the body is clung to as self. However refined this image becomes, it remains essentially the same or is of the same lineage, and is a result of misunderstanding. When such philosophers and seekers encounter and identify with an aspect of reality, they fix this image or concept on that condition, distorting the truth. Whatever is known by them is therefore not the pure, unadulterated Truth.
- *Clinging (upādāna)*: Ever since believing in a rudimentary idea of self, these people harbour a tendency towards attachment. Besides sustaining a misguided self-view, they relate to phenomena with attachment, which prevents them from realizing the true nature of things. {106}

In brief, these religious seekers and philosophers are not yet liberated. They are neither liberated from misconceptions nor from clinging. These

two deceptions are in fact inseparable: combining them, one can say that these individuals mistakenly take an idea of self, lingering from an original attachment, and overlay it onto reality or nature. As a consequence they remain bound.

Liberation is possible only when one stops investing things with a fixed identity; phenomena then cease to exist as substantial entities, and one realizes Ultimate Truth. Buddha-Dhamma teaches that the self is a supposition, a conventional reality. Ultimate Truth is diametrically opposed to conventional truth. The self applies to conventions; when one transcends conventions, one attains the Ultimate Truth, which is free from self. Stated simply, the Truth is not self; if there is still a self, it is not the Truth. Freed from conventions, the self ceases; by letting go, the self vanishes.

The prime factors for delusion are attachment and fixed notions of self. As the self does not truly exist except on a conventional level, it is simply a belief. The self is just an idea; it is not a true unchanging entity. *Attā* in the above quotation from the Suttanipāṭa can therefore be defined in two ways, firstly as ‘self’ or ‘belief in self’, and secondly as ‘something grasped’.

In addition, the passage mentions the pair of *attā* and *nirattā*, and explains that an arahant has neither *attā* nor *nirattā*. *Nirattā* can also be defined in two ways, firstly as ‘(clinging to) no-self’, that is, an annihilationist view, and secondly as ‘something to be relinquished’. When one abandons the misapprehension of conventions and no longer attaches to a self, the matter is finished. One has reached freedom and ease; to cling to a notion of no-self is unnecessary. The abandonment of clinging is the end: nothing else is seized. With nothing seized there is nothing to be relinquished, as confirmed by the Buddha’s words:

That which is clung to does not exist; where then is there something to relinquish?

*Natthi attā kuto nirattaṃ vā.*

*Sn. 180; explained at Nd. I. 352-3.*

Even the expression ‘clinging to a self’ is strictly incorrect. Since the self is only a conventional reality, the proper expression is ‘clinging to an idea of self’. Our task is to cease grasping the belief in or concept of self. The self does not need to be relinquished, because there is no self that can be possessed; how then can it be relinquished?

To believe in a self is to form a concept and superimpose it on reality. One should abandon forming such a fixed image. If one fails to do this, then although one has let go of certain conditions, one will fasten a concept or ‘deposit’ of self onto something else, obscuring or distorting its true nature. Therefore, the necessary tasks are to eliminate the attachment to previous notions of self, to refrain from attaching to anything else as self, and to avoid clinging to no-self (*nirattā*). Then only the Truth remains, which is neither concerned with nor dependent on personal beliefs and attachments. {107}

Since the self is an idea and a conventional entity established for facilitating communication, if one fully comprehends the self, and makes use of it without clinging, then it is not destructive. Likewise, if one formerly attached to an image of self, the teachings insist on abandoning this attachment. Without attachment, the matter is finished; it is unnecessary to identify with anything else. It is unnecessary to seize anything as self or to seek a self elsewhere.

Therefore, the Buddha taught to cease clinging only to the self that has already been attached to, which means to cease clinging to the five aggregates. Once the self is no longer attached to, the question of self ends. Thereafter, it is a matter of attaining the Truth, which does exist. A self, however, has no bearing on Truth, and therefore Truth is described as *anattā*: nonself. Those who have realized the Truth are free from any belief in self; they no longer need to believe in self or no-self. Knowing what is non-existent as non-existent, the matter is finished; thenceforth, there is arrival at the Truth, the Unconditioned, for which a self no longer has any significance.

One harmful consequence of clinging to a self, or believing in an image of self, is that one concludes that the self is the agent, with power to control events. When the notion of self becomes most subtle, a sovereign

universal Self is envisaged, as the Creator of all things. This Creator is imagined as intervening in the causal process, despite such intervention being unnecessary.

It is unnecessary because nature exists autonomously; interrelated conditioned dynamics function independently, without requiring a Creator. Therefore, rather than say that a Creator, a God, must exist as a prerequisite for the genesis of all things, it should be granted that natural phenomena themselves are the primordial reality (since natural phenomena are reciprocally created in line with causality; simply speaking, they create each other.) One need not then be troubled with questions of the past such as, ‘What existed before God?’ ‘Who created God?’ or ‘From where does God come?’

It is neither necessary nor true to say that natural phenomena or causal dynamics require a creator God to exist. If a God were truly the creator, the result would be two overlapping systems: God and nature. The course of nature would need to wait for the creative act of God. Natural dynamics subject to divine designs would be unwieldy, however, since things must proceed in accord with interrelated causes and conditions within their own system. Acts of God would interfere and obstruct the continual causal flow of phenomena.

Moreover, as God’s temperament can vacillate, things would be affected accordingly; at one moment God would have them be one way, and in the next moment another. As a consequence, nature would have even less opportunity to follow causality, ending in great confusion and chaos. This is not, however, the way things actually are; natural dynamics occur in conformity with their conditionality.

Some people may say that nature follows laws, and that God created or established these laws. In that case the laws must be uncertain, liable to change at any time, and untrustworthy, because the ordainer of the laws would abide beyond the laws; such a Being could modify the laws as desired. These laws, however, have invariably remained constant. {108}

The existence of a Creator of the laws is unnecessary and improbable, because nature must proceed in a specific fashion. Natural conditions accord with causes and are ‘just so’ (*tathatā*): they are not and could not



be otherwise (*avittḥatā*). The laws themselves are only descriptions, which we form by observing specific natural occurrences.

Furthermore, the absence of a creator God and the autonomy of causal dynamics resolves another dilemma. Ultimate Reality, or the Unconditioned, is absolute; it does not meddle as the Creator of phenomena or interfere with conditioned processes. (From this perspective, Nibbāna cannot be God, no matter how much some people try to equate them, unless one is willing to redefine the meaning of ‘God’).<sup>74</sup>

Under ordinary circumstances, it is natural for people to believe in a self and in a Creator of the world, because things ostensibly require an agent or creator to come into being. Seeing through this false belief to underlying causality is difficult. Therefore, in former times people believed that gods were the sole causes behind lightning, winds, floods and earthquakes. It is not strange then that religious seekers and philosophers have believed in a soul and a Creator. Clever individuals have created more refined, all-embracing concepts, but essentially they have been stuck at the same point.

The Buddha’s release from self-identification (despite the probability that he would get ensnared in more refined notions of self), his revelation that the world functions without a Creator, and his discovery of the non-self and non-creative Unconditioned count as enormous advancements in human wisdom. This realization is the escape from the massive pitfall that has trapped human beings.

Despite understanding the principles of impermanence and dukkha, the great philosophers before the Buddha were hampered by the belief in a self or soul. The principle of nonself is therefore extremely difficult to see. The Buddha tended to use the characteristics of impermanence and dukkha to signal and explain anattā. The commentators recognized the need to explain selflessness by way of impermanence and dukkha, and valued this major advance in wisdom as a revelation not found before or outside Buddhism, as is illustrated by the following passages:<sup>75</sup> {109}

<sup>74</sup>On the subject of God see Appendix 4.

<sup>75</sup>VbhA. 48-9; and in some sections of MA. II. 113; VinT. Mahākhandaḥkaṃ, Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇanā.

The Sammāsambuddha explained the characteristic of nonself by way of impermanence, by way of dukkha, or by way of both. In this sutta, the Buddha explains the characteristic of nonself by way of impermanence thus: ‘Bhikkhus, if someone were to say, ‘the eye (ear, etc.) is self, this would be unsuitable [because] the rise and decline of the eye is apparent; seeing such rise and decline that person would conclude: ‘My self arises and deteriorates.’ For this reason saying, ‘the eye is self’, is unsuitable. Thus the eye is not-self.’

*In reference to M. III. 282.*

The Perfectly Enlightened Buddha explained the characteristic of nonself in this sutta by referring to dukkha thus: ‘Bhikkhus, the body is not-self. If this body were self, then it would not be subject to disease (i.e. oppression – *dukkha*), and it would be possible to have it of the body: ‘May my body be this way, may my body not be that way.’ But because the body is not-self, therefore the body is subject to disease, and it is not possible to have it of the body: ‘May my body be this way, may my body not be that way.’

*In reference to S. III. 66.*

The Perfectly Enlightened Buddha explained the characteristic of nonself in the suttas by referring to both impermanence and dukkha, for example: ‘Bhikkhus, material form is impermanent. Whatever is impermanent is dukkha. Whatever is dukkha is nonself. Whatever is nonself should be seen with perfect wisdom, as it really is, thus: ‘This is not mine’, ‘I am not this’, ‘this is not my self’.

*In reference to, e.g.: S. III. 22.*

Why did the Buddha explain in this way? Because impermanence and dukkha are manifest (they are easily observed). Indeed, when a cup, bowl or other object slips from the hand and shatters, people exclaim, ‘Oh, how fleeting!’ Impermanence is therefore described as apparent. When a boil or blister forms on the body, or a thorn pricks someone, he exclaims, ‘Oh, how painful!’ Dukkha is thus described as apparent. Anattā, however, is not apparent, it is not

conspicuous; it is difficult to comprehend, difficult to explain, and difficult to describe.

Whether Tathāgatas arise or not, the characteristics of impermanence and dukkha are apparent, but the characteristic of nonself remains hidden unless a Buddha arises; it is evident only during the time of a Buddha. Truly, the religious ascetics and wanderers with great psychic powers, like the teacher Sarabhaṅga, were able to describe impermanence and dukkha, but were unable to describe nonself. If Sarabhaṅga, for example, had been able to describe nonself to his gathered community, that assembly would have been able to realize path and fruit. Indeed, revealing the characteristic of selflessness is not within the capability of anyone other than the Omniscient Buddhas. In this sense, the characteristic of nonself is not apparent. {110}

### 3.6 EGO AND CONCEIT

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Confusion exists, especially in the Thai language, about certain terms pertaining to the self and an attachment to self, so it seems appropriate to add a brief explanation at this point. The terms that pose a difficulty are *attā* and *māna*.

*Attā* in Pali, or *ātman* in Sanskrit, translates as ‘self’ or ‘soul’. Buddha-Dhamma teaches that this self does not truly exist, but that it is assumed by people for convenient communication and mutual recognition with respect to composite forms.

The self becomes a problem when people mistakenly believe that they really possess a self or truly exist as a self, which is a result of not fully comprehending the truth or being deceived by conventional reality.

To resolve this question of self, one should be aware that the self is not a defilement; it is not something that must be relinquished. As a self does not truly exist, there is thus no self that one can abandon. The self exists only as a belief. Our responsibility is to fully understand the truth that no self exists, which is to fully comprehend conventional reality.

In other words, the practice concerning the purported self consists only of abandoning the belief in and identification with self, or eliminating delusions and false notions of self.

In the previous reference to the Suttanipāta, the Buddha used the words *attā* and *nirattā*. The commentaries developed the meaning of *attā* in this case as ‘attachment to a self’ or ‘belief in a self’, with another connotation as ‘something grasped’. This was paired with *nirattā*, defined as ‘belief in no-self’ or ‘belief in the annihilation of self’, with an additional connotation as ‘something to be relinquished’.

The definition of *attā* in this case goes beyond its ordinary perimeter; it stresses a person’s view (*diṭṭhi*), namely, harbouring a view of a self, which is called *atta-diṭṭhi* or *attānudiṭṭhi*. This is the eternalist view of having a permanent self as core or essence. Therefore, the explanatory passages from the Mahāniddesa and Cūḷaniddesa mentioned above define *attā* as ‘belief in self’ (*atta-diṭṭhi*) or eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). As *attā* in this case refers to ‘wrong view’, which is a defilement to be abandoned, there are Pali verses in the Suttanipāta describing the relinquishment of self, for example: *One who has relinquished the self (attañjaho)*,<sup>76</sup> and *having relinquished the self (attaṃ pahāya)*.<sup>77</sup>

There exists another form of belief concerning self, which differs from holding to a view (*diṭṭhi*). *Diṭṭhi* here is the belief that one possesses or exists as a self, for example identifying with something or viewing the self as permanent. The other form of belief relating to self is an appraisal; it is belief in the comparisons of oneself to others, the self-evaluations and self-judgements, for example: ‘I am this way’, ‘this is just who I am’, ‘I am better’, ‘I am worse’, ‘we are inferior’, or ‘we are equal’. The specific term *māna* is used for such belief, which translates as conceit, pride, arrogance, or self-appraisal as better, worse or equal in comparison to others.<sup>78</sup> *Māna*, like *diṭṭhi*, is a defilement, something that should be relinquished or removed.

<sup>76</sup>Sn. 155 (see related passages at Nd. I. 90-91).

<sup>77</sup>Sn. 157 (see related passages at Nd. I. 107-108).

<sup>78</sup>The current meaning of *māna* in the Thai language, which has deviated far from the original – now denoting effort/diligence – will not be discussed here, as that would branch out too far into the subject of linguistics.

In Thailand, some people currently use the word *attā* in the meaning of *māna*, for example: ‘She has much *attā*’ and ‘his *attā* is big’.<sup>79</sup> {111} One should be aware that using *attā* in this way is simply a current custom, but is technically incorrect. The proper word to use in this context is *māna*, which is the principal defilement causing defiance, disagreement, boasting, competition, and even persecution.

Note also that even the belief in being equal to others is conceit and a defilement, just like considering oneself better or worse. As long as such comparisons exist, the mind is still subject to prejudice, condescension, overconfidence, and inflation. These assumptions may be inaccurate or based upon the truth, but the mind is not yet free and clear. The end of conceit occurs with knowledge of the truth; despite being aware of superiority, inferiority or equality, if the knowledge is unadulterated by clinging, then it is not conceit or defilement.

To sum up, *attā* and *anattā* are matters to be understood with wisdom. If one lacks a true understanding of phenomena, one misunderstands them and believes that a true, substantial self exists. This is the rise of wrong view (*diṭṭhi*). One must rectify this misunderstanding with wisdom (*paññā*). Our only responsibility in this respect is to develop understanding. When one truly understands that phenomena do not possess a fixed, substantial self – that only conventional labels of self exist – any doubts or problems pertaining to self cease accordingly.

*Māna* is a matter of the mind – of emotions. It is a negative emotion (a form of defilement), whereby the mind seeks self-importance. One exalts oneself and disparages others. The mind is blemished, in conflict, inflated, closed, or anxious. These attributes of the mind should be remedied. Our responsibility in this context is to train the mind, to abandon and dispel this conceit, to develop such traits as politeness, gentleness, and humility, and to value and respect others.

*Māna* is a matter connected to ethical conduct. One should abstain from conceit and arrogance and resist mental defilement. *Attā*, on the

<sup>79</sup>Trans.: in English the word ‘ego’ is used in this way, for example: ‘He has a big ego.’

contrary, is a matter pertaining to the truth. It is rectified when wisdom recognizes the selfless nature of phenomena.

These two tasks, however, are essentially connected. When one discerns the characteristic of nonself and lets go of a belief in self, one abandons conceit. The wisdom inherent in this discernment frees the mind from arrogance, haughtiness, self-importance, and such self-comparisons as being better or worse than others: one is free from *māna*.

To quote the Buddha:

One who perceives all things as nonself arrives at the removal of pride that says ‘I am’ (*asmi-māna*), and attains Nibbāna here and now.  
{112}

*A. IV. 353, 358; Ud. 37.*

### 3.7 PRACTICAL VALUE

From a practical point of view, the Buddhist teachings touch on impermanence more than the other characteristics, because impermanence is more apparent. The state of pressure, stress and friction – *dukkhatā* – is moderately difficult to observe and is therefore referred to less. The characteristic of nonself is the most subtle and difficult to see, and is referred to the least. The more obvious sign of impermanence is used as a foundation to explain the characteristics of *dukkha* and nonself.

The following two verses of the Buddha, which highlight impermanence, show the value of the Three Characteristics for Dhamma practice:

Indeed, all conditioned things are impermanent, prone to arise and pass away. Having arisen, they cease; their coming to rest is truest bliss.<sup>80</sup>

*D. II. 199; S. II. 193; spoken by others at D. II. 157; S. I. 6, 158; Ap. 385.*

Monks, all conditioned things are of a nature to decay; strive to attain the goal by diligence.<sup>81</sup>

Note that the first verse describes the state in which conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*) are stilled, that is, it refers to Nibbāna. It describes how Nibbāna is not subject to change; it is not subject to rising and falling, to dissolution and disintegration. It is a state of true happiness. This verse (*aniccā vata saṅkhārā...*) is very frequently chanted and cited, to the extent that it has become an important part of the Theravada tradition. In relation to ordinary people, this verse is linked to practical application; it is defined in such a way that people can benefit from contemplating the stilling of conditioned things evident in their own lives.

The first verse thus advocates a proper relationship to the world and to life in general: the value of thoroughly comprehending that all things are compounded, unstable, and subject to change; they cannot be commanded at will, they accord with causes, and they exist ‘just so’. With this knowledge a person maintains an appropriate attitude towards life and clinging ceases. Despite alteration, decay, and disappearance of cherished objects, the mind is not overwhelmed and disturbed; it remains clear, radiant and joyful on account of its innate wisdom, which leads to true peace. This verse emphasizes liberation of the heart – transcendence – which is the benefit of spiritual practice.

The second verse calls attention to virtuous conduct, which is conducive to the realization of the supreme state. This realization stems from the knowledge that all things are ephemeral and subject to stress. {113} Flux is perpetual, relentless, and inexorable. Human life especially is fleeting, uncertain and unreliable. Knowing this, one makes effort in that which should be done and refrains from that which should be avoided. One does not procrastinate or waste opportunities. One strives to rectify harmful situations, takes heed to protect oneself from further

<sup>80</sup>This verse is known as ‘the maxim of the arahants’ (S. I. 6). The ‘coming to rest’ and equally the ‘bliss’ refers to Nibbāna. The verse is commonly chanted at funerals: *Aniccā vata saṅkhārā...*

<sup>81</sup>Alternative second clause: *bring heedfulness to perfection*. This verse is the Buddha’s final utterance and is considered to be of great import. It is found at D. II. 120, 156; S. I. 157-8; Venerables Revata and Sāriputta spoke similar verses at Thag. 67, 91.

damage, and cultivates virtue by reflecting with wisdom, which accords with conditions. As a result, one fulfils one's responsibilities and attains one's goals. This verse emphasizes diligence and careful attention, which are mundane and practical qualities. These qualities are the benefit of proper conduct.

One should apply this second, engaged course of action to all levels of human affairs, from personal to social issues, from secular to spiritual matters, and from earning a living to seeking the enlightened truth of the Buddha. The following teachings of the Buddha highlight this quality:

Monks, considering personal wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering others' wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering the wellbeing of both, you should accomplish it with care.

S. II. 29; A. IV. 134-5.

There is one quality, Great King, which secures dual welfare, both present (visible) welfare, and future (subtle) welfare.... This quality is heedfulness (*appamāda*).... A wise person who is heedful secures dual welfare, both present and future. The steadfast one, by securing [these two] benefits, is called a sage.<sup>82</sup>

S. I. 86-7

Monks, a person of good moral conduct, perfect in moral conduct, through careful attention to his affairs, gains much wealth.<sup>83</sup>

A. III. 253

By earnest endeavour (*appamāda*), monks, I attained enlightenment. And you too, monks, if you put forth undeterred effort ... in no long time you shall realize the goal of the holy life by way of superior wisdom in this very life.

A. I. 50.

<sup>82</sup> See S. I. 89; A. III. 48-9; It. 16-17.

<sup>83</sup> See D. II. 86; D. III. 236; Ud. 87; in addition, see the beginning (not quoted) of the passage cited in the previous footnote.



The two benefits, derived from spiritual practice and from proper conduct, are mutually supportive. By their consummation through right training a person obtains supreme wellbeing. {114}

#### **A. THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE LEADING TO LIBERATION**

Spiritual benefit, and the practice for its fulfilment, relates directly to the highest goal of Buddha-Dhamma. It is of utmost importance, concerning the entire spectrum of Buddhist teachings. Because many details of its development require special understanding, the texts refer to it frequently and at length. Some texts, for example the *Visuddhimagga*, outline this development as an ordered system. Rather than describe specifics here, I will only offer a broad summary.

Those people who discern the three characteristics grow in wisdom and acquire a clearer understanding of life. In addition, they normally undergo two important transformative mental stages:

- **Stage 1:** Once a person understands conditionality more clearly, and has gained an intermediate insight into impermanence, *dukkha* and nonself, a reaction occurs. A feeling arises unlike any feeling previously experienced. Whereas formerly the person was captivated and delighted by sense objects, having now discerned the three characteristics sentiment changes into discontentment and aversion, and sometimes into disgust. At this stage emotions are predominant over wisdom. Despite the deficiency of wisdom and the lingering of mental bias, this stage is nonetheless important and occasionally even crucial for escaping from the power of attachment and for attaining the perfection in stage 2. Conversely, by stopping at this point a person's prejudice can be harmful.
- **Stage 2:** At this stage a person has cultivated a thorough understanding of reality: wisdom has entered the stage of completion. All feelings of repulsion disappear, replaced by a feeling of equanimity. There exists neither infatuation nor disgust, neither attachment nor aversion. There remains only a lucid understanding of things as they truly are, along with a feeling of spaciousness. A person is able to act appropriately and judiciously. This level of

mental development, included in the practice of insight meditation (*vīpassanā*), is called ‘equanimous knowledge of formations’ (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). It is a necessary stage of direct realization of truth and of the complete freedom of the heart.

There are two important fruits of liberation, especially when liberation is complete (in stage 2):

- **Freedom from suffering:** liberated individuals are relieved of all harm resulting from clinging. Their happiness exists independent of alluring material objects. The mind is unrestricted, joyous, fearless, and sorrowless. It is not stricken by the vacillations of worldly conditions (*lokadhamma*).<sup>84</sup> {115} This feature affects ethics as well since these people do not create problems by venting unhappiness on others, which is a significant cause for social conflict. They develop spiritual qualities, notably lovingkindness and compassion, which act for the welfare of all.
- **Absence of defilement:** liberated persons are free from the power of mental defilement, e.g. greed, anger, covetousness, prejudice, confusion, jealousy, and conceit. Their minds are clear, unfettered, calm, and pure. This feature has direct influence on behaviour, both individual and social. Personally, awakened individuals apply wisdom in an unadulterated way; they are not biased by aversion or selfish ambition. Externally, they do not commit offences prompted by defilement. They perform wholesome actions righteously and without hesitation since no defilements like laziness or self-centredness impede and disturb.

Nevertheless, when still not fully developed and existing in isolation (that is, when not supported by the practice of heedfulness), spiritual

<sup>84</sup>Trans.: the eight ‘worldly winds’: gain and loss, praise and blame, happiness and suffering, fame and obscurity.

practice can still be harmful since the good can be a cause for unskillfulness.<sup>85</sup> Having attained some spiritual advances and found peace and happiness, people are likely to revel in this happiness. They are likely to rest on their laurels, abandon effort, or neglect unfinished responsibilities. In short, they fall into heedlessness, as confirmed by the Buddha:

And how, Nandiya, is a noble disciple one who dwells negligently? Here, Nandiya, a noble disciple possesses firm confidence in the Buddha ... the Dhamma ... and the Sangha.... He possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones.... Content with this firm confidence ... with these virtues, he does not make further effort.... In this way, Nandiya, a noble disciple dwells negligently.

S. V. 398.

The way to avoid such harm is to integrate the second practice.

## **B. THE PRACTICE OF HEEDFULNESS**

Out of habit, people generally follow two pathways while conducting their affairs. When oppressed by suffering or in crisis, people hasten to amend the situation. Sometimes they are able to solve the problem, while at other times they cannot and must face loss or ruin. Even if they succeed, they experience much distress and struggle to find a lasting solution; they may even find defeat amidst their success: ‘win the battle but lose the war’.

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While at ease in everyday life, having attended to immediate concerns, people then become complacent, allowing the days to pass by searching for pleasure or indulging in gratification. They do not occupy themselves with avoiding future harm. Unless cornered, they postpone their responsibilities. Assaulted by affliction or danger, they hasten to find relief; having escaped, they are content to partake in their delights. This cycle continues until one day they are powerless to alter the course of events or are destroyed in their attempt to escape.

<sup>85</sup>*Kusalo dhammo akusalassa dhammassa ārammaṇapaccayena paccayo* (Paṭ. 154); *adhipatipaccena* (Paṭ. 158); *upanissayapaccena* (Paṭ. 166).

The conduct described above is referred to as *pamāda*, which can be variously translated as negligence, heedlessness, laxness, disregard, lack of effort, and lethargy. It tends to go hand in hand with laziness.

The opposite quality is referred to as *appamāda* ('diligence'; 'heedfulness'),<sup>86</sup> which is roused and guided by mindfulness. Diligent persons are continually aware of what must be avoided and what must be pursued, and commit themselves to these tasks. They recognize the importance of time, of work, and of the slightest responsibility. They are not intoxicated or overly enthralled by life. They make every effort to avoid transgression and miss no opportunity to grow in virtue. They hasten towards their goal or towards the good without interruption, and take great care in their preparations.

There are three important attributes of heedfulness (*appamāda*):

1. One recognizes the importance of every moment; one does not allow opportunities to pass by in vain; one uses time in the most valuable and beneficial way.
2. One is not intoxicated, indulgent, reckless, or forgetful. One is constantly vigilant in order to avoid making careless mistakes or falling into corrupt or evil ways.
3. One hastens to cultivate virtue and create wellbeing; one endeavours in one's duties and responsibilities and one acts thoroughly; one strives to develop the mind and foster wisdom. (This factor is referred to as 'heedfulness in regard to all virtuous qualities'.)

An understanding of the Three Characteristics directly promotes diligence, because when one knows that all things are impermanent, unstable, fleeting, non-compliant, and subject to causes, then only one way of practice remains, which is to act in conformity with causes and conditions. This means that one makes effort to protect oneself from unwholesome influences, to repair damage, to preserve beneficial qualities, and to act meritoriously for further progress. This practice involves

<sup>86</sup>Trans.: other translations include: earnestness, perseverance, carefulness, uninterrupted mindfulness, vigilance, and zeal.

investigating causality and acting accordingly. For example, aware that all things are subject to change, one strives to act in such a way that desired salutary conditions increase and exist as long as possible, and that they give the maximum benefit to others. {117}

Upon closer examination, one sees that the real cause for, or force behind, this diligence is suffering. People's relationship to suffering, however, affects their reaction to it, resulting in either heedlessness or care. And even careful responses vary in quality. An analysis of this dynamic will show the value of *appamāda*. There are three ways to respond to suffering:

- *Conduct based on the strain of suffering:* some people indulge in comfort and pleasure, neglect their responsibilities, do not consider potential danger, but rather wait until danger confronts them. Faced with trouble and necessity, they hasten to remedy the situation, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.
- *Conduct based on fear of suffering:* some people fear suffering and difficulty, and so strive to prevent hardship. Although their attempts to establish more security are usually successful, their minds are burdened by anxiety. Besides fearing suffering, they suffer from fear, and they act prompted by this secondary source of distress.
- *Conduct based on knowledge of suffering:* some people reflect with wisdom on how to manage with potential suffering. They are not intimidated by fear since they understand the nature of the three characteristics; they recognize potential danger. They investigate the dynamics of change, relying on the awareness of impermanence and the liberty and flexibility afforded by the characteristic of nonself, to choose the best way forward. In addition, they use past experience as a lesson to prevent suffering and to steer towards the greatest possible good. They are relieved of as much suffering as is in their power, to the point of being free from all mental suffering and anxiety.

The first type of behaviour is heedless; types two and three are performed with care, but type two is a caution fed by defilement and thus

bound up with suffering. Type three, on the other hand, springs from wisdom, and is therefore trouble-free: no mental suffering arises. This is full and proper heedfulness, which only an arahant practises perfectly. The quality of vigilance for unawakened persons depends on their ability to apply wisdom (in line with type three), and on the reduction of stress caused by fear and anxiety (of type two).

As described above, ordinary people are not the only ones susceptible to heedlessness; persons in the initial stages of enlightenment can be careless as well. The reason for this carelessness is contentment, satisfaction, or complacency concerning exceptional qualities that they have attained. They delight in happiness and ease, and abandon their spiritual work. {118}

Another reason is that they have perceived the three characteristics; they have a profound understanding of change, they are reconciled to conditionality, and they are not troubled by decay and separation. Because of this ease and reconciliation, they stop; they show no further interest and make no effort to deal with unresolved issues. They neglect the necessary tasks for prevention or improvement, allowing problems to simply remain or even worsen.

In this case, the attainment of spiritual benefit, or of (initial) liberation, is the grounds for carelessness. These individuals act incorrectly; their practice is one-sided and incomplete, lacking the effort required to achieve the full value of heedfulness. To rectify this situation, they must be aware of both benefits, the spiritual and the practical, and bring them to completion.

Thorough knowledge of things based on an understanding of the three characteristics loosens or releases clinging to things. This non-clinging is at the heart of liberation and freedom from suffering, leading to the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

One cause for heedless behaviour is attaching to non-attachment. In proper practice, letting go occurs by itself; it is a consequence of clearly seeing things according to the truth of the Three Characteristics. Some people, however, do not yet have this lucid discernment; they have simply heard about this truth and rationalize about it, forming a half-baked

## NOTE 3.2: INDIFFERENCE

Not desiring anything is good, but one must be very careful of indifference. Acting without wishing for personal reward is praiseworthy as it demonstrates that one is not controlled by craving; but indifference can easily turn into neglect. Neglect is equivalent to heedlessness, misjudgement, and craving, which leads a person to indulge in ease and comfort. At the very least indifference indicates a lack of wholesome enthusiasm (*kusala-chanda*), which is the first step to all virtue.

understanding. Furthermore, they hold on to the idea that by grasping nothing whatsoever they will be released from suffering.

Thinking in this way, they try to prove to themselves and others that they do not attach to anything, or are free of defilement, to the extent of taking nothing seriously (see Note 3.2). The result is functional imbalance, inattentiveness, and negligence. This is attachment to non-attachment: it is a counterfeit non-attachment.

A comparison of activities prompted by different motivations helps to highlight the activity prompted by heedfulness. Compare the four kinds of activity and inactivity:

- Some people do not act if they receive no personal advantage or if they will lose an advantage. They act to gain or to protect an advantage.
- Some people do not act because they attach to non-attachment: they abstain from acting to show that they are free of defilement.
- Some people do not because they are careless, delighting in contentment and ease. Unafflicted by suffering, or resigned to conditionality, they are complacent. {119}
- Some people act or refrain from acting dependent on wise consideration of the circumstances. Knowing that something should be done, they act even if they gain no advantage. Knowing that something should not be done, they refrain even if by acting they would

gain an advantage. When action is called for, they act immediately, without hesitation or delay.

The fourth kind is proper action performed with pure mindfulness and wisdom.

The Buddha's guidelines for heedful action are twofold, concerning both internal and external activities. The former are the exhortations pertaining to spiritual development, to making effort towards higher states of consciousness, which is equal to attaining the spiritual benefit from the Three Characteristics or to liberation of the heart. In brief, this activity is 'personal improvement'. The latter are the teachings for daily life and interaction with the world: the urging for diligence in work, the fulfilment of responsibilities, the solution and prevention of problems, the development of virtue, and the fostering of social wellbeing. In brief, this is 'social improvement'.

The teachings of heedfulness encourage contemplation on three periods of time: the past, in order to draw lessons from past events and experiences, and to use these lessons as incentives for further effort; the present, for greater urgency in one's activities, for not postponing, and for making the most of each moment; and the future, to reflect on potential change, both beneficial and destructive, by using wisdom to examine causality, followed by plans to prevent harm and advance the good.

Compared with the Buddha's spiritual teachings, the practical teachings are fewer and of less detail; they are found scattered throughout the scriptures and tend to be concise. The reason for this is that human activities vary greatly according to time and place; they cannot be described with any uniformity. Therefore, the Buddha merely presented principles or examples. In contrast, the transformation of the heart pertains to all human beings: the nature of the human mind is identical for all. Furthermore, this transformation is profound and difficult to realize, and is the unique aspect of the Buddha's teaching. He thus explained it thoroughly.

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### **C. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRACTICE OF LIBERATION AND THE PRACTICE OF HEEDFULNESS**

The spiritual practice for liberation supports the practice of heedfulness by promoting purity of action. Liberated persons act with a pure heart, not driven by defilement. The practice for liberation also fosters a sense of joy in a person's activities. It releases people from the stress, agitation and worry that results from actions stemming from unwholesome mind states, for example action done out of fear or competitiveness. Instead, people act with serenity and joy. In addition, when people see the value of deliverance and mental wellbeing, they perform external activities to promote a just and peaceful life. In brief, material progress goes hand in hand with spiritual development.

Heedfulness similarly complements the practice for liberation. Generally, when people are at ease they become heedless, by becoming idle and slack in their effort. People who profit materially or who solve external problems are not the only ones who become careless when they are prosperous and comfortable. Those who have reconciled themselves to impermanence, dukkha and nonself, whose hearts are at ease, also tend to become attached to happiness and cease making effort. They no longer attend to unresolved matters, and do not urge themselves to improve either personal or social circumstances. The active value of the Three Characteristics based on heedfulness prevents this stagnation and motivates these individuals to persevere.

In short, these two practices must be united for Dhamma practice to be correct. Spiritual progress then inspires virtuous and joyful action, while people's deeds nurture further spiritual development. Proper practice is free from acting with a troubled mind and free from complacency. People act with ease, and this ease does not become an obstacle for subsequent effort. As a result, spiritual realization safeguards action and action enhances spiritual realization. In unison, perfection is reached. {121}

Spiritual qualities and active, heedful qualities both depend on wisdom, which discerns the three characteristics, leads to non-attachment, surrender, relinquishment, and liberation. The deeper the understanding, the greater is the freedom and higher the realization. For example, by

accessing jhāna or gaining an insight, a person is able to perceive the impermanence, dukkha, and nonself in the bliss of these conditions, and they neither cling to the bliss nor to the attainments.

In practical affairs, wisdom rouses people to act with diligence and to make the most of each opportunity. An understanding of the law of causality prompts a person to investigate causes to solve problems at their root and to act in harmony with this law. This knowledge includes analyzing causes of past events so that one learns from them, and recognizing the necessary conditions for preventing harm and promoting wellbeing.

The two ways of practice reveal the supreme importance of the teaching on the three characteristics. The first way of practice highlights wisdom, which penetrates reality by comprehending the three characteristics. The second way of practice points to diligent action, which springs from an understanding of this teaching. Wisdom's task is to realize the truth of the three characteristics; with this realization the heart is freed. At the same time, the three characteristics motivate a person who has some level of insight to take heed, make further effort, and avoid transgression.

An understanding of the three characteristics is the source of just action, from beginning stages of Dhamma practice to the end. Awareness of the three characteristics is the motivation for heedfulness, ingenuity, abstention from evil, and good conduct on all levels. Ultimately, a complete understanding of the three characteristics enables perfect mental freedom, which is the highest human achievement.

The worldly and the transcendent converge at the three characteristics. Liberation of the heart is a transcendent quality; heedfulness is mundane. The mutually supportive nature of these two principles demonstrates that in an honourable life the worldly and the transcendent abide in unison.

One sees the evidence of this clearly in the Buddha and the arahants. Perfectly free, they represent the human ideal; and they attain this freedom by way of heedfulness. Arahants alone are described as 'those who

have perfected heedfulness’;<sup>87</sup> they are persons who have finished their business by way of careful attention. Having attained arahantship they continue to persevere for the welfare of the monastic community (*saṅgha*) and of all beings. {122} One should follow the example of these awakened ones, by realizing mental freedom and acting with care.<sup>88</sup>

The practical benefits associated with the three characteristics ensure perfect moral conduct, with definite consequences. There are two things which guarantee infallible moral conduct:

1. *A mind free from longing*, which does not experience clinging, craving, lust for material objects, or perverse thoughts; because one has reached deliverance, there is freedom from defilement; there is an end to selfishness.
2. *Sublime happiness*, which is independent of materiality and is accessible without moral infringement.

Indeed the first quality is enough to guarantee moral impeccability. The second is merely additional confirmation.

Liberation grants these two moral guarantees. A thorough understanding of the world and an insight into the three characteristics leads to freedom of the heart. Coveting and loathing, both grounds for wrongdoing, cease. In other words, moral conduct arises automatically since no impulse exists to act immorally.

Furthermore, liberation generates a profound happiness. Awakened beings experience expansiveness and joy and some of them experience exalted states of bliss in *jhāna*.<sup>89</sup> Experiencing such bliss, it is natural that they are of no mind to act dishonourably for another sort of happiness.

<sup>87</sup>The Buddha sometimes characterized an arahant as ‘incapable of negligence’ (M. II. 478; S. IV. 125). He explained that arahants have completed all tasks that must be accomplished through heedfulness.

<sup>88</sup>The Abhidhamma states that arahants, those who have attained the ultimate transcendent state, act with ‘an eminent operative mind’ (*mahākirīya-citta*), which is mundane and belongs to the sense sphere.

<sup>89</sup>In contrast, being confronted with the three characteristics but not truly understanding them is a cause for suffering (e.g.: S. III. 3, 16, 42-3).

In any case, one must understand that the second guarantee of refined happiness alone is not yet fully dependable if it is a mundane form of happiness, for example that of *jhāna*, since a person who accesses these mundane states can still revert to indulgence in gross forms of happiness. To be truly secure, a person must obtain the first guarantee of non-craving; otherwise, the happiness must be transcendent, which automatically arises with the first guarantee. {123}

Stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*) possess these two moral guarantees; they are impeccable in moral conduct and are incapable of moral transgression. The scriptures refer to enlightened beings (*ariya-puggala*), from stream-enterers upwards, as ‘perfect in moral conduct’.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, if we wish for ethical standards to be firmly established in society, we must promote the realization of stream-entry; we will thereby meet with true success.

If one is unable to establish these two guarantees, one’s chances for a secure ethical society will be slim, because members of society will be contaminated by defilement and thus be predisposed to violate boundaries. In this event, systems of control and coercion must be implemented, or even excessive force be applied, which does not offer true safety or resolution.

We see the lack of success of such measures everywhere. For example, people in this day and age receive advanced education, and have learned what is good and bad, what is beneficial and harmful. But because they fall prey to greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), they act immorally; they injure themselves (for example, by intoxication and drug abuse) and damage society (for example, by corruption, exploitation, and deforestation). Reasoned arguments and law enforcement end up having minimal effect and sometimes even appear farcical.

When people are unable to establish the two aforementioned guarantees, they generally use the following methods to protect or promote ethical standards, with varying degrees of success:

<sup>90</sup>E.g.: A. IV. 380-81; Pug. 37.

- Intimidation by establishing rules, laws, and punishments. Due to evasion of these laws, new systems must be created for reinforcement. In addition, the system itself may be flawed, for example with corruption. As a result, the attempts to maintain ethical standards meet with ever diminishing success.
- Intimidation with threats of occult power, for example of gods and supernatural forces. This is successful during times when people believe in these forces, but is less effective when people have the sort of scientific understanding present today. This form of intimidation includes instilling the fear of going to hell.
- Intimidation with threats against a person's honour and popularity, for example applying social pressure of blame and disrepute. This works for some but not for others, and is indecisive at best (this will drive some people, for example, to act in secret.)
- Catering to desire by using a reward or compensation, either from people, gods, or occult powers, including the promise of heaven. This method is variously effective, according to time and place, and its results are uncertain.
- An appeal to virtue and righteousness, by encouraging a sense of shame, self-respect and mindfulness. Few people possess these qualities in strength; people usually submit to desire and therefore their moral conduct is inconsistent. The protection bestowed by this motivation is especially weak in an age abounding in temptation and base values. {124}
- An appeal to faith, by fixing the mind with strong conviction on an ideal. This is difficult to accomplish, and even when successful it is unreliable, because faith is dependent on something external. Faith is not direct knowledge and sole reliance on faith is still tainted by defilement. Occasionally, this defilement intensifies and enshrouds faith, or faith wanes and disappears on its own. (This method includes the concentrative power in preliminary stages of mind deliverance – *cetovimutti*.)
- Applying the power of wholesome desire (*chanda*), by encouraging an interest in the development of virtue. This force is the adversary

of craving, which is the agent behind immoral behaviour. If one cannot yet cultivate the heart's liberation, one should emphasize the rousing of such desire and enthusiasm, as it is a wholesome force, is conjoined with wisdom, and supports liberation more directly than any of the other methods mentioned above.

Regardless of which impetus or motivation one uses, Dhamma practice must rely on self-restraint (*saññama*) to achieve moral rectitude. Therefore, to foster ethical conduct people should be trained in strict self-discipline.

Of all the motivations listed above, the summoning of virtuous qualities, faith, and enthusiasm are best, but one must remember that these forces are unable to provide definite results. A truly stable ethical society only exists when people establish the two moral guarantees: a free heart and sublime happiness, which generate moral integrity automatically.

One can use heedfulness as a measuring stick for Dhamma practice by comparing oneself to the arahants, who combine consummate liberation with perfect diligence. They integrate knowledge of the truth with pure conduct, non-attachment with earnest effort, and transcendent realization with responsible action in the world. They reveal how two apparently discordant elements can exist in harmony and be mutually supportive.

Heedfulness is the core of all righteous conduct and is the incentive behind all virtuous acts from beginning to end. As the Buddha said, heedfulness is like an elephant's footprint, which covers the footprints of all other animals; it dictates the function of all other virtues. All virtues depend on heedfulness; regardless of all the virtues described in the scriptures, carelessness alone suppresses and invalidates them as if they did not exist. Virtues are truly effective when heedfulness is established.

For ordinary people, however, diligence tends to be weakened or interrupted due to their preoccupation with alluring sense objects. Craving causes laziness, worry, and procrastination. People's conduct is thus continually wanting or fruitless. {125}

Conversely, the greater the heart's liberation, the less a person indulges in delusory sense objects, and the more assiduous that person

is, unimpaired by defilement. Freedom and earnest effort support one another in this way.

In addition, the principle of heedfulness is a reminder that all persons, including noble ones (*ariya*) in initial stages of awakening, are still vulnerable as long as they have not realized arahantship. They may become heedless by grasping the ease and contentment stemming from their attainments: their virtues induce them to err. Therefore, we must constantly remind ourselves to take care, and to promote a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*).

In any community there are people who succumb to heedlessness. Offering friendship and encouraging others to be prudent is one duty of a diligent person. The presence of a ‘beautiful friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta*) is a key factor which is paired with caution as an antidote when all other virtues are defunct during a period of foolhardiness, and as an answer to the question: Having been careless, what are the alternatives to simply waiting to incur the painful consequences?

To sum up, people should take care and make earnest effort for their own and others’ benefit and development. For example:

- Leaders of a country should make effort to establish peace and welfare, promote a healthy, just environment, and nurture people’s spiritual qualities.
- Religious elders should propagate the Dhamma for the welfare of the many, act in consideration of later generations, and do everything in their ability to preserve the true teaching (*saddhamma*) for all beings everywhere.
- Monks should perform their duties and inspire people with care; they should create a feeling of peace and safety by not undertaking practices of self-mortification, and by teaching the way to a virtuous life.

- All persons should strive for personal wellbeing by developing self-reliance, and for others' wellbeing by helping them gain self-reliance. One should cultivate wisdom to reach the highest boon, which leads to deliverance and a life of integrity.

Because human beings who are momentarily untroubled, live in comfort, or have reconciled themselves to an aspect of the truth ordinarily become careless, skilled teachers customarily offer friendly admonishment. They constantly seek means to encourage their followers by advising, inspiring, and even frustrating, to establish people in heedfulness. {126}

#### D. THE VALUE OF LIBERATION

Although the value of liberation is a component of the spiritual path, it has several distinctive features. The scriptures define the spiritual path and its companion practical teachings by referring to impermanence, since impermanence is easily noticed. Even beginning Dhamma practitioners benefit from the three characteristics by integrating the spiritual and practical teachings, as befits their level of understanding. The value of liberation, however, accompanies the meditation on nonself (*anattā*), cf. Note 3.3.

A person sees any kind of material form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formation ... and consciousness, whether past, present or future ... as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.' When a person knows and sees in this way, there exists no 'I-making' (*ahaṅkāra*), 'my-making' (*mamaṅkāra*), or underlying tendency to conceit (*mānānusaya*) regarding this body with its consciousness and all external signs.

M. III. 18-19.

The defilements of *ahaṅkāra*, *mamaṅkāra* and *mānānusaya* are also called *diṭṭhi*, *taṇhā* and *māna* respectively. As a group they are usually arranged as *taṇhā*, *māna* and *diṭṭhi*. This quote's significance is that a person who



## NOTE 3.3: LIBERATION

The results of inquiries into impermanence, dukkha, and selflessness are linked, so examining each of the three characteristics aids in liberation. The chief determining factor for liberation, however, is the understanding of nonself, as confirmed by the Buddha's teaching:

*The perception of impermanence should be cultivated for the removal of the conceit 'I am' (asmimāna). For when one perceives impermanence, Meghiya, the perception of nonself is established. A person who perceives nonself [in all things] accomplishes the eradication of the conceit 'I am', and [realizes] Nibbāna.*

*Ud. 37; and see A. IV. 353, 358*

clearly sees the nature of nonself eliminates the three defilements that are tied up in a sense of self or that create egocentricity, namely:

- *Taṇhā*: selfishness; the search for self-gratification and personal gain.
- *Māna*: conceit, pride and self-judgement; the desire for prominence and control over others; the pursuit of power.
- *Diṭṭhi*: attachment to personal opinions; rigid conviction, credulity, and infatuation concerning theories, creeds, and ideals.

These three defilements are collectively called *papañca* or *papañca-dhamma*, which can be translated as 'encumbrances'. Another translation is 'agitators': *papañca* produce mental proliferation and turmoil. They cause mental disquiet, excess, delay, and confusion. They lead a person to deviate from simple obvious truth. They breed new problems and interfere in the reasoned solution to existent problems; instead, they generate more complication and disorder. They dictate human behaviour, inducing unrest, disagreement, conquest, and war.

Such vices are not the only fruits; even if a person acts virtuously, a hidden catch hampers behaviour when these defilements act as the catalyst, leading people astray. {127}

Depending on the extent of wisdom, an understanding of the three characteristics, especially the quality of selflessness, weakens or destroys these self-obsessed defilements. Once these disturbing, confining, and misleading agents are absent, the path to virtuous conduct is wide open and limitless. A person can then wholeheartedly cultivate virtues, for example goodwill, compassion, benefaction (*atthacariyā*), and generosity.

In sum, insight into the three characteristics leads to goodness, growth, and happiness: the goodness of great virtue, the growth of diligence, and the happiness of wisdom, which brings about the heart's release.

Happiness is the basis on which good conduct rests. The happiness meant here is primarily the happiness independent of material objects (*nirāmisa-sukha*); it is a happiness that does not stagnate, sour, or lead to harm.

People who have penetrated the truth of the three characteristics and whose happiness is independent of material things do not become infatuated with sensual pleasures. They do not commit ill deeds in pursuit of such pleasure. When pleasure subsides, grief does not overwhelm them; they are able to sustain mindfulness with minimal disturbance. Untroubled by anxiety, they are able to partake of all degrees of happiness fully and fluently, including enjoying the most refined forms of bliss without attachment.

### 3.8 PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

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So far the practical benefits of the Three Characteristics have been explained as a whole. Below, the benefits of each individual characteristic are outlined:

#### A. IMPERMANENCE

The teaching on impermanence describes the arising, maintaining, and ending of all things, extending to the smallest molecule, and embracing both mind and matter. Although people acknowledge impermanence

when witnessing the alteration of an object, even this alteration may reinforce their belief in substantiality: they believe that an object's essence was formerly of one composition, now it is of another. This misunderstanding leads people to further self-deception and entanglement. People who have gained true insight into impermanence, on the other hand, are no longer led astray. {128}

Impermanence is essentially neutral, neither good nor bad, but with human beings one can designate some forms of change as growth and some as decline. Regardless of which direction it goes, change depends on causes: whatever declines can improve or can decline further; and whatever improves can decline or can blossom further. Humans themselves are a primary factor in this growth or decline, and are able to create many supporting conditions.<sup>91</sup>

Growth and decline therefore do not occur at random but are subject to human participation according to people's deeds (*yathā-kamma*). They are subject to human actions. To prosper, one should not wait for the interference by some imagined supernatural agent, nor should one passively stand by, believing that things happen on their own depending on one's fate.

Impermanence thus offers people hope: if one wishes for something, one must foster the proper conditions. Improvement is possible, both material and spiritual; an ignorant person can become wise and an ordinary person can be awakened. Self-improvement depends on our understanding the causes for such change and then generating these causes.

As just mentioned, growth is susceptible to decline. One must take care to prevent the conditions for decline, and foster the conditions for growth. A person who has fallen into decline can rectify the situation by abandoning detrimental factors and nurturing beneficial ones. Moreover, spiritual growth can be enhanced to the point that one realizes the complete end of spiritual regression.

<sup>91</sup>The term 'create' here is used tongue-in-cheek; speaking accurately, human beings are one condition affecting other conditions in an interconnected process.

Here we come to the supreme quality that links the truth with human conduct: wisdom. Wisdom is necessary to differentiate between decline and true growth, to know which factors are necessary for desired change, and to develop the skills for supporting these factors.

The teaching on impermanence is thus of great import for human conduct. It offers the potential for improvement, it confirms the law of kamma, that human actions bear fruit, and it emphasizes the development of wisdom. {129}

Besides helping one to prosper in one's worldly engagements, the teaching on impermanence prevents one from becoming a slave to the vicissitudes of life. One can live with change without being battered by worldly currents until one is powerless to help oneself, let alone help others.

People who no longer cling to various aspects of life can clearly see what is truly valuable. They do not maintain false ideas of what is beneficial that justify the kinds of gain leading to dependency and ruin. They take the fullest advantage of prosperity, both material and spiritual, and are a refuge to others.

On a basic level the understanding of impermanence helps to alleviate suffering when one is faced with misfortune, and prevents indulgence in times of success. At an advanced level it leads to a gradual realization of truth up to an understanding of nonself, resulting in the heart's deliverance and the absence of suffering – to perfect mental health.

People tend to use the teaching of impermanence to comfort themselves in times of anguish or loss, with varying degrees of success. Such use of impermanence is effective when used appropriately, especially to alert someone to this truth who has never considered it. Habitual application of such self-solace is detrimental, however, equivalent to submitting oneself to worldly tides, or to not taking full advantage of the teaching on impermanence. Such action is incorrect in the light of the law of kamma; it contradicts the self-improvement necessary for reaching the goal of Buddha-Dhamma.

In brief, the advantages of the teaching on impermanence are comprised of two stages. First, people who comprehend this natural law are able to diminish or eliminate grief when confronted with undesirable change, and do not get carried away by desired change. Second, they diligently attend to necessary tasks, knowing that all alterations are due to causes; these changes do not occur in isolation or by chance.

Conversely, people who observe that all things are unstable and transitory and therefore see no point in getting involved, carelessly letting life drift along, betray a misapprehension and act incorrectly in relation to impermanence. Such a stance conflicts with the Buddha's final teaching:

All conditioned things are of a nature to decay; strive diligently to reach the goal.<sup>92</sup> {129}

*D. II. 156.*

## **B. DUKKHA**

To understand the benefits of the teachings on dukkha one must examine this characteristic in relation to two key teachings: the Three Characteristics and the Four Noble Truths:

1. Given that all conditioned things exist as an aggregate of fleeting components, and are subject to birth, transmutation, and demise conforming to the law of impermanence, things are a venue for change and conflict; they are thoroughly instilled with impending rupture and decay. To sustain a desired object or to steer the flow of change in a desired direction requires energy and guidance. The more complex and numerous the components, the greater the effort and more meticulous the means required to engage with them. To influence something one must act at its underlying causes, and know the relative importance of these causes. Such wise action leads to an end of suffering. In contrast, action prompted by misguided attachment leads to oppression.

<sup>92</sup> Alternate translations for the second clause are: *... fulfil your own and others' welfare by way of heedfulness*, and: *...bring heedfulness to perfection*.

2. According to the teaching on the Four Noble Truths, our sole responsibility (*kicca*) in the face of *dukkha* is accurate knowledge (*pariññā*). This correct response to suffering is essential and yet it tends to get overlooked. Buddha-Dhamma teaches not to increase our suffering but to know suffering, to deal with it skilfully, and to be free of it: to realize true happiness. In other words, the teaching on the Four Noble Truths instructs us to investigate and accurately understand personal problems before trying to solve them. Investigation of problems does not imply creating or inflicting ourselves with more; on the contrary, it is a method for eliminating problems. People who are not aware of the responsibility enjoined by the noble truths may react to suffering inappropriately and aimlessly, and may increase their suffering by viewing the world negatively.

These two dimensions of *dukkha*, the universal and the personal, and the skilful response enjoined by the teachings mentioned above, determine the practical value of this characteristic.

The rise and disintegration of things reveals an inherent frailty and imperfection. Passage of time amplifies this deficiency, as alterations occur within and surrounding an object. Consequentially, things must continually struggle to sustain their form or to improve. For human beings, maintaining a higher quality of life and reaching fulfilment requires constant revision and refinement. {131}

People's impulsive resistance to the conflicts arising from change generally leads to more harm than good, irrespective of the matter involved: a material object, another person, or a community. An appreciation of proper adaptation and improvement is essential, and points again to the importance of wisdom, which engages with all things in harmony with cause and effect.

Ordinary happiness falls within the domain of the characteristic of *dukkha*. Such happiness is inherently flawed in the sense that it is subject to change, and therefore it is not fully satisfying. People who place their hope in this form of happiness essentially align themselves with the imperfection, or fall into the stream of change; they are thus swept in whichever direction the currents go. When disappointed, the

anguish is equal to the expectation for joy. Searching for happiness in this way is tantamount to enslavement or to gambling with life. It is incumbent on us to apply mindfulness and clear comprehension while deriving pleasure from these transient forms of happiness. Despite the vacillation of worldly joys one should minimize the harmful repercussions with the resolve: ‘Whatever happens, may I protect freedom of the heart.’

Happiness is of two kinds: happiness satisfying various forms of desire, and happiness of a spacious heart – a heart free from mental obstructions and free from the need for personal gratification.

The first kind of happiness can be subdivided into two kinds: happiness derived from gratifying unwholesome desire (*taṇhā*; ‘craving’), and happiness derived from fulfilling wholesome desire (*chanda*). The first kind is gratification by way of the five senses, by which one focuses on deriving pleasure from people or things in a selfish way. The second kind is a fulfilment of a desire for people or things to be well and complete. This wholesome desire (*chanda*) prompts one to act in order to help bring about such wellness or completion. It is a vital factor for nurturing virtue and for spiritual development, leading to more profound kinds of happiness and acting as a link to the second kind of happiness (of a spacious heart). This wholesome desire, however, is often overlooked by people, as if it is concealed or hidden behind the desire of craving. It will be discussed at more length in another chapter.<sup>93</sup>

Here, the discussion is limited to sense pleasure, which the majority of people get caught up with and obsess over. Sense pleasure is almost an opposite to the second kind of happiness, which is spacious and tranquil, free from such obstructions like anxiety and stress, which bind and oppress the mind. {132}

Pleasure based on sense contact is dependent on external conditions in order to gratify desire. The disposition of the mind enthralled with this form of happiness is prevailing agitation, possessiveness, and self-obsession. When not restrained these selfish qualities cause problems. It is natural that this form of happiness dependent on material objects

<sup>93</sup>Trans.: see Chapter 10.

(*sāmisā-sukha*) leads in some degree to addiction and disturbance, since it results from an attempt to compensate for a feeling of lack or loss.

The second kind of happiness is independent of external sense objects; it is a self-reliant and unconditional state of mind. Its distinguishing features are:

- *Purity*: uncontaminated by defilement.
- *Luminosity*: accompanied by profound, immeasurable wisdom, prepared for investigation.
- *Peace*: an absence of anxiety or agitation; relaxed and tranquil.
- *Freedom*: free of mental obstruction; spacious, non-attached, and buoyant; full of lovingkindness, compassion, and appreciative joy.
- *Fulfilment*: no feelings of inadequacy or loneliness; satisfied; inherently complete; if compared to the body, akin to having good health.

The two most significant qualities of this state of mind are freedom and wisdom. Together they manifest in the mind as equanimity (*upekkhā*): an evenness and balance of mind, which engages with things in an unbiased way. This profound happiness (*nirāmisā-sukha*) is of supreme benefit to human conduct.<sup>94</sup> It is untroubled and is instrumental in solving problems. One can say that it is beyond happiness, and is thus referred to as freedom from suffering. It signals the end of defect and insecurity.

Human beings normally seek the first form of happiness, of sense pleasure (*sāmisā-sukha*), but they cannot always obtain or keep desired objects at will because these things are subject to external influences and are transient. One must therefore try to establish the second kind

<sup>94</sup>Strictly speaking, one must use the term *nirāmisatara-sukha*, according to the threefold division of happiness: *sāmisā-sukha* (= *kāma-sukha*; sense pleasure), *nirāmisā-sukha* (the happiness of *jhāna*), and *nirāmisatara-sukha* (the happiness of liberation). It is possible for unawakened beings to become attached to the happiness of *jhāna*; true safety thus occurs with *nirāmisatara-sukha*. On the threefold division of happiness, see: S. IV. 235.



of happiness, at least enough to live at ease in the world and to minimize suffering; one will then know how to relate to sensual happiness without causing distress for oneself and others. {133} Understanding the three characteristics engenders this supreme happiness and leads to non-attachment.

Happiness dependent on external conditions requires the interaction between two parties, for example between two persons, or a person and an object. Both parties, however, possess the characteristic of *dukkha*: they are impaired by inherent conflict. The friction between two such entities increases in proportion to the misguided behaviour of the persons involved.

An example is of two people, one who seeks pleasure and the other who is the object of desire. Both persons possess inherent deficiency: the former is not always equipped to partake of pleasure and the latter is not always in a state to be enjoyed. It is impossible that either always gains. If they do not realize or accept this fact, they will hold their gratification as the criterion for happiness, causing strife and irritation.

Furthermore, a person's fixation on an object includes possessiveness and a wish to sustain the affiliation forever. This behaviour sets a person in opposition to the natural causal process. Such lack of wisdom, applying gratification as the measure for behaviour, is just foolhardy defiance, leading to the numerous expressions of suffering.

Apart from two parties interacting, additional elements often play a special participatory role, for example when two people desire the same object. Frustrated desire tends to create contention, leading to competition, arguments, and theft, all of which are symptoms of suffering. The more people attend to their problems with attachment, the more intense is the ensuing anguish. But the greater the application of wisdom the less that problems remain.

Ignorance (*moha*) leads to selfishness and greed (*lobha*); unable to acquire a desired object, a person then becomes angry (*dosa*). Many other vices spring from these three root defilements, for example stinginess, jealousy, mistrust, restlessness, anxiety, ill-will, and laziness, generating ever increasing internal discord. These impurities divorce people from

nature's harmony. The repercussion of such denial is a feeling of oppression and stress: nature's penalty system. Hence, the dukkha of nature is compounded, creating more intense pain for human beings, for example: {134}

- Feelings of tension, dullness, embarrassment, agitation, insecurity and depression.
- Psychological disturbances and related physical illnesses.
- Ordinary physical pain, for example the pain experienced during sickness, which is unduly exacerbated because of craving and clinging.
- Escalated misery brought about by causing distress and discomfort for others.
- Increased social conflicts resulting from individuals inflaming their defilements. The consequence is social decline and turmoil.

By engaging with things with ignorance, stubbornly resisting the flow of nature, and succumbing to desire, the dukkha of formations (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*) erupts as pain (*dukkha-dukkha*).

The alternative is to engage with things wisely based on an accurate understanding of truth. People with such understanding know that the dukkha that is an attribute of formations is simply a part of nature; they do not struggle and create surplus conflict. Knowing that to grasp these formations would lead to suffering, they abstain from such grasping. By accepting this truth, they do not breed defilements. They know how to live in harmony with nature by exercising virtues, which promote inner spaciousness and peace. Such virtues include: lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), social concord (*sāmaggī*), cooperation, self-sacrifice, self-restraint, patience, humility, and circumspection.

These virtues counter the many vices, for example: hatred, hostility, jealousy, dissension, greed, self-indulgence, obstinacy, arrogance, fear, mistrust, indolence, infatuation, absentmindedness, and credulity.

This harmonious and wise way of conducting our lives, of taking best advantage of nature's laws, not forfeiting our freedom, and not clinging, is the most excellent way to live, as extolled by the Buddha:

Life with wisdom is the supreme life. {135}

*Paññājīviṃ jīvitamāhu seṭṭham.*

*Sn. 32.*

### C. ANATTĀ

An understanding of nonself benefits conduct in these significant ways:

- It reduces selfishness and prevents one from applying personal gain as a basis for action. Instead, not limited by a sense of self, one discerns the wider benefit of one's actions.

According to the selfless nature of things, an object is dependent on its causes, which steer and shape the course the object takes. For this reason this teaching emphasizes that a person should wisely relate to things in conformity with their causes and conditions, which is the most effective way to succeed in one's aspirations and to avoid suffering.

- Concerning 'view' (*diṭṭhi*),<sup>95</sup> this understanding broadens the mind, enabling it to manage problems without interference from selfish desires and attachments. Instead, the mind engages with an object in accord with its true nature and potential. The mind is equanimous, and complies with the sovereignty of truth (*dhammādhipateyya*), rather than pursuing sovereignty of self (*attādhipateyya*).
- On a higher level, an understanding of selflessness is equivalent to knowing all things as they truly are; it is an ultimate understanding of truth. Such complete understanding brings about the utter removal of clinging and the realization of perfect freedom, which

<sup>95</sup>Trans.: *diṭṭhi* here is used in a neutral sense, referring to a person's perspective or comprehension of the world.

is the goal of Buddha-Dhamma. A lucid understanding of nonself, however, relies on an understanding of Dependent Origination, and on a practice consistent with the Eightfold Path, as will be discussed later.<sup>96</sup>

- The teaching on the Three Characteristics verifies other Buddhist teachings, in particular the teachings on kamma and the path to deliverance. For example, because all things are void of a fixed self, an interconnected causal dynamic is possible, and therefore our actions can bear fruit. And because the self is not fixed, liberation is possible. These statements, however, must be viewed in the context of Dependent Origination, which is explained in the following chapter. {136}

### 3.9 BUDDHA'S WORDS ON THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

#### A. DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

Monks, when what exists, owing to what, by adhering to what, does such a view as this arise: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?

When there is form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, owing to form ... consciousness, by adhering to form ... consciousness, such a view as this arises: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self.'

*S. III. 203-204.*

Monks, whichever ascetics and brahmins who regard the self in various, manifold ways all regard [as self] the five aggregates subject to clinging, or a certain one among them. What five?

Here, the uninstructed worldling ... regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He regards feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self,

<sup>96</sup>Trans.: see the following chapter on Dependent Origination. The Eightfold Path is discussed in later chapters.

or self as in consciousness. This way of regarding things becomes their firm belief: 'I exist'.

*S. III. 46.*

Monks, physical form is impermanent. Whatever is impermanent is dukkha; whatever is dukkha is nonself. Whatever is nonself should be seen as it truly is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.' (The same for feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.)

*E.g.: S. III. 22.*

Monks, physical form is impermanent ... oppressive (*dukkha*) ... and nonself. So too, the causes for the arising of physical form are impermanent ... oppressive ... and nonself. As physical form has originated from causes that are impermanent ... oppressive ... and nonself, how could it be permanent, easeful, or self? (The same for feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.)

*S. III. 23-24.*

But Friend, a learned, noble disciple, who has seen the noble ones and is skilled and well-trained in their teaching, who has seen the worthy ones and is skilled and well-trained in their teaching, does not regard physical form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He does not regard feeling as self ... perception as self ... volitional formations as self ... consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

He understands as it truly is impermanent form as 'impermanent form' ... impermanent consciousness as 'impermanent consciousness'. He understands as it truly is stressful (*dukkha*) form as 'stressful form' ... stressful consciousness as 'stressful consciousness'. He understands as it truly is selfless form as 'selfless form' ... selfless consciousness as 'selfless consciousness'. He understands as it truly is conditioned form as 'conditioned form' ... conditioned consciousness as 'conditioned consciousness'. He understands as it truly is

debilitating form as ‘debilitating form’ ... debilitating consciousness as ‘debilitating consciousness’. {137}

He does not assume, grasp or determine form as ‘my self’. He does not assume feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness; he does not grasp or determine it as ‘my self’. Not grasped or attached to, these five aggregates of clinging lead to his long-lasting welfare and happiness.<sup>97</sup>

S. III 114-15

How, householder, is one afflicted in body and afflicted in mind? Here, an untaught ordinary person, who has not seen the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their teaching ... regards physical form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness as self, regards self as possessing form ... regards form in self ... regards self in form ... regards self in consciousness. He lives obsessed by the notions: ‘I am form’, ‘my form’, ‘I am feeling’, ‘my feeling’, ‘I am perception’, ‘my perception’, ‘I am volitional formations’, ‘my volitional formations’, ‘I am consciousness’, ‘my consciousness’. As he lives obsessed by these notions, that form ... consciousness of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, there arises in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

And how, householder, is one afflicted in body but not afflicted in mind? Here, the instructed noble disciple ... does not regard physical form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness as self, regard self as possessing form ... regard form in self ... regard self in form ... regard self in consciousness. He does not

<sup>97</sup> A verse by Ven. Sāriputta; an abbreviated translation. The section, *does not regard physical form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form*, is encapsulated in the Visuddhimagga’s definition: *Na attā* (not self), *na attano* (not of self), *na attani* (not in self), *na attavatī* (not possessing self); see Vism. 578. The Visuddhimagga uses numerous explanations for perceiving selflessness, for example by regarding physical form as not a being, a spirit, a person, a youth, a woman, a man, a self or of self, us or ours, or belonging to anyone (Vism. 653-6).

live obsessed by the notions: ‘I am form’, ‘my form’, ‘I am feeling’, ‘my feeling’, ‘I am perception’, ‘my perception’, ‘I am volitional formations’, ‘my volitional formations’, ‘I am consciousness’, ‘my consciousness’. As he lives unobsessed by these notions, that form ... consciousness of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, there do not arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.<sup>98</sup>

S. III. 3-5

How, monks, is there non-agitation through non-clinging? Here, an instructed noble disciple ... does not regard physical form as self, self as possessing form, self in form, or form in self. That form of his changes and alters. Despite the change and alteration of form, his mind is not preoccupied with this physical change. No agitation and constellation of mental states (*dhamma-samuppāda*) arising from preoccupation with physical change remains overpowering his mind. {138}

Because his mind is not overpowered, he is not frightened, distressed or anxious, and through non-clinging he does not become agitated. (The same for feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.)

S. III. 17-18.

Monks, when one has understood the impermanence, alteration, fading away and cessation of physical form, and when one sees as it truly is with correct wisdom thus: ‘Form, both past and present, is impermanent, dukkha and subject to change,’ then one abandons sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. By abandoning sorrow ... despair, one is not agitated. Unagitated one dwells happily. A monk who dwells happily is said to be quenched in that respect (*tadaṅga-nibbuta*). (The same for feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.)

S. III. 43.

<sup>98</sup>A verse by Ven. Sāriputta; an abbreviated translation.

An untaught ordinary person reflects unwisely (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) thus: ‘In the far-reaching past did I exist? Did I not exist? What was I? How was I? Having been what, what did I become? In the far-reaching future will I exist? Will I not exist? What will I be? How will I be? Having been what, what will I become?’ Or else he doubts about the present thus: ‘Do I exist or do I not exist? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go?’

When he reflects unwisely in this way, one of the six views arises in him. There arises the view (belief) as true and real: ‘I have a self’, ‘I do not have a self’, ‘I perceive the self by way of the self’, ‘I perceive nonself by way of the self’, ‘I perceive the self by way of nonself’. Or else he has some such view as this: ‘It is this self of mine that directs, feels and experiences here and there the fruits of good and bad actions; it is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and it will endure like this forever.’ Monks, this speculative view is called the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the disturbance of views, the wriggling of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by the fetter of views, the untaught ordinary person is not freed from birth, aging, and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; he is not freed from suffering, I say.

Monks, a well-taught noble disciple ... understands what things are fit for reflection and what things are unfit for reflection. He does not reflect on those things unfit for reflection, and he reflects on those things fit for reflection.

What are the things unfit for reflection that he does not reflect on? They are the things such that when he reflects on them, the unarisen taints of sensual lust, becoming, and ignorance arise in him, and arisen taints increase. These are the things unfit for reflection that a noble disciple does not reflect on.

And what are the things fit for reflection that a noble disciple reflects on? They are the things such that when he reflects on them, the unarisen taints of sensual lust, becoming, and ignorance do not arise, and arisen taints are abandoned. These are the things fit for reflection that he reflects on. {139}



By not reflecting on things unfit for reflection and by reflecting on things fit for reflection, unarisen taints do not arise in him and arisen taints are abandoned.

That noble disciple reflects wisely (*yoniso-manasikāra*) thus: ‘This is suffering ... this is the cause of suffering ... this is the cessation of suffering ... this is the way to the cessation of suffering.’ When he reflects wisely in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and observances (*śīlabbataparāmāsa*).<sup>99</sup>

M. I. 7-9.

## B. PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

### 1. *The Ephemeral Nature of Life and the Value of Time*

Form is like a lump of foam,  
Feeling like a water bubble;  
Perception is like a mirage,  
Volitions like a plantain trunk,  
And consciousness like an illusion,  
So explained the Kinsman of the Sun.<sup>100</sup>

However one may consider [these five aggregates],  
And carefully investigate,  
They are but void and empty,  
When one discerns them thoroughly.

With reference to this body  
The One of Broad Wisdom<sup>101</sup> has taught  
The abandonment of three things.<sup>102</sup>

Behold the body thrown aside;  
When vitality, heat, and consciousness  
Depart from this physical body,

<sup>99</sup>A similar but slightly more detailed passage, concerning the six views, is found at Vbh. 382.

Then it lies there cast away:  
A senseless thing, mere food for others.

Such is this continuum [of life],  
This illusion, beguiler of fools.  
These five aggregates are known as a murderer;  
Here no substance can be found.

A monk with energy aroused  
Should look upon the aggregates thus,  
Whether by day or by night,  
Comprehending, ever mindful.

He should discard all the fetters  
And make a refuge for himself;  
Let him fare as with head ablaze,  
Aiming for the imperishable state.<sup>103</sup>

*S. III. 142-3.*

Monks, this lifespan of human beings is short; one must pass on to the future life. You should reflect wisely, do good, and live a pure life (*brahmacariya*). One born cannot avoid death; one who lives long lives a hundred years or a fraction more.

Short is the lifespan of human beings,  
The good man should disdain it.  
You should live like one with head aflame:  
No one can avoid Death's arrival.

Days and nights pass by;  
Life is brought to a halt.  
The life of mortals is exhausted  
Like the water of small streams.<sup>104</sup>

*Nd. I. 44, 119-20.*

<sup>100</sup>Trans.: the Buddha.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>*Lobha, dosa and moha, or taṇhā, māna and diṭṭhi.*

Life in this world is unpredictable and uncertain. Life here is difficult, short, and bound up with suffering. There are no means to help those born to avoid death. Even for one reaching old age, death prevails; such is the nature of living creatures. {140}

As ripe fruit is in constant danger of falling, so too living beings are in constant danger of death. As clay pots made by the potter end up shattered, so it is with the life of mortals. The young and the old, the foolish and the wise, all are trapped by death, all have death as their end.

When they are overcome by death, going from here to the next world, even a father cannot save his son, or a family its relatives. Look: while relatives are watching, tearful and wailing, humans are carried off one by one, like cattle being led to slaughter. The world is smitten by death and old age.

The wise do not grieve, knowing the nature of the world. You cannot know a person's path, neither its origin nor its destination. Not seeing these ends, to grieve for him is futile. If a deluded person should gain any good by lament and self-torment, a wise person would act so too. Grief does not lead to peace of mind. On the contrary, it doubles the misery and harm.

Tormenting himself, a mourner grows thin and pale. He cannot thereby aid the departed; lamentation is of no avail. Without abandoning grief a person suffers further anguish. Mourning the departed makes him a slave to sorrow.

Look at people set to depart in conformity with their actions; all beings are terrified when trapped by Death. What people expect is always different from what actually happens; such is the nature of separation.

<sup>103</sup>The imperishable state: Nibbāna.

<sup>104</sup>Some of these verses occur at D. II. 246; S. I. 108-109; Thag. 20.

See the way of the world: a person may live for a hundred years or more, but in the end he is parted from his relatives, and he too forsakes life here.

Having listened to the worthy ones, dispel your grief. Seeing someone who has passed away say: 'I cannot bring him back again.' A wise, skilled and learned person eliminates sorrow as soon as it arises, like dousing a fire, or like the wind blowing away a tuft of cotton.

A person wishing for happiness should allay bereavement, pining, and distress; he should pull out this piercing arrow. Having pulled out the arrow he is free and discovers peace of mind. He passes beyond all grief, sorrowless and quenched.<sup>105</sup> {141}

*Sn. 112-114*

Once conceived in the womb at day or night, human beings go onwards without return. Despite abundant vigour, their battles against aging and death are futile. Aging and death overrun all beings; for this reason I resolve to practise the Dhamma.

Kings may defeat a fearsome fourfold army [of elephants, horses, chariots and infantry], but they are unable to defeat the Lord of Death.... Surrounded by a fourfold army, kings may escape an enemy's clutches, but they are unable to escape from Death.... With elephants, horses, chariots, and infantry a hero may assail and destroy an enemy, but he is unable to destroy Death.... People can propitiate furious demons, spirits and ghosts, but they are unable to placate Death.... A criminal, felon or rogue may still receive the king's clemency, but Death shows no mercy.... Not royalty or nobility, not the rich, the powerful, or the strong; Death pities no one. For this reason I resolve to practise the Dhamma....

Indeed righteousness protects the righteous; Truth when well-observed brings the reward of joy. Those who observe the Truth to a woeful state do not go. For righteousness and unrighteousness have not equal ends; unrighteousness leads to hell; righteousness leads to a happy abode.

*J. IV. 494-6*

Just as mountains of solid rock,  
Massive, reaching to the sky,  
Might draw together from all sides,  
Crushing all in the four quarters –

So aging and death come  
Overwhelming living beings.  
Kings, brahmins, peasants, servants,  
Outcastes and scavengers:

Aging and death spare none along the way,  
Crushing everything.  
No battlefield exists there for elephants,  
For chariots and infantry.

One cannot defeat them by incantations  
Or bribe them with wealth.  
Therefore let a wise person, out of regard for his own welfare,  
Establish faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

When one conducts oneself righteously with body, speech and  
mind, one is praised here in the present life, and after death one  
rejoices in heaven. {142}

*S. I. 102.*

The world is smitten by Death and besieged by old age; the world is  
pierced by the arrow of craving, constantly seething with desire.

The world is mauled by Death and engulfed by old age; it is defence-  
less and relentlessly beaten like a thief receiving punishment.

Death, disease and old age pursue us like three huge fires; no power  
exists to withstand them, no speed to run away.

Do not let the days pass in vain – accomplish something, great or  
little.

With the passing of each day and night, life's opportunities dwindle.

<sup>105</sup>Some verses are repeated at J. IV. 127; Nd. I. 120-21.

Your last moment approaches: whether walking, standing, sitting or lying, there is no time for you to be negligent.<sup>106</sup>

*Thag. 447-52.*

I see your young sons crying ‘Mommy, Daddy’; they are adorable and hard to come by. Alas, even before reaching old age they succumb to death. I see your young daughters, maidens lovely to behold; but their life ends like an uprooted tender bamboo.

Truly, both men and women though of youthful age can die; who is assured of life, saying, ‘I am still young?’ The days and nights pass by; life’s duration constantly shrinks, like the time remaining for a school of fish in an evaporating pond. What reassurance is youth?

The world is smitten by Death and besieged by old age; the days do not pass in vain.... Just as thread is used up by weavers, so too is the life of human beings. Just as a brimming river does not return to the heights, so too human beings do not return to youth. Just as a swollen river sweeps away the trees along its banks, so too old age and death sweep away all living beings.... Just as ripe fruit is in constant danger of falling, so too living beings are in constant danger of death.

In the morning we see many people; by evening some are no longer in sight. In the evening we see many people; by morning some are no longer in sight. We should hasten to make effort today; who knows if we shall die tomorrow? For there is no postponing Death and his hordes.

*J. VI. 25-8.*

<sup>106</sup>Spoken by Ven. Sirimaṇḍa Thera.

My son discarded his body as a snake casts off old skin; no use for his body, he passed away.... From another world he came unsummoned; departing this world I gave not my leave. As he came so he went; what good is there in grieving his departure? If I keen my body will waste away; what benefit is there in this? My friends and relatives would anguish even more.... {143}

As children cry in vain to grasp the moon above, so people idly mourn the loss of those they love. Those dead and cremated feel not their relatives' lament. Therefore, I do not grieve; he fares the way he had to tread.

*J. III. 164-6.*

Rather than mourn the deceased we should mourn for ourselves, who are constantly under Death's dominion. As people stand, sit, lie or walk, life's constituents are not remiss; our years wear away in each blinking of the eye.

Alas, as our lives expire so, we must face separation. We should have pity on those beings remaining rather than mourn for those who have passed away.

*J. III. 95.*

Monks, there are these five states not obtainable by ascetic, brahmin, god, Māra or Brahma, nor by anyone in the world. What five? The fulfilment of these requests: 'May what is subject to aging not age', 'may what is subject to sickness not sicken', 'may the mortal not die', 'may the transient not end', and 'may the unstable not be destroyed'.

For an untaught ordinary person, something subject to aging ages, something subject to sickness sickens, something mortal dies, something transient ends, and something unstable is destroyed. [When this happens] that ordinary person ... does not reflect thus: 'Not to me only ... [does this happen], but as long as beings come and go, arise and pass away, to all, that which is subject to aging ages ... that which is unstable is destroyed. When that which is subject to aging ages ... that which is unstable is destroyed, if I grieve,

pine, lament, beat my breast, wail and anguish, food would have no appeal, the body would languish, affairs would be neglected, enemies would rejoice, while friends would be distraught'.... [When those conditions come about] he grieves, pines, laments and wails. This person is called an untaught ordinary person; pierced by the poisoned dart of sorrow, he torments himself.

To the learned, noble disciple also, that which is prone to aging ages ... that which is unstable is destroyed. {144} [When this happens] that noble disciple ... reflects thus: 'Not to me only ... [does this happen], but as long as beings come and go, arise and pass away, to all, that which is subject to aging ages ... that which is unstable is destroyed. When that which is subject to aging ages ... that which is unstable is destroyed, if I grieve, pine, lament, beat my breast, wail and anguish, food would have no appeal, the body would languish, affairs would be neglected, enemies would rejoice, while friends would be distraught'.... [When those conditions come about] he does not grieve, pine, lament or wail. This person is called a learned, noble disciple; drawn out is the poisoned dart of sorrow with which the untaught ordinary person torments himself. This noble disciple, having extinguished the fires of anguish, is sorrowless, dart-free and quenched.

Neither grief nor lamentation offers any gain;  
And enemies rejoice to see our grief and pain.  
But the sage, skilled in discrimination,  
Does not tremble in the face of misfortune.

Seeing the sage's face unchanged and as before,  
Rather his enemies are pained.  
Wherever and however one gains the good,  
By discourse, consultation, or well-worded speech,  
By gifts or by customs rightly kept,  
Make effort here with just these means.

And if one knows that a desired end is out of reach,  
Both for oneself and for others,  
One should not grieve, but rather halt



And with firm resolve inquire:  
 ‘How shall I now proceed.’

*A. III. 54-6, 60-62; the final verses are also found at J. III. 204.*

Dying we go alone; born we arrive alone; associations amongst beings are mere encounters. Therefore a sage, erudite, perceiving both this world and the next, and fully comprehending Truth, is not anguished even by the severest woe.

‘I will bestow honour and wealth to the worthy, and support spouse, relatives and fellow citizens’; this is the duty of a wise person.

*J. IV. 127.*

‘Here I will live in the rainy season, here in the winter and the summer’; unaware of danger, so muses the fool. Preoccupied with children and livestock, attached to possessions, Death carries him away as a great flood sweeps away a slumbering village. {145}

When one is overcome by Death, neither children, nor parents, nor friends can offer protection; family provides no refuge. Realizing the significance of this, let the wise and virtuous person swiftly clear the path leading to Nibbāna.

*Dh. verses 286-9.*

Short indeed is this life; a person dies within a hundred years, and even if one exceeds that one surely perishes from old age. People grieve for things they attach to as ‘mine’, but no cherished possession lasts forever. A person seeing this inevitable separation should live the homeless life. Whatever one conceives of as ‘mine’ one must relinquish at death. Knowing this let a wise person devoted to the Buddha shy away from possessiveness.

Just as a waking person does not see what he met in a dream, likewise one does not meet loved ones when they are dead and gone. Here, one sees and hears of specific people, but when they have passed away one is left only reciting their names.

A person greedy for possessions cannot renounce grief, lamentation, and stinginess. Hence the sage discerning true safety abandons guarded possessions and wanders forth.

The wise declare that he who escapes the cycle of births<sup>107</sup> is a suitable companion for a monk cultivating seclusion and dwelling in solitude.<sup>108</sup> Free from attachment, a sage creates no objects of lust or loathing.

Sorrow and selfishness do not stain the sage, as water does not permeate a lotus leaf. Just as water does not adhere to a lotus leaf, as a lotus is not tainted by water, a sage does not cling to what is seen, heard or perceived.

A wise person does not give undue import to what is seen, heard or perceived, nor does he wish for purity by other means.<sup>109</sup> He is neither impassioned nor disaffected.<sup>110</sup>

*Sn. 158-160.*

At times wealth parts from its owner; at other times, a person departs from his wealth. See here, you pursuer of pleasure: mortals do not live forever. Therefore, I do not grieve whilst others are grieving.

The full moon rises and then wanes; the sun illumines the earth and sets. I see through worldly vicissitudes; therefore, I do not grieve whilst others are grieving. {146}

*J. III. 154; Nd. I. 124.*

<sup>107</sup>Trans.: an arahant.

<sup>108</sup>A monk who is still in training: a *sekha* or a virtuous unenlightened person (*puṭhujjana-kalyāṇaka*).

<sup>109</sup>For example, by other means apart from the Eightfold Path or the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

<sup>110</sup>He is neither impassioned like a misguided person nor disaffected like a *sekha* or a virtuous unenlightened person.

Pleasure and pain, fame and disrepute,  
 Gain and loss, praise and blame:  
 For human beings these things are transient,  
 Inconstant and bound to change.

One mindful and wise discerns them well,  
 Observant of their alterations.  
 Pleasant things do not stir his mind  
 And those unpleasant do not annoy.

All partiality and enmity is dispelled,  
 Eliminated and abolished.  
 Aware now of the stainless, griefless state,  
 He fully knows, having gone beyond.

*A. IV. 157.*

The physical form of mortals decays, Their name and ancestry do  
 not decay.

*S. I. 43.*

Time all beings devours, and consumes itself as well.

*J. II. 260.*

Life undergoes destruction night and day.

*S. I. 38, 43.*

Time flies by, the days swiftly pass; the stages of life successively  
 end.

Seeing clearly this danger in death, a seeker of peace should release  
 the world's bait.

*S. I. 63.*

Nowhere have I committed any evil; Therefore, I fear not impending  
 death.

*J. VI. 312.*

Firmly grounded in the Dhamma, One need not fear the other  
 world.

*S. I. 43.*

Now, Ānanda ... at that time I was King Mahāsudassana. Those eighty-four thousand cities of which Kusāvatī was the chief were mine, those eighty-four thousand palaces of which the Truth-Palace was the chief were mine ... those eighty-four thousand carriages adorned with gold ornaments, gold banners and spread with gold nets of which Vejayanta was the chief were mine.... And of those eighty-four thousand cities I dwelt in just one, Kusāvatī; of those eighty-four thousand palaces I dwelt in just one, the Truth-Palace ... and of those eighty-four thousand carriages I rode in only one, Vejayanta.... See, Ānanda, how all those conditions are past; they have vanished and changed. Thus, Ānanda, conditioned states are impermanent; they are unstable and can bring us neither satisfaction nor security. This alone is enough for us to grow weary of conditioned states, to detach from them, and to be liberated from them....

‘Indeed, all conditioned things are impermanent, prone to arise and pass away. Having arisen, they cease; their coming to rest is truest bliss.’ {147}

*D. II. 196-9.*

My city is called Kapilavatthu; my father is King Suddhodana; my mother who bore me is called Māyādevī. I was a householder for twenty-nine years; I had three magnificent palaces: Sucanda, Koka-nuda and Koñca, with forty thousand beautifully adorned royal concubines. My wife’s name is Yasodharā and my son’s name is Rāhula. Having seen the four signs, I left the household life behind; for six years I strove and undertook austerities. I proclaimed the Wheel of Dhamma in the deer-park of Isipatana at Bārāṇasī. I am the enlightened Buddha named Gotama, the refuge for all beings.... My lifespan in this era is a mere one hundred years. Despite living so briefly, I have aided many people in crossing beyond the round of rebirth, and have set up the Torch of Righteousness to awaken future generations. Soon, I along with my disciples will attain parinibbāna,<sup>111</sup> like a fire is extinguished for lack of fuel. This abode of the body possessed of superior qualities, graced with the

thirty-two characteristics and peerless splendour, along with the perfections, the ten powers, and the six-hued aura illuminating as the sun the ten directions, all this will completely disappear. Indeed, all conditioned things are without essence, they are empty.

*Bv. 97-8.*

The young and the old, the foolish and the wise, the wealthy and the poor, all are destined for death. As a potter's vessels, both small and large, both fired and unfired, end up shattered, so too the lives of all beings end in death.

Ripe I am in years. Only a little of my life remains. Now I depart from you; I have made myself my own refuge.

Monks, be vigilant, mindful and of pure virtue; compose your thoughts, and guard your mind. In this Doctrine and Discipline, a person who abides diligently escapes the round of rebirth and makes an end of misery.

*D. II. 120-21.*

Nowadays, O monks, speaking truthfully one should say: 'Short is the life of human beings, limited and brief; it is fraught with pain and tribulation. Reflect wisely, do good, and lead the sublime life (brahmachariya); for none who is born is immortal.' Today one who lives long lives for a hundred years or a little more. And when living for a hundred years, it is just for three hundred seasons.... When living for three hundred seasons, it is just for twelve hundred months.... When living for twelve hundred months, it is just for twenty-four hundred fortnights.... And when living for twenty-four hundred fortnights, it is just for 36,000 days.... And when living for 36,000 days, a person eats just 72,000 meals: 24,000 meals in winter, 24,000 in summer and 24,000 in the rains. And this includes the drinking of mother's milk and the times without food. {148}

<sup>111</sup>Trans.: final Nibbāna; final release from rebirth.

These are the times without food: when resentful, troubled, or ill, when observing a fast, and when not finding anything to eat. Thus, O monks, I have reckoned the life of a centenarian: the limit of his lifespan, the number of seasons, of years, months and fortnights, of days and nights, of his meals and foodless times. Whatever should be done by a compassionate teacher, who out of goodwill seeks the welfare of his disciples, that I have done for you. These are the roots of trees, O monks, these are empty huts. Meditate, monks, do not be negligent, lest you regret it later. This is my instruction to you.

A. IV. 138-40.

Monks, considering personal wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering others' wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering the wellbeing of both, you should accomplish it with care.

S. II. 29; A. IV. 134-5 (quoted previously).

## ***2. Developing a Sense of Urgency and Preparing for the Future***

Heedfulness is the path to the deathless,  
heedlessness is the path to death.  
The heedful do not die;  
the heedless are as if already dead....  
An earnest, attentive person obtains abundant bliss.

*Dh. verses 21 and 27.*

Therefore, with the remainder of your lives,  
Carefully attend to your duties.

*Sn. 131.*

One who has gone forth should reflect repeatedly: 'The days and nights are relentlessly passing, how am I spending my time?'

A. V. 88.

Do not let the opportunity pass you by....  
With perseverance and knowledge remove the piercing arrow.

*Sn. 58.*

You should promptly do the deed you know leads to your own wellbeing.

*S. I. 57.*

The lazy, lethargic slacker who, although still young and strong,  
Does not devote himself to timely tasks and wallows in heedless  
fantasies finds not the path to wisdom. {149}

*Dh. verse 280.*

A person of little learning grows old like an ox; his muscles develop  
but his wisdom does not.

*Dh. verse 152.*

They who have not led a pure life,  
Who in youth have not acquired wealth,  
Sit dejected like old herons  
At a pond void of fish.  
They who have not led a pure life,  
Who in youth have not acquired wealth,  
Lie bemoaning the past  
Like spent, wasted arrows.

*Dh. verses 155-6.*

All profit is founded on two things:  
Obtaining the unacquired and protecting the acquired.<sup>112</sup>

*J. V. 116.*

Whatsoever families, Monks, attain great wealth and last a long  
time, all of them do so because of these four reasons or one or  
other of them, namely, they seek for what is lost, repair the worn,  
consume in moderation, and put in authority a virtuous woman or  
man.

*A. II. 249.*

<sup>112</sup>The two aspects of heedfulness are establishment and protection.

Heedfulness is the path to the deathless, heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful do not die; the heedless are as if already dead.

Indulgence leads to heedlessness, heedlessness to degeneracy, and degeneracy to calamity. You with the responsibility to rule the nation, do not be heedless!

Many reckless rulers have lost both their good fortune and their state. Likewise, reckless householders lose their homes, and reckless homeless ones their renunciant life.

When a nation's ruler throws caution to the wind, the nation's wealth is utterly destroyed; such is a king's misfortune. Carelessness is the enemy of Truth.

Through a ruler's excessive negligence, thieves destroy a rich, prosperous country; descendants, gold, and treasure are all lost; once plundered, a country's wealth is no more.

Despite being king, when all wealth is lost, friends and relatives do not respect your judgement; your dependants – mahouts, knights, charioteers, and foot-soldiers – do not respect your judgement.

The glory of a witless, misguided leader wanes, like a worn-out snake-skin. But a diligent, industrious leader, who manages affairs well and in a timely fashion, grows in riches, as a bull enhances the fortunes of his herd.

Therefore, O King, journey and inspect the countryside, and having completed your inspection perform your royal duties. {150}

*J. V. 99-100; also in part at J. V. 112-13.*

Let a wise person in hope stand fast and not be discouraged.  
Myself, I see clearly the fulfilment of all my desires.

*E.g.: J. I. 267; J. IV. 269; J. VI. 43.*



I have realized, Monks, [the value of] two things: not to be content with good states of mind so far achieved, and to be unremitting in the struggle for the goal.... Through diligence have I won enlightenment, through diligence have I won the unsurpassed security from bondage.

*A. I. 50.*

Do not rest content merely by keeping precepts and observances, nor by great learning, nor by deep concentration, nor by a secluded life, nor even by thinking: 'I enjoy the bliss of renunciation not experienced by an ordinary person.' O Monks, you should not rest content until reaching the utter destruction of the taints.<sup>113</sup>

*Dh. verses 271-2.*

Carry out your responsibilities in preparation for the future; Let not those tasks oppress you when they no longer can be postponed.

*J. IV. 166.*

Fear that which ought to be feared; protect yourself from potential danger.

A wise person inspects this world and the next considering future danger.

*J. III. 35, 399.*

Monks, recognizing these five future dangers (i.e. the possibility of old age, illness, famine, social unrest, and a schism in the sangha), you should be earnest, ardent and resolute to attain the unattained, master the unmastered, and realize the unrealized.

*A. III. 102-105.*

Monks, these five future dangers (i.e. there will be monks untrained in body, virtue, mind, and wisdom, who will act as preceptors for higher ordination, act as mentors, recite discourses on the Abhidhamma and Catechism, who will not listen attentively to the

Buddha's sermons, and who will be elders living laxly and luxuriously), which have not yet arisen, will arise in the future. Be aware of these dangers; being aware, endeavour to prevent them.

A. III. 105-108.

Monks, these five future dangers (i.e. there will be monks who long for fine robes, rich food, and pleasant lodgings and will seek these by violating the discipline; there will be monks who overly associate with nuns and female novices, and who will overly associate with lay stewards and male novices), which have not yet arisen, will arise in the future. Be aware of these dangers; being aware, endeavour to prevent them. {151}

A. III. 108-110.

Here Sāriputta, the Lords Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa were diligent in teaching the Dhamma in detail to their disciples, and they had many discourses in prose, in prose and verse ... and catechetical discourses. They prescribed the training rules for their disciples, and laid down the Pāṭimokkha.<sup>114</sup> When these Buddhas, these Blessed Ones, and their awakened disciples passed away, disciples of later generations of various names, families and clans went forth and preserved the teaching for a very long time.

It is as if various flowers, loose on a plank of wood, well tied together by a thread, are not scattered and dispersed by a gust of wind. This is because they are well tied together by the thread.... It is for this reason that the teaching of the Lords Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa lasted long.

Vin. III. 8.

<sup>113</sup>The commentaries define the bliss of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukha*) as the happiness of a non-returner (*anāgāmi*).

<sup>114</sup>Trans.: the monastic code of discipline.

And then the Venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks and said: 'Friends, this Dhamma has been well-proclaimed and well-imparted by our Lord the Perfectly Enlightened One; it leads to salvation and is conducive to peace. All of us should therefore convene and recite this teaching without disagreement, so that this dispensation (*brahmacariya*) may be enduring and established for a long time, thus to be for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and humans.'

*D. III. 210-11.*

Then the Venerable Kassapa the Great addressed the monks, saying: 'Come your reverences, let us recite the Dhamma and Discipline before what is not Dhamma shines out and the Dhamma is eclipsed, before what is not Discipline shines out and Discipline is eclipsed, before those who speak what is not Dhamma become strong and those who speak Dhamma weaken, before those who speak what is not Discipline become strong and those who speak Discipline weaken.'

*Vin. II. 283-4.*

Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians hold regular and frequent assemblies ... as long as the Vajjians meet in harmony, break up in harmony, and carry on their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline....

Monks, as long as the monks hold regular and frequent assemblies ... as long as they meet in harmony, break up in harmony, and carry on their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline....

Monks, as long as the monks continue with faith, with modesty, with fear of wrongdoing, with much learning (*bahussuta*), with energetic resolve, with established mindfulness, and with wisdom, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. (See Note 3.4)

*D. II. 73-9.*

## NOTE 3.4: IMPERMANENCE AND ATTENDANCE TO DUTIES

In regard to spiritual development the Buddha urged his disciples to reflect that all things are impermanent and subject to decay; this passage, however, instructs that careful attendance to one's (proper) duties results exclusively in prosperity, not decline.

One should study these two injunctions well for a correct understanding and to avoid misguided Dhamma practice. Furthermore, one should be aware that heedfulness for self-improvement and self-development, which is a personal matter, must go hand in hand with heedfulness in respect to social responsibility.

### 3.10 APPENDIX 1: ABHIDHAMMA CLASSIFICATION OF NATURAL LAWS

The Abhidhamma commentaries divide *niyāma*, natural laws, into five kinds:

1. *Utu-niyāma* (physical laws): laws concerning human beings' external environment, e.g. laws governing temperature, weather, and seasons.
2. *Bīja-niyāma* (genetic laws): laws concerning reproduction, including heredity.
3. *Citta-niyāma* (psychic laws): laws concerning mental activities.
4. *Kamma-niyāma* (kammic laws): laws concerning intention and human behaviour, i.e. the law of actions (kamma) and their results.
5. *Dhamma-niyāma*: general laws of nature, especially those of cause and effect; laws concerning the interrelationship of all things.<sup>115</sup>

DA. II. 432; DhA. 272.

<sup>115</sup>Trans.: the author here adds the English translation: 'general law of the suchness of natural states'.

### 3.11 APPENDIX 2: COMMENTARIAL EXPLANATION OF DESIGNATIONS (PAÑÑATTI)

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The Vimativinodanī Ṭikā (Samuṭṭhānasīsaṇṇanā) explains the verse at Vin. VI. (Parivāra) 86 as follows:

Since designations (*paññatti*), for example the label ‘person’, are conventional truths – they are contrived and ultimately do not exist – they are not characterized by impermanence and *dukkha*, as such characteristics imply rise and decay. They should, however, be characterized as nonself, because they are void of any substance that exists, for example as agent or recipient. Therefore, designations are explained as nonself, along with *Nibbāna*, which does exist, because they are both unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) ... they do not arise from conditioning factors. *Nibbāna* is unconditioned and does exist; designations are unconditioned and do not ultimately exist. Hence, there exists the one, true Unconditioned – *Nibbāna* – but both *Nibbāna* and designations are selfless.

### 3.12 APPENDIX 3: VARIOUS FORMS OF SUFFERING

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Somdet Phra Mahāsamaṇa Chao Krom Phraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa, in the *Dhammavicāraṇa* (Mahāmakuta University Press, 1958), pp 14-19, lists various kinds of *dukkha*, from different sources, into ten groups.<sup>116</sup> Some of the groups are given new names by the author. They are as follows:

1. *Sabhāva-dukkha*: *dukkha* inherent in conditioned phenomena, i.e. birth, aging and death;
2. *Pakiṇṇaka-dukkha* or *dukkha-cara*: sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair (including association with the disagreeable, separation from the loved, and non-acquisition of the desired);

<sup>116</sup>This appendix comprises material found on page 87 of the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*: footnote 156.

3. *Nibaddha-dukkha*: continual or resident suffering, i.e. cold, heat, hunger, thirst, and the need to defecate and urinate;
4. *Byādhī-dukkha* (illness) or *dukkha-vedanā* (pain);
5. *Santāpa-dukkha*: the burning and agitation of the heart due to the ‘fires’ of defilement;
6. *Vipāka-dukkha*: the afflictive fruits of actions, i.e. remorse, punishment, and the fall into states of perdition;
7. *Sahagata-dukkha*: concomitant suffering; the suffering accompanying mundane, agreeable conditions, e.g. the suffering of needing to protect material possessions;
8. *Āhārapariyeṭṭhi-dukkha*: the suffering of seeking food; the same as *ājīva-dukkha* – the suffering resulting from making a living;
9. *Vivādamūlaka-dukkha*: suffering caused by disputes, e.g. fear of losing an argument or a lawsuit;
10. *Dukkha-khandha*: the entirety of suffering, i.e. the five aggregates as objects of clinging are suffering.

### 3.13 APPENDIX 4: GOD

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The meanings of the words *Phra Jao* (Thai for ‘God’, literally ‘Excellent Lord’) and the English ‘God’ are vague. *Phra Jao* was originally a word used by Buddhists as an epithet for the Buddha (*Phra Phu Pen Jao* – ‘Venerable Lord’ – is still a form of address to monks).

Once Christians adopted this term to refer to their God, Buddhists abandoned it until they forgot the original meaning. As for the word ‘God’, Christians use this term to denote the Supreme Divinity, who they believe created the world and is characterized as a Being.

Some philosophers, however, broaden the meaning of God to be an abstract quality, not necessarily involved with the world’s creation. Some contemporary Christian theologians define God in a similar way, i.e. not as

a Being, but Christian establishments reject these definitions (or outright condemn them).

When Hans Küng (in ‘Does God Exist? An Answer for Today’, trans. Edward Quinn. London: Collins, 1980, pp. 594-602) tried to compare God with Nibbāna, he realized the difference, as Nibbāna is not involved in the creation of the world.





# SECTION III.

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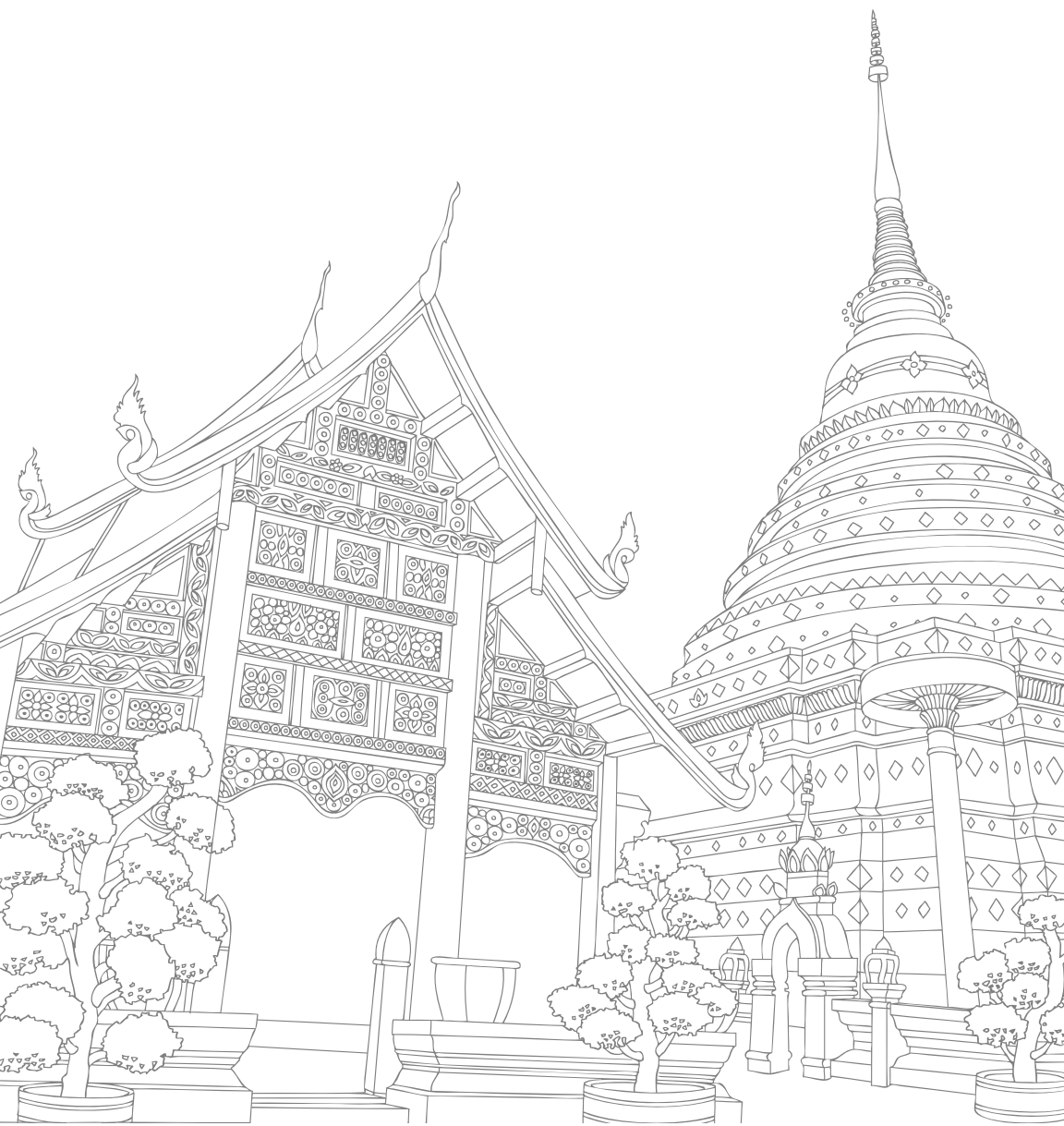
## PROCESS OF LIFE

Chapter 4

*Dependent Origination*

Chapter 5

*The Law of Kamma*



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## CHAPTER 4

# DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

### *Paṭiccasamuppāda: The Buddhist Law of Conditionality*

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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Basic definitions for the term paṭiccasamuppāda include ‘dependent origination’, ‘dependent co-origination’, and the ‘origin of suffering dependent on co-conditionality’.

The Buddha presented the teaching of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) in two ways: general presentations, which do not specify each factor of the process, and detailed presentations listing each factor in a connected sequence. The general presentation usually occurs preceding the detailed presentation. The detailed presentation is found frequently in the scriptures, usually alone, without the general presentation; it expands on the general presentation, describing and analyzing each factor of Dependent Origination.

#### A. GENERAL PRESENTATION

When this exists, that comes to be;  
With the arising of this, that arises.

When this does not exist, that does not come to be;  
With the cessation of this, that ceases.

*Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti,  
imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati.*

*Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti,  
imasmiṃ nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.*<sup>1</sup>

S. II. 28, 65.

## B. DETAILED (OR ‘APPLIED’) PRESENTATION

With ignorance as condition, there are volitional formations.  
*avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā*

With volitional formations as condition, there is consciousness.  
*saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ*

With consciousness as condition, there is mind-and-body.<sup>2</sup>  
*viññāṇapaccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*

With mind-and-body as condition, there are the six sense bases.  
*nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*

With the six sense bases as condition, there is contact.  
*saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso*

With contact as condition, there is feeling.  
*phassapaccayā vedanā*

With feeling as condition, there is craving.  
*vedanāpaccayā taṇhā*

With craving as condition, there is clinging. {155}  
*taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ*

With clinging as condition, there is becoming.  
*upādānapaccayā bhavo*

With becoming as condition, there is birth.  
*bhavapaccayā jāti*

<sup>1</sup>VismṬ.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭiccasamuppādakathā-vaṇṇanā states that this general presentation is sometimes applied to a single factor of Dependent Origination (e.g. ‘contact’ at S. II. 96-7.); in this case it is called ‘single topic Dependent Origination’ (*ekaṅga-paṭiccasamuppāda*). This general presentation corresponds to the term ‘specific conditionality’ (*idappaccayatā*).

With birth as condition, there is aging-and-death.

*jātipaccayā jarā-maraṇaṃ*

Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair thus come to be.

*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā sambhavanti*

Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

*evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*

With the remainderless abandonment and cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of volitional formations.

*avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho*

With the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness.

*saṅkhāraṇirodhā viññāṇaṇirodho*

With the cessation of consciousness, cessation of mind-and-body.

*viññāṇaṇirodhā nāmarūpaṇirodho*

With the cessation of mind-and-body, cessation of the six sense bases.

*nāmarūpaṇirodhā saḷāyatanaṇirodho*

With the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact.

*saḷāyatanaṇirodhā phassaṇirodho*

With the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling.

*phassaṇirodhā vedanāṇirodho*

With the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving.

*vedanāṇirodhā taṇhāṇirodho*

With the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging.

*taṇhāṇirodhā upādānaṇirodho*

With the cessation of clinging, cessation of becoming.

*upādānaṇirodhā bhavaṇirodho*

With the cessation of becoming, cessation of birth.

*bhavanirodhā jātinirodho*

With the cessation of birth, (cessation of) aging-and-death.

*jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ*

Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease.

*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti*

Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

*evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti*

*Vin. I. 1-2; S. II. 1-2, 65.*

Both of these formats can be divided into two parts – the process of origination and the process of cessation. The first sequence, the process of origination, is called the cycle of origination (*samudaya-vāra*). It is also known as the forward sequence (*anuloma-ṭṭhikāsamuppāda*) and is equivalent to the second Noble Truth: the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*). The latter sequence is called the cycle of cessation (*nirodha-vāra*) or the reverse sequence (*paṭiloma-ṭṭhikāsamuppāda*); it corresponds to the third Noble Truth: the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*).

The closing statements of the detailed presentation indicate that Dependent Origination deals with the origin and cessation of suffering. Most of the scriptural references to Dependent Origination end with these statements. There are, however, passages that end with the origin and cessation of the ‘world’:

This, bhikkhus, is the origin of the world;

this, bhikkhus, is the cessation of the world;

*Ayaṃ kho bhikkhave lokassa samudayo;*

*ayaṃ kho bhikkhave lokassa atthaṅgamo.*

*S. II. 73.*

In such a way the world originates,

in such a way the world ceases. {156}

<sup>2</sup>Trans.: *Nāma-rūpa* is variously translated as ‘mind and body’, ‘mentality and materiality’, or ‘name and form’.

*Evamayaṃ loko samudayati;  
evamayaṃ loko nirujjhati.*

S. II. 78.

Here the words ‘suffering’ and ‘world’ are interchangeable, which will be explained below.

The detailed presentation of Dependent Origination contains twelve factors, which are part of an interconnected cycle, without a beginning or an end. There is no ‘first cause’ (*mūla-kāraṇa*). For the sake of convenience, the Buddha chose ignorance (*avijjā*) as the most suitable candidate to place at the start of the list of factors, but this is not intended to imply that ignorance is the first cause. Occasionally, to prevent the misunderstanding that ignorance is the ‘first cause’, he inserted the following statement:

With the arising of the taints, ignorance arises; with the cessation of the taints, ignorance ceases.

*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo, āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho.*

M. I. 55.

The twelve factors of Dependent Origination, beginning with ignorance and ending with aging-and-death, are as follows:

*Avijjā* (ignorance) →  
*saṅkhāra* (volitional formations) →  
*viññāṇa* (consciousness) →  
*nāma-rūpa* (mind-and-body) →  
*saḷāyatana* (six sense bases) →  
*phassa* (contact) →  
*vedanā* (feeling) →  
*taṇhā* (craving) →  
*upādāna* (clinging) →  
*bhava* (becoming) →  
*jāti* (birth) →  
*jarāmaraṇa* (aging-and-death).

Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are results of the cycle of Dependent Origination, arising in the minds of those who have mental impurities (*āsava* and *kilesa*) when they are faced with aging and death.

These results, however, take an active role by leading to a further increase of mental taints (*āśava*), which are in turn the conditions for ignorance and a continued rotation of the cycle.

In general, when presenting this detailed or ‘applied’ format of Dependent Origination (comprising the entire twelve factors), the Buddha mentioned the forward sequence only as an introduction. When he wished to emphasize the direct human experience of suffering, he most often presented Dependent Origination in the reverse sequence:

*Jarāmaṇa* ← *jāti* ← *bhava* ← *upādāna* ← *taṇhā* ← *vedanā* ← *phassa*  
← *saḷāyatana* ← *nāma-rūpa* ← *viññāṇa* ← *saṅkhāra* ← *avijjā*.

*S. II. 5-11, 81.*

On some occasions, when he wished to highlight a particular factor, the Buddha began the detailed presentation with one of the intermediate factors. The presentation may begin with birth (*jāti*),<sup>3</sup> feeling (*vedanā*),<sup>4</sup> or consciousness (*viññāṇa*),<sup>5</sup> and then be linked with the subsequent factors until the process reaches aging-and-death (for the forward sequence), or traced back to ignorance (for the reverse sequence). Occasionally, the process begins with a factor or problem not included in the group of twelve, and is then connected to the process of Dependent Origination.<sup>6</sup> In summary, the presentation of Dependent Origination is not fixed and does not have to mention all twelve factors. {157}

Although the twelve factors are said to be interdependent and act as conditions for one another, this is not the same as saying they are ‘causes’ for one another. As a comparison, there are more conditions other than the seed itself that permit a plant to grow: soil, water, fertilizer, weather, and temperature all play a part. And these interrelated conditions do

<sup>3</sup>E.g.: *S. II. 52.*

<sup>4</sup>E.g.: *M. I. 266-7.*

<sup>5</sup>E.g.: *S. II. 77-8.*

<sup>6</sup>E.g.: *S. II. 11, 101.*



not need to follow a set temporal sequence. Similarly, a floor acts as a condition for the stability or positioning of a table.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

The Buddha presented the principle of Dependent Origination as a law of nature, which does not rely on the emergence of a Buddha for its existence. The Buddha presented Dependent Origination as a natural truth in the following way:

Whether Tathāgatas arise or not, that principle of specific conditionality<sup>8</sup> is constant, certain, and a law of nature. Having fully awakened to and penetrated to this truth, a Tathāgata announces, teaches, clarifies, formulates, reveals, and analyzes it. And he says: ‘See! With ignorance as condition, there are volitional formations....

Thus, bhikkhus, this actuality (tathatā), this inerrancy (avitathatā), this invariability (anaññathatā) – this specific conditionality (idappaccayatā) – is called Dependent Origination.<sup>9</sup>

S. II. 25-6.

The central importance of Dependent Origination is evident from the Buddha’s words:

One who sees Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees Dependent Origination.

M. I. 190-91.

<sup>7</sup>The Abhidhamma mentions twenty-four modes of conditionality; see the Paṭṭhāna.

<sup>8</sup>‘Specific conditionality’ = *idappaccayatā*. This is another name for Dependent Origination. It can also be translated as the ‘convergence of conditional factors’. In the later texts of the Tipiṭaka, Dependent Origination is sometimes referred to as ‘mode of conditionality’ (*paccayākāra*). The commentaries and sub-commentaries use this term *paccayākāra* more frequently than the term *idappaccayatā*.

<sup>9</sup>‘Principle’ = *dhātu*: literally, ‘element’. This is an almost identical presentation to the Buddha’s teaching on the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*). See chapter 3.

Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple has a knowledge about this that is independent of others: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises’.... When a noble disciple thus understands as they really are the origin and the passing away of the world, he is then called a noble disciple perfected in view, perfected in vision, who has arrived at this true Dhamma, who possesses a trainee’s knowledge, a trainee’s true knowledge, who has entered the stream of the Dhamma, a noble one with penetrative wisdom, one who stands squarely before the door to the Deathless.  
{153}

*S. II. 78-9.*

Those ascetics and brahmins who understand these things (i.e. the factors of Dependent Origination), their origin, their cessation, and the way leading to their cessation ... those ascetics and brahmins are deserving of the acknowledgement as ascetics among ascetics and brahmins among brahmins. By realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, they are recognized as in this very life reaching and abiding in the goal of asceticism and the goal of brahminhood.

*S. II. 16, 45-6, 129.*

On one occasion, the Buddha warned Ven. Ānanda not to misjudge the complexity of Dependent Origination:

[Ānanda:] ‘It is wonderful, venerable sir! It is marvellous, venerable sir! This Dependent Origination is so deep and appears so deep, yet to me it seems clear and easy to understand.’

[Buddha:] ‘Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! This Dependent Origination is deep and appears deep. It is because of not understanding and not penetrating this truth that this generation is afflicted and become like a tangled skein, like a knotted ball of thread, like matted reeds and rushes, and is unable to transcend the plane of misery, the bad destinations, the lower worlds, and the round of rebirth (saṃsāra).

*S. II. 92.*

Readers who are familiar with the Buddha's life story will remember his reluctance soon after his awakening to proclaim the Dhamma:

Bhikkhus, this thought arose in me: 'This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, difficult to see, difficult to realize, peaceful, excellent, not accessible by reasoning, to be known by the wise. But this generation delights in attachment, takes pleasure in attachment, rejoices in attachment.'<sup>10</sup> It is hard for such a generation delighting in attachment to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, Dependent Origination. And it is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the abandonment of all foundations for suffering (upadhi), the end of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. If I were to teach the Dhamma and others would not truly understand me, that would be wearying and troublesome for me.

*Vin. I. 4-5; M. I. 167-8.*

This passage mentions both Dependent Origination and Nibbāna, emphasizing both the importance of these two truths and also the difficulty in realizing them. The Buddha awakened to these truths and explained them to others. {154}

#### 4.3 INTERPRETATIONS OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

The teaching of Dependent Origination may be summarized as follows:

1. An explanation describing the evolution of the world and the cycle of all life, by interpreting some of the Buddha's words in a more literal way, for example the Buddha's teaching on the 'origin of the world' (*loka-samudaya*).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Ālaya*: attachment, obsession, dependency; a reliance on external conditions.

<sup>11</sup> E.g.: S. II. 73.

2. An explanation describing the birth and death of human beings and the origin and cessation of human suffering. This explanation can be subdivided into two further categories:
  - A. A broad description of one life to another: the passing from one realm of existence to another. This is also a literal explanation and it is commonly found in the commentaries, where it is systematized and described in great, and sometimes intimidating, detail.
  - B. A description of a cycle present at each moment of life. This description offers an interpretation of this teaching implicit in the previous description (2A), but it focuses on a deeper meaning of specific Pali terms, or on their practical significance. This interpretation explains the whole cycle of Dependent Origination in terms of present experience, which is considered to be in line with the Buddha's intention and the real objective of this teaching, as evidenced by many discourses of the Buddha, including the *Cetanā Sutta*,<sup>12</sup> the *Dukkhanirodha Sutta*,<sup>13</sup> and the *Lokanīrodha Sutta*.<sup>14</sup> In the *Abhidhamma* an entire section is dedicated to the complete sequence of Dependent Origination arising in a single mind moment.<sup>15</sup>

In reference to explanation #1, some people interpret Dependent Origination as a theory of the origin ('genesis') of the universe, declaring ignorance as a 'first cause'<sup>16</sup> in a process followed and completed by the remaining eleven factors. {158} This interpretation leads to the view that Buddhism resembles other religions and philosophies that posit a prime

<sup>12</sup>S. II. 65.

<sup>13</sup>S. II. 72-3.

<sup>14</sup>S. II. 73.

<sup>15</sup>The *Abhidhamma-Bhājanīya* of the *Paccayākāra-Vibhaṅga*: Vbh. 138-92.

<sup>16</sup>[Trans.: a form of 'cosmological argument' or 'argument from first cause'.] Some proponents of this argument define *avijjā* as an 'unknowing entity', which refers to materiality as the origin of life. Others translate *avijjā* as the 'unknowable' or the 'unfathomable', equating *avijjā* with God. And the term *saṅkhāra* (the second factor) is occasionally misdefined as 'all conditioned phenomena'.

agent, for example a creator God, who is the source of all beings and all things. According to this interpretation, the only difference is that these theistic doctrines portray the creation and governing of the world by a force outside and above nature, while Buddhism describes a causal, natural process.

This interpretation, however, is inaccurate, because any teaching that professes a first cause or prime agent contradicts the teaching of Dependent Origination or of specific conditionality. The teaching of Dependent Origination offers an objective account of causality, that all conditioned things are interrelated and interdependent. They arise in a successive, causal process without beginning or end. A first cause, either a creator God or other agent, is impossible. Therefore, the explanation of Dependent Origination as describing the evolution of the world is only suitable in the context of explaining a natural, causal process of continual growth and disintegration, without beginning and without end.

One way of determining whether an interpretation of Dependent Origination is correct or not is to consider the Buddha's intention in teaching the Dhamma. The Buddha focused on things that can be applied to bring about wellbeing, that are relevant to everyday life, and that solve real-life problems. He considered attempts to reach the truth through metaphysical speculation and debate to be fruitless. Determining what is truly Buddha-Dhamma thus requires a consideration of a teaching's ethical and practical value.

The worldview that stems from explanation #1 of Dependent Origination, above, is suitable and accords with the aims of Buddha-Dhamma. It provides a broad perspective that things proceed according to cause and effect, that they depend on natural conditions, and that they neither originate from a creator God nor do they arise randomly or by accident. Moreover, it is conducive to bringing about the following three practical benefits:

First, one realizes that to find success and fulfilment, one cannot rely on hope, desire, fate, divine intervention, or supernatural powers. One only reaches success through concerted action; one must be self-reliant and generate the conditions that lead to success.

Second, to generate these conditions, one must properly understand each factor within the dynamic of nature in which one is engaged, as well as understanding the mutual relationship between factors; wisdom is therefore an essential element in the process. {159}

Third, the knowledge of causal connections reduces or eliminates the mistaken identification with things as a fixed ‘self’. This knowledge promotes an appropriate relationship to things and leads to inner freedom.

Although the explanation of Dependent Origination as describing a beginningless and endless evolution of the world is acceptable, its practical value is limited. It is not yet sufficiently cogent or integrated to guarantee the three benefits mentioned above (especially the third benefit of promoting freedom).

To truly profit from this broad interpretation of Dependent Origination, one must refine one’s investigation by discerning the causal, interdependent nature of all conditioned phenomena. When one develops this clarity in every moment of one’s life, the three benefits mentioned earlier are complete, and at the same time one reaches the true objective of the interpretation related to the evolution of the world.

The explanation of Dependent Origination as the evolution of the world, either in its broadest sense or in a more refined way, is a contemplation of external phenomena. The second explanation, on the other hand, emphasizes the internal life of human beings, including the dynamic of human suffering.

The first subdivision (2A) is favoured by the commentaries, where it is explained in great detail.<sup>17</sup> The commentaries coin many new descriptive terms for this process in order to construct a clear, organized system. The disadvantage, however, is that this system can appear inflexible, and to students new to Buddhism, rather arcane. The second subdivision (2B) is directly linked to the first (2A), as will be described below. {160}

<sup>17</sup>See: Vism. 517-86; VbhA. 129-213 (pages 199-213 illustrate the complete process of Dependent Origination in a single mind moment.)

#### 4.4 RELATIONAL CONTEXT OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

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The essential aim of Dependent Origination is to illustrate the origin and cessation of suffering (*dukkha*). The term *dukkha* plays a pivotal role in Buddha-Dhamma and appears in several key teachings, for example the Three Characteristics and the Four Noble Truths. To understand the complete meaning of the term *dukkha*, one must set aside the common translation of ‘suffering’ and examine the threefold classification of *dukkha*,<sup>18</sup> along with its commentarial explanations:<sup>19</sup>

1. *Dukkha-dukkhatā*: a feeling of pain (*dukkha-vedanā*), as commonly understood; physical suffering (e.g. aches and pains) and mental suffering (e.g. grief); dis-ease; the suffering arising from encounters with undesirable and disturbing sense objects.
2. *Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*: suffering associated with change; suffering inherent in pleasure. Pleasure becomes suffering or produces suffering due to the transitoriness of pleasure. A person may feel at ease, without any disturbance, but after experiencing a more pleasant form of ease, the original state of ease may feel unpleasant. It is as if suffering lies latent and manifests when pleasure fades away. The degree of suffering is proportional to the degree of pleasure that precedes it. Suffering can even arise while experiencing pleasure if a person becomes aware of the fleeting nature of that pleasure. And when pleasure ends, the sadness of separation follows in its wake.
3. *Saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*: the *dukkha* of conditioned phenomena; the *dukkha* of all things that arise from causes and conditions, that is, the five aggregates (*khandha*), including ‘path’ (*magga*) and ‘fruit’

<sup>18</sup>D. III. 216-17; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56. The first two references are passages spoken by Ven. Sāriputta; the third reference is a passage by the Buddha. In the Tipiṭaka these three kinds of *dukkha* are simply listed by name, without explanations.

<sup>19</sup>Vism. 499; VbhA. 93. Here, these factors are listed according to the commentaries; the order in the Pali Canon is: (1) *dukkha-dukkhatā*; (2) *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*; and (3) *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*.

(*phala*), which are technically classified as ‘transcendent’. All conditioned things are oppressed by conflicting component factors; all things arise and pass away; they are imperfect. They exist in the ‘stream’ of causes and conditions, which generate suffering for someone who does not understand the nature of conditionality, who with craving, grasping and ignorance foolishly resists this process, and who does not engage with it wisely.

The third kind of *dukkha* reveals the inherent nature of conditioned phenomena, but it also has a psychological dimension. This state of imperfection and stress prevents thorough satisfaction with conditioned phenomena and continually causes suffering for a person who relates to things with craving, grasping and ignorance.<sup>20</sup> {161}

The meaning of this third kind of *dukkha* is thus all-inclusive. It corresponds with the meaning of *dukkha* in the Three Characteristics (‘all conditioned things are *dukkha*’). The pressure and instability inherent in things may lead to the *dukkha* of the Four Noble Truths, whereby craving, grasping, and ignorance come to fruition as suffering, and whereby the five aggregates of nature develop into the five aggregates of clinging of human beings.

In this context, one can include the three kinds of feeling (*vedanā*): pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*dukkha*), and neutral feeling (*upekkhā*). Painful feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*) is part of the first kind of *dukkha*: *dukkha-dukkhatā*. Pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*) is introduced in the second factor of *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*. Although neutral feeling (or ‘equanimity’) escapes the first two factors, it is included in the final factor of *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. Even equanimity is ephemeral, transient, and subject to causes and conditions. If one is enchanted by equanimity and wishes to indulge in it, one cannot escape the *dukkha* of conditioned phenomena. The commentaries elaborate by stating that neutral feeling (*upekkhā-vedanā*), along with all other formations in the three planes of existence (*tebhūmaka*) are *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*, as they are oppressed by arising and dissolution. In

<sup>20</sup>The three aspects of *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* are: (1) stress, conflict, oppression, unrest, imperfection; (2) unsatisfactoriness; and (3) state of being liable to suffering.



sum, all three kinds of feeling are incorporated in these three kinds of *dukkha*.

The teaching of Dependent Origination reveals how dynamics inherent in nature develop into human problems as a consequence of ignorance, craving, and clinging. At the same time, these natural dynamics reveal how the interrelatedness of phenomena takes the form of a stream. Various aspects of this stream may be distinguished: conditioned phenomena are interrelated; they exist dependent on other conditioned phenomena; they are inconstant, not remaining the same even for an instant; they are not autonomous – they have no true ‘self’; and they have no first cause.

Seen from another angle, the way in which phenomena manifest in the world – as appearing, growing, and declining – reveals their fluid nature. This fluid nature exists because things are made up of interrelated components. The stream of phenomena flows on because all of its components are unstable, inconstant, and without true substance. The particular features of interdependent processes both point to the impossibility of a first cause and also allow for the manifestation of distinct fluid entities.

If things were to truly possess a ‘self’, they would be stable. If things were stable, even for a moment, they would by definition not be mutually dependent, and there would be no fluid entities. But, without a stream of interdependent phenomena, nature would not exist in the way it does. A ‘self’ or fixed substance within phenomena would render true causal interactions impossible. Because all things are impermanent, inconstant, subject to decay, insubstantial, and interconnected, there is a stream of conditions manifesting as distinct natural phenomena.

The Pali term for impermanence and instability is *aniccatā*. The term for oppression through birth and decay, for inherent stress, conflict and imperfection, is *dukkhatā*. The term for ‘selflessness’ or insubstantiality – the absence of any internal or external essence or agent that dictates things according to desire – is *anattatā*. The teaching of Dependent Origination reveals these three characteristics and describes the interrelated sequence of phenomena. {162}

The process of Dependent Origination applies to both material things (*rūpa-dhamma*) and to immaterial things (*nāma-dhamma*), to both the

material world and to human life, which is comprised of both physical and mental attributes. This process manifests as particular laws of nature, namely: (1) *dharmma-niyāma*: the general law of cause and effect; (2) *utu-niyāma*: laws of the material world (physical laws); (3) *bīja-niyāma*: laws governing living things, including genetics (biological laws); (4) *citta-niyāma*: laws governing the workings of the mind (psychological laws); and (5) *kamma-niyāma*: law of ‘karma’ (intentional action; karmic laws)<sup>21</sup>, which determines human wellbeing and is directly linked to ethics.

Again, all natural processes, including the dynamics of karma, are possible because things are impermanent and insubstantial. This fact may be at odds with how people commonly feel. Yet if things were permanent, stable, and possessed a solid core, none of the above laws of nature would hold true. Also, these laws confirm that there is no first cause for things, no creator God.

Conditioned things arise dependent on causes and they are interrelated; they have no fixed core. A bed, to take a simple example, is composed of various parts which have been assembled following a prescribed plan; there exists no essential substance of the bed apart from these components. Taking them apart, the bed no longer exists; there exists merely a notion of ‘bed’, which is a thought in the mind. Even particular notions do not exist in isolation, but are connected to other concepts. The notion of a ‘bed’ only has significance in relation to the notions of ‘lying down’, a ‘level plane’, ‘position’, ‘space’, etc.

People’s awareness and understanding of particular designations is linked to their understanding of the relational factors of that particular entity. But when recognition of the object has been made, habitual attachment in the form of craving and grasping leads the person to be convinced of the object’s substantiality. The object is separated from

<sup>21</sup>Trans.: Pali: *kamma*; Sanskrit: *karma*. There are many misunderstandings of the Buddhist concept of karma. As a case in point, note the first two definitions of karma in ‘Collins Concise Dictionary, Fourth Edition 1999’: 1. Hinduism, Buddhism. the principle of retributive justice determining a person’s state of life and state of his reincarnations as the effect of his past deeds; 2. destiny or fate. Hopefully, this text will demonstrate and explain just how remote these definitions are from the original Buddhist connotations.

its relational context and true discernment of the object is obstructed. Selfishness and possessiveness come to the fore.

As mentioned above, things do not have a ‘first cause’ or original source. Tracing back the causes and conditions *ad infinitum*, one still cannot find a first cause. There is a strong impulse in people, however, to seek an original source for phenomena, and as a consequence they assign undue importance to particular entities. This impulse to find a source conflicts with the truth, and the notions associated with whatever is taken as a source become a form of ‘perceptual aberration’ (*saññā-vipallāsa*).

People abandon their inquiry into causality too soon. A correct investigation would go on to inquire into the cause of what is being taken as the source and conclude that this line of inquiry is endless. Things exist in mutual dependence, and therefore there is no ‘first cause’. Indeed, one can pose the question: Why is it necessary for things to originate from a primal source? {163}

The belief in a creator God is equally at odds with nature. This belief stems from the observation and common assumption that human beings are responsible for producing things like tools, implements and crafts; therefore, everything in the universe must also have a creator.

The logic of this reasoning, however, is flawed. People separate the act of production from the natural context of conditionality. In fact, human production is only one aspect of conditionality. In the act of production, humans are one factor among many in a conditional process, all of which combine to reach a desired result. The distinction here from a purely material process is that mental factors (e.g. ‘desire’) accompanied by intention also play a role. But these mental factors must combine with other factors in a conditional process to bring about a desired end. For example, when building a house, a person influences other factors to bring about completion. If humans were above the conditional process, they could build a house out of thin air, but this is impossible. Creation, therefore, is not separate from conditionality, and since all conditioned things exist as parts of an ongoing causal process, a creator God plays no role at any stage.

Another line of reasoning that contradicts the truth and is similar to the idea of a ‘first cause’ is the idea that in the beginning there was nothing. This idea is connected to and stems from a belief in self: the identification with composite parts that comprise an individual form. A person establishes a notion of self and attaches to this notion. In addition, he may believe that originally this self did not exist, but rather came into being at a later time.

This limited way of thinking, of getting stuck on an object and not having a fluid outlook on things, is an attachment to conventional labels and a misunderstanding of conventional truth. It lies behind the need to find a first cause or creator God as the source of all phenomena, giving rise to such conflicting ideas as how can something immortal produce something that is mortal or how can transient things spring from the eternal? Apropos the causal, interrelated flow of phenomena, there is no need to speak of an enduring or a temporary ‘self’, unless one is referring to ‘conventional truth’ (*sammati-sacca*). Again, one can ask why is it necessary to have nothing before something can exist?

In any case, speculation on such topics as a ‘first cause’ and a creator God is considered to be of little value in Buddha-Dhamma because it is irrelevant to the practical application of the teachings for bringing about true spiritual wellbeing. Even though these philosophical considerations can lead to a broad worldview, as shown above, they can be passed over since a focus on practical application leads to the same benefits. Attention here, therefore, should be on applying the teachings to everyday life.

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As mentioned earlier, human beings are comprised of the five aggregates. Nothing exists separately from these aggregates, dwelling either inside them or out. Nothing owns or controls the aggregates and governs life. The five aggregates function according to Dependent Origination; they are part of the interrelated flow of conditions. All of the components in this process are unstable; they all arise and pass away, and they condition further arising and decay. The interdependency of the components enables there to be a causal process and continual stream of formations.

The five aggregates are marked by the three universal characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*): (1) they are impermanent and unstable, subject to constant arising and passing away (= *aniccatā*); (2) they are continually oppressed by arising and dissolution; they inevitably produce suffering for one who engages with them by way of ignorance and attachment (= *dukkhatā*); and (3) they are void of any substantial essence or self that is able to dictate things according to desire (= *anattatā*).

These five aggregates, perpetually shifting and inherently insubstantial, follow their own nature and proceed according to the flow of interrelated conditions. Unawakened human beings, however, make the mistake of resisting this flow by identifying with certain phenomena. They then want this imagined 'fixed entity' to last or proceed in a desired fashion. At the same time, the eddying currents within the flow of conditions conflict with desire, causing stress and increasing desire and attachment. When desire is thwarted, the struggle to establish, control, and stabilize an identity becomes more intense, which results in ever greater disappointment, anguish, and despair.

A dim understanding of truth may lead a person to conclude that change is inescapable and that one's cherished 'self' may disappear, but this consideration only leads to firmer attachment intertwined with deep-seated anxiety. Such a state of mind is comprised of three defilements: *avijjā* (ignorance of the truth; the mistaken belief in a 'self'); *taṇhā* (the wish for this surmised 'self' to be or not to be in a particular way); and *upādāna* (grasping; binding this 'self' to things). These defilements are deeply embedded in the mind and they control the behaviour of human beings, overtly or covertly. They mould people's personalities and shape their destiny. It is fair to say they are the source of suffering for all unawakened people.

The preceding paragraphs have revealed a conflict between two distinct processes:

1. The course of life that is governed by the law of the Three Characteristics (*anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*), which is a fixed law of nature.

It manifests as birth, aging and death, both in an ordinary and a deeper sense.<sup>22</sup>

2. Ignorance of the course of life; the mistaken belief in a stable, enduring ‘self’ and a subsequent attachment, accompanied by fear and anxiety. {165}

The conflict is between laws of nature and a mistaken self-view, between the causal dynamics in nature and people’s desires. People construct a self which then impedes the flow of nature. When people’s desires are unsound or thwarted, the result is suffering in its various manifestations. This results in a life of ignorance, attachment, enslavement, resistance to nature, and misery.

Conventionally speaking, the second process comprises two ‘selves’. First is the ‘self’ or ‘entity’ within nature that changes according to causes and conditions. Although no true ‘self’ exists, it is possible to separate and distinguish one natural dynamic or flow from others, and for practical purposes one can assign a conventional label of ‘self’ to each individual dynamic. Second is a false ‘self’, a ‘fixed entity’, which one imagines to be real and clings to with ignorance, craving and grasping. The first ‘self’, the dynamic entity, is not a cause for attachment. But the second ‘self’, which is superimposed on the first ‘self’, is defined by attachment; it is inevitably undermined by the nature of the first ‘self’ and thus causes suffering.

A life of ignorance and attachment instils fear and anxiety in the heart, affects behaviour, and makes people unwitting slaves to their desires. It increases selfishness (a perpetual search for personal gratification), possessiveness, and a lack of consideration for others.<sup>23</sup>

In order to reinforce and affirm their desires, people latch onto and identify with those views, opinions, doctrines, belief systems, etc., that meet the needs of and accord with desire. They cherish and cling to

<sup>22</sup>Trans.: here, the author is referring to the different interpretations of Dependent Origination, as describing both the physical death of a human being and the birth and death occurring in each moment of life.

<sup>23</sup>Clinging to sensuality: *kāmuṇāpādāna*.

these views, etc. as if protecting their very selves. As a result, they build a barrier that prevents them from accessing the truth: they hide from the truth. This rigidity of mind means that their critical faculties are impaired. And it can give rise to obstinacy – an inability to tolerate or listen to the views of others.<sup>24</sup>

When people establish ideas, views, and beliefs on what is good, what should be achieved, and what is the proper way to reach desired goals, they behave accordingly, and they observe corresponding traditions and customs. Their behaviour may even be naive or irrational as a result; they may act simply out of an attachment to such traditions and customs, possessing only a faint understanding of the causal relationship of the factors involved. Hence, they lack a clear understanding of cause and effect. {166}

This is reflected in the lives of some religious seekers, who uphold various ascetic traditions and practices with great intensity, believing that such behaviour will guarantee liberation, realization, or a passage to heaven. They then go on to criticize and look down on other people as a consequence of these established practices.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, on a deeper level, such people are worried about the preservation of their cherished ‘self’, which is a fabricated concept. Although they do not really know what or where this assumed self is, they still lug it around and protect it. And because they fear that at any moment the self may perish, they grab after whatever provides a sense of self-affirmation, however obscure such things may be. Life thus becomes restricted and their wellbeing is shaped by the fortunes of this so-called ‘self’.<sup>26</sup>

These repercussions do not merely affect the individual: the conflict and suffering extends outwards, causing social conflict. All social problems created by human beings stem from a life of ignorance and attachment.

<sup>24</sup>Clinging to views: *diṭṭhupādāna*.

<sup>25</sup>Clinging to virtuous conduct (clinging to precepts and religious practices): *śīlabbatupādāna*.

<sup>26</sup>Clinging to the ego-belief: *attavādupādāna*.

The detailed presentation of Dependent Origination outlines the origin of a life of suffering; it outlines the origin of a sense of self, which inevitably results in suffering. Breaking the chain of Dependent Origination is to end a life of suffering, to eradicate all suffering arising from a 'self'. This leads to a life of wisdom, non-attachment, freedom, and harmony with nature.

A life of wisdom – of direct knowledge of the truth – entails deriving benefit from one's relationship to nature, which is equivalent to living in harmony with it. To live in harmony with nature is to live freely and with non-attachment: an escape from craving and grasping. And a life of non-attachment relies on a knowledge of conditionality, along with an appropriate relationship to things.

Buddhist teachings do not recognize a supernatural entity existing above nature and having power over it. If something were to exist beyond nature – to transcend nature – then by definition it could have no influence over nature. Whatever is involved in nature is a part of nature. {167} Natural phenomena exist according to causes and conditions; they do not arise haphazardly. All amazing occurrences that appear as miracles or marvels arise from and proceed according to causes and conditions. We call these events miracles because the causes and conditions remain hidden; as soon as the causes and conditions are known, the sense of wonder disappears. The terms 'supernatural' and 'preternatural' are merely ways of speaking; they do not refer to some entity that exists apart from nature.

A related subject is the distinction between 'man' and 'nature'. The expressions 'man and nature' or 'humans control nature' are simply figures of speech. In fact, human beings are one part of nature, and humans can control nature only to the extent that they exist as one condition within it, influencing subsequent conditions and giving rise to particular results.

What is unique in the case of human interaction is the involvement of mental conditions, including volition, and therefore the term 'creation' is used for human activities. But all the elements in the act of creation are, without exception, conditional factors. Human beings are unable to



create anything out of thin air or in isolation, as somehow separate from the conditional process. When humans understand the requisite conditions leading to desired results, they enter the process as one determinant factor, shaping other conditions to reach a desired end.

There are two stages to successful interaction: the first is knowledge and the second is to act as a condition for subsequent conditions. The initial stage, equivalent to wisdom, is essential. With wisdom, one can engage with things according to one's wishes. A wise engagement with things entails benefiting from one's relationship to nature, or even controlling nature, and this benefit extends to a person's relationship to both material things and the mind. Because human beings and nature exist in a mutual relationship, to live wisely is to live in harmony with nature. With wisdom, one has control over one's mental faculties, control over one's mind: one has control over oneself.

A life of wisdom has two dimensions: internally, wise individuals are calm, clear and joyous. When encountering pleasant objects, they are not seduced or reckless. When separated from delightful objects, they are not upset or despondent. They do not entrust their happiness to material things by allowing them to govern their lives. And externally, they are fluent and agile; they are prepared to engage with things appropriately and reasonably. There are no inner attachments or fixations that cause obstruction, prejudice, or confusion. {168}

The following words by the Buddha demonstrate the difference between a life of attachment and a life of wisdom:

Bhikkhus, the uninstructed worldling feels a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. The instructed noble disciple too feels a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. In this case, bhikkhus, what is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed worldling?

Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is contacted by a painful feeling, he grieves and laments; he weeps beating his breast

and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings – bodily feeling and mental feeling. Suppose an archer were to strike a man with an arrow, and then strike him afterwards with a second arrow, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two arrows. So too, when the uninstructed worldling is contacted by a painful feeling ... he feels two feelings – a bodily one and a mental one.

Being contacted by that painful feeling, he harbours aversion towards it. When he harbours aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling lies behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he seeks delight in sense pleasure.<sup>27</sup> For what reason? Because the uninstructed worldling does not know of any escape from painful feeling other than by sense pleasure. When he seeks delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling lies behind this. He does not understand as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. When he does not understand these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling lies behind this.

If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it as one bound. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it as one bound. If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it as one bound. This, bhikkhus, is called an uninstructed worldling who is bound<sup>28</sup> by birth, aging and death; who is bound by sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; who is bound by suffering, I say. {169}

Bhikkhus, when the instructed noble disciple is contacted by a painful feeling, he does not grieve or lament. He does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. He feels one feeling – a bodily feeling, not a mental feeling. Suppose an archer were to strike a man with one arrow, but the second arrow would miss the mark, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by one arrow only. So too, when the instructed noble disciple is contacted by a painful feeling ... he feels one feeling – a bodily one, not a mental one.

Being contacted by that painful feeling, he harbours no aversion towards it. Since he harbours no aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling does not lie behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he does not seek delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the instructed noble disciple knows of an escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. Since he does not seek delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling does not lie behind this. He understands as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. Since he understands these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling does not lie behind this.

If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it detached. If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. This, bhikkhus, is called a noble disciple who is free from birth, aging and death; who is free from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; who is free from suffering, I say.

This, bhikkhus, is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed worldling.

S. IV. 207-210.

The preceding section emphasizes knowing things as they are, knowing what to revise and what to cultivate in the heart, and knowing what is gained by such revision and cultivation. The proper conduct in relation to revision and cultivation is a matter of practical application, which will be addressed below. {170}

<sup>27</sup>Sensual pleasure (*kāma-sukha*): happiness that gratifies desire by way of the five senses. A basic example is the pleasure sought by gambling, drinking alcohol, and other immoderate amusements.

<sup>28</sup>*Saññutta* = 'bound', 'attached', 'associated with'. 'Bound by defilement', see: SA. III. 77.

## 4.5 ORTHODOX EXPLANATION

The orthodox explanation of Dependent Origination is detailed and intricate. Its study requires extensive knowledge of the texts and of the Pali language.<sup>29</sup> Much of that material is beyond the scope of this book and here a basic summary must suffice.

### A. FACTORS OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

(1) *Avijjā* → (2) *saṅkhāra* → (3) *viññāṇa* → (4) *nāma-rūpa* → (5) *saḷāyatana* → (6) *phassa* → (7) *vedanā* → (8) *taṇhā* → (9) *upādāna* → (10) *bhava* → (11) *jāti* → (12) *jarāmarāṇa-soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā* ⇒ *dukkha-samudaya* (origin of suffering).

The cessation of suffering follows the same sequence.

The cyclical nature of Dependent Origination may be illustrated as shown on Figure 4.1. {171}

### B. DEFINITIONS

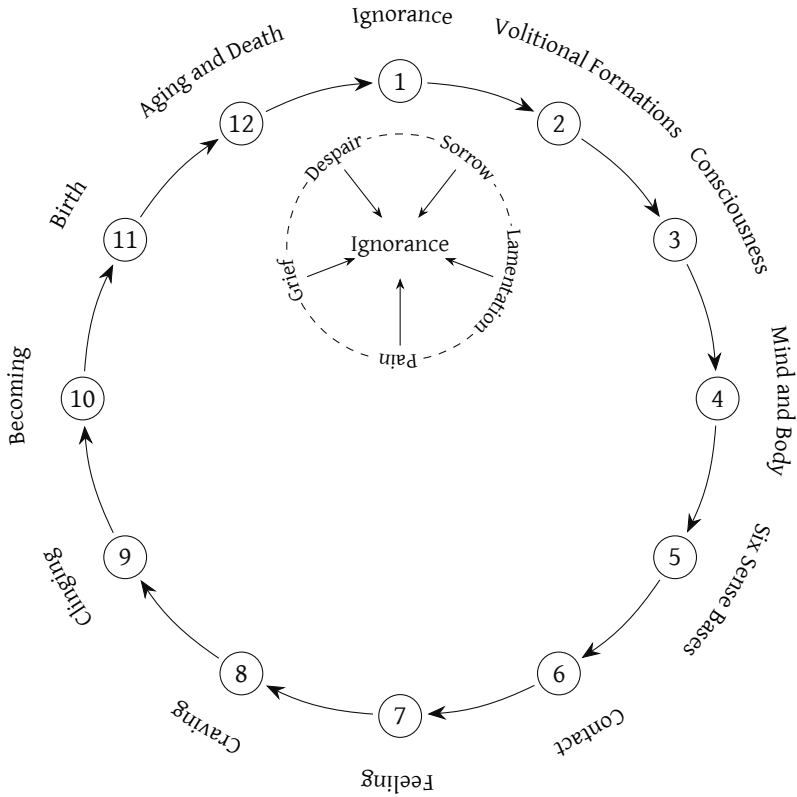
First, here are basic and literal definitions for these twelve factors:<sup>30</sup>

1. *Avijjā*: ignorance; ignorance of truth; a lack of clear understanding.
2. *Saṅkhāra*: mental formations; volitional formations; volition and all mental phenomena stored in the mind.
3. *Viññāṇa*: consciousness; knowledge based on cognition.
4. *Nāma-rūpa*: mental and physical phenomena; the mind and body.
5. *Saḷāyatana*: the six sense bases; the six doorways of cognition: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
6. *Phassa*: cognition; contact between the sense bases (*āyātana*), the sense objects (*ārammaṇa*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

<sup>29</sup> See the *Paccayākāra-Vibhaṅga*: Vbh. 135-92; Vism. 517-86; VbhA. 129-213; Comp.: *Paccayaparicchedo*.

<sup>30</sup> For these definitions, see, e.g.: S. II. 2-4; Vbh. 135-8. For further explanations, see the references in the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Vibhaṅga-Aṭṭhakathā* quoted above.

Figure 4.1: The Cycle of Dependent Origination



7. *Vedanā*: feeling; the sensation of pleasure, pain, and neutral feeling.
8. *Taṇhā*: craving (for sense pleasure, for becoming, and for non-existence).
9. *Upādāna*: grasping; clinging; appropriation.
10. *Bhava*: becoming; state of existence; mode of being; collective results of volitional action (*kamma*).
11. *Jāti*: birth; the manifestation of the aggregates clung to as self.
12. *Jarāmaraṇa*: aging-and-death; the decline of the faculties and dissolution of the aggregates.

Second, here are the formal, doctrinal definitions:

1. *Avijjā*: ignorance of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering (the Four Noble Truths), and according to the Abhidhamma, ignorance of the past, the future, the past and future, and Dependent Origination.<sup>31</sup>
2. *Saṅkhāra*: Bodily volition (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), verbal volition (*vacī-saṅkhāra*), and mental volition (*citta-saṅkhāra*),<sup>32</sup> and according to the Abhidhamma, meritorious volition (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*), demeritorious volition (*apuññābhisaṅkhāra*), and imperturbability-producing volition (*āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*).<sup>33</sup>
3. *Viññāṇa*: the six kinds of consciousness: eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*), nose-consciousness (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*), tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), and mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*).<sup>34</sup>
4. *Nāma-rūpa*: ‘mind’: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*); and ‘body’: the four great elements (*mahābhūta*) and form that depends on

<sup>31</sup> *Pubbanta*, *aparanta*, and *pubbantāparanta* (the past, the future, and the past and future), see: Dhs. 195-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Kāya-saṅkhāra* = bodily volition (*kāya-saṅcetanā*); the twenty volitional formations by way of the body (the eight wholesome volitions of the sensuous sphere and the twelve unwholesome volitions). *Vacī-saṅkhāra* = verbal volition (*vacī-saṅcetanā*); the twenty volitional formations by way of speech (as above). *Citta-saṅkhāra* = mental volition (*mano-saṅcetanā*); the twenty-nine volitional formations of the mind door (*mano-dvāra*), which have not yet manifested as a bodily or verbal medium of communication (*viññatti*).

<sup>33</sup> *Puññābhisaṅkhāra* (wholesomeness that ‘shapes’ the course of life) = the thirteen wholesome intentions (eight intentions of the sensuous sphere – *kāmāvacara* – and five intentions of the fine-material sphere – *rūpāvacara*). *Apuññābhisaṅkhāra* (unwholesomeness that shapes the course of life) = the twelve unwholesome intentions of the sensuous sphere. *Āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* (state of stability that shapes the course of life) = the four wholesome intentions of the four formless spheres (*arūpāvacara*).

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed description see Appendix 9.

these four great elements. The Abhidhamma defines ‘name’ as the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-khandha*), the perception aggregate (*saññā-khandha*), and the volitional formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*).<sup>35</sup>

5. *Salāyatana*: the six sense bases: eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāṇa*), tongue (*jivhā*), body (*kāya*), and mind (*mano*). {172}
6. *Phassa*: the six kinds of contact, by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.<sup>36</sup>
7. *Vedanā*: the six kinds of feeling: feeling arising from contact by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.<sup>37</sup>
8. *Taṇhā*: the six kinds of craving: craving for forms (*rūpa-taṇhā*), craving for sounds (*sadda-taṇhā*), craving for smells (*gandha-taṇhā*), craving for tastes (*rasa-taṇhā*), craving for tactile objects (*phoṭṭhabba-taṇhā*), and craving for mind objects (*dhamma-taṇhā*).<sup>38</sup>
9. *Upādāna*: the four kinds of grasping: *kāmupādāna* (grasping onto sensuality: to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects); *diṭṭhupādāna* (grasping onto views, ideals, theories, and beliefs); *silabbatupādāna* (grasping onto rules and practices, believing that in themselves they lead to spiritual purity); and *attavādupādāna* (grasping onto ‘self’; creating a false idea of self and then clinging to this idea).

<sup>35</sup>See the appendix to chapter 1, on the five aggregates.

<sup>36</sup>*Phassa* is the contact between the internal sense base, the external sense object, and the consciousness of that particular sense faculty.

<sup>37</sup>Feeling can be divided into three kinds: pleasant, painful, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant, or into five kinds: pleasant bodily feeling, painful bodily feeling, pleasant mental feeling, painful mental feeling, and equanimity – *upekkhā*.

<sup>38</sup>Craving can be divided into three kinds: *kāma-taṇhā* (craving for gratification by way of the five senses; delight in sensuality); *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for eternal life; desire associated with an eternalist view); and *vibhava-taṇhā* (craving for extinction; desire associated with an annihilationist view). Multiplying these three kinds of craving with the six kinds mentioned above yields eighteen kinds; multiplying these eighteen with the pair of external and internal fields yields thirty-six; multiplying these thirty-six with the three periods of time (past, present and future) yields one hundred and eight (A. II. 212-13).

10. *Bhava*: the three spheres of existence: the sense-sphere (*kāma-bhava*), the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-bhava*); and the immaterial sphere (*arūpa-bhava*). Alternatively: (1) the sphere of ‘karma’ (*kamma-bhava*) – the active process of becoming (equivalent to meritorious volition, demeritorious volition, and imperturbability-producing volition; see *saṅkhāra*, above), and (2) the passive process of becoming (*uppatti-bhava*)<sup>39</sup>, equivalent to the sense sphere, the fine-material sphere, the immaterial sphere, the sphere of perception (*saññā-bhava*), the sphere of nonperception (*asaññā-bhava*), the sphere of neither-perception-nor-nonperception (*nevasaññānāsaññā-bhava*), the sphere of one-constituent being (*ekavokāra-bhava*), the sphere of four-constituent being (*catuvokāra-bhava*), and the sphere of five-constituent being (*pañcavokāra-bhava*).<sup>40</sup>
11. *Jāti*: the birth of the five aggregates; the arising of the sense spheres (*āyatana*). Alternatively, ‘the arising of these various phenomena.’<sup>41</sup>
12. *Jarāmarāṇa*: *jarā* (aging; weakening of the faculties), and *marāṇa* (death; the breaking up of the aggregates; an end of the ‘life faculty’ – *jīvitindriya*). Alternatively, ‘the degeneration and dissolution of these various phenomena.’<sup>42</sup>

### C. GENERAL EXPLANATIONS

Here are several examples that give a brief and simple explanation for these factors of Dependent Origination:

*Āsava* → *avijjā*: The belief that going to heaven is the highest happiness; the belief that killing others will bring happiness; the belief that

<sup>39</sup>Trans.: also known as ‘rebirth-process becoming’.

<sup>40</sup>*Uppatti-bhava* is a term from the Abhidhamma (e.g. Vbh. 137); in the later suttas the term used is *paṭisandhipuna-bhava* (see: Nd. II. 17, 50).

<sup>41</sup>The last of these definitions, ‘the arising of these various phenomena’, is used to explain Dependent Origination in the context of a single mind moment, following the teachings at: Vbh. 145, 159, 191.

<sup>42</sup>For this alternative definition, see the preceding footnote.



suicide will bring happiness; the belief that birth as a Brahma god will bring immortality; the belief that heaven is reached by making propitiatory offerings; the belief that Nibbāna is reached by undertaking austerities; the belief that there is a presently existing self that will be reborn as a result of certain actions; the belief that nothing exists after death. Thence:

- *Saṅkhāra*: Thinking and inclining in the direction of, or in accord with, such beliefs (above); conceiving modes of conduct and action (*kamma*) based on such thoughts and intentions; these actions may be good (*puñña*), bad (*apuñña* or *pāpa*), or ‘imperturbable’ (*āneñja* – see *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*, above). Thence:
- *Viññāṇa*: Awareness and cognition of sense impressions that specifically conform to such intentions. A consciousness with particular qualities is generated. {173} At death, the force of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) – of created karma – induces rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*), with appropriate properties, to take rebirth in a plane of existence suited to it.
- *Nāma-rūpa*: Birth leads to a body and a life that is prepared to perform subsequent karma. There arise the body aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*), the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-khandha*), the perception aggregate (*saññā-khandha*), and the volitional formation aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*), which possess the properties and deficiencies endowed in them by the force of previously generated karma. These aggregates are also conditioned by the nature of the particular plane of existence, depending on birth say as a human being, an animal, or a celestial being.
- *Salāyatana*: In order to respond to the external world, to enable cognition, and to satisfy personal needs there must be a channel for associating with the external world. With the support of ‘mind-and-body’ (*nāma-rūpa*), life proceeds according to the force of karma (‘karmic momentum’) to the point where there arise the six senses: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind which cognizes internal phenomena.

- *Phassa*: Cognition takes place by the contact or coming together of three factors: the internal sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind), the external sense objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and mind objects), and consciousness (eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness). With cognition:
- *Vedanā*: There arises feeling (or ‘sensation’), either as pleasure (*sukha-vedanā*), pain (*dukkha-vedanā*), or a neutral feeling (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā* or *upekkhā-vedanā*). For unawakened beings, the process does not end here; as a consequence:
- *Taṇhā*: When experiencing pleasure, there is delight, covetousness, and greed. When experiencing pain or discomfort, there is aversion, annoyance, and hostility. A person is agitated and wishes for the feeling to disappear. He wishes to escape from the painful object, seeking to replace it with a pleasurable one. Alternatively, a person experiences a neutral feeling, of indifference, which is a subtle feeling classified as a form of pleasure, since there is no aversion. It is a mild feeling of ease. Thence:
- *Upādāna*: When desire is heightened, there is grasping. A person becomes attached to and preoccupied with an object. Before an object is acquired there is craving; after the object is acquired there is grasping. Grasping is not confined to desirable sense objects (*kāmuṇupādāna*), but extends to associated views and opinions (*diṭṭhupādāna*), to ways of practice for acquiring desired objects (*sīlabbatupādāna*), and to a sense of self (*attavādupādāna*). These different forms of grasping are linked. As a consequence, there is:
- *Bhava*: The intention to act in response to the aforementioned grasping. This intention, which conforms to the specific craving and grasping, leads to the entire range of behaviour (the active process of becoming – *kamma-bhava*), as good, bad, or ‘imperturbable’ (*āneñja*). For example, a person may wish to go to heaven and believes that certain actions will lead to this end, and thus performs these actions. At the same time, he or she prepares the ‘conditions for existence’ – the five aggregates – that will appear in the state of existence befitting that karma (the passive process of becoming –

*uppatti-bhava*). When creation of karma operates in this way, at the moment when a lifespan ends, the force of the accumulated karma (*kamma-bhava*) impels the next stage of the cycle: {174}

→ *Jāti*: Starting with rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*), which conforms to the ‘karmic momentum’, there is birth in a realm of existence appropriate to that karma. The five aggregates arise and life begins: ‘mind-and- body’, the six sense bases, contact, and feeling arise and the wheel of Dependent Origination continues. With birth, there is certain to be:

→ *Jarāmaraṇa*: Deterioration and destruction of life. For unawakened people, aging and death are constantly felt as threatening and oppressive, both overtly and subconsciously. Therefore, in the life of ordinary people, aging and death are linked to:

... *Soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa* (sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair), which collectively are referred to as ‘suffering’. The concluding line of Dependent Origination is thus: ‘Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.’

As Dependent Origination exists as a cycle, this stage of sorrow, etc. is not the end. In fact, this collection of qualities becomes another important factor causing the cycle to rotate further. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair reveal the existence of mental impurities called *āsava* that fester in the heart.

There are four such impurities or ‘taints’:

1. *Kāmāsava*: The desire for gratification by way of the five senses and by way of the mind;
2. *Diṭṭhāsava*: The holding fast to certain beliefs, like ‘I am the body’ or ‘this body is mine’;
3. *Bhavāsava*: Satisfaction in a particular state of existence, considering it superior, precious, and happy; the wish that one can abide in such a state and experience joy forever;
4. *Avijjāsava*: Ignorance of things as they truly are.

Aging and death are the marks of decline and decay, and they run counter to these mental impurities. For example, in regard to sensuality, aging and death lead people to feel that they will be separated from pleasurable, desired sense objects. In regard to views, when one identifies with the body, one grieves when it changes. In regard to ‘becoming’, one fears that one will miss the opportunity to abide in a desired state of existence. And in regard to ignorance, one lacks basic understanding, of say the nature of aging and the proper course of conduct in relation to it. When a person who lacks proper understanding thinks of or encounters aging and death, he or she experiences fear and gloom and behaves in a misguided way. The ‘taints’ thus act as fuel, giving rise to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair the moment a person contacts aging and death.

Sorrow, lamentation, etc., also reveal mental obscurity. Whenever these negative emotions are present, the mind is dim and dull. When one of these mind states arises, it is accompanied by ignorance, as confirmed by the Visuddhimagga:

Sorrow, pain, grief and despair are inseparable from ignorance, and lamentation is found in one who is deluded. So when these are established, ignorance is established; *Vism.* 576.

This is how ignorance should be understood to be established by sorrow and so on; *Vism.* 577.

As long as these [sorrow, etc.] go on occurring so long does ignorance occur. *Vism.* 529.

Therefore it is said: ‘With the arising of the taints there is the arising of ignorance’. *M. I.* 54.

One can conclude that for unawakened persons, aging and death, with their retinue of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, are a condition for the arising of ignorance, providing the next link in the cycle of Dependent Origination, without interruption. {175}

Several important points may be made concerning the previous explanations:

**(1)** The cycle of Dependent Origination as explained above is usually called the ‘wheel of becoming’ (*bhava-cakka*) or the ‘wheel of rebirth’ (*saṁsāra-cakka*), and it covers three distinct lifetimes: ignorance (*avijjā*) and volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) comprise one lifespan; consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to becoming (*bhava*) comprise another lifespan; and birth (*jāti*) and aging-and-death (*jarā-maraṇa*; along with sorrow, lamentation, etc.) comprise a third lifespan. By determining the middle interval (consciousness to becoming) as the present life, the three stages (containing twelve factors) can be connected to three periods of time:

1. Past life = ignorance and volitional formations.
2. Present life = consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, and becoming.
3. Future life = birth and aging-and-death (with sorrow, lamentation, etc.).

**(2)** In this three-life division, the present life is considered the principal period of time. The relationship of the past to the present is only viewed in the light of causal factors; the results manifesting in the present are traced back to the causes in the past (past causes → present results). Similarly, the view to the future pertains to results; present causes are linked to future results (present causes → future results). Therefore, only the present contains both results and causes; this relationship of cause and effect can be depicted as four stages:<sup>43</sup>

1. Past causes (*atīta-hetu*) = ignorance and volitional formations.
2. Present results (*pacuppanna-phala*) = consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact, and feeling.
3. Present causes (*pacuppanna-hetu*) = craving, grasping, and becoming.

<sup>43</sup>These are called the four ‘classifications’ (*saṅgha*) or the four ‘groups’ (*saṅkhepa*).

4. Future results (*anāgata-phala*) = birth and aging-and-death (with sorrow, lamentation, etc.).

**(3)** From the explanations of each factor above, it is evident that some definitions for these factors overlap or correspond with one another. The factors can thus be grouped as follows:

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*) corresponds with craving and grasping (*taṇhā* and *upādāna*):

In the general explanations of ignorance above it is clear that craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*), especially grasping onto a sense of self, are inherent in each example. When a person does not understand the truth and mistakenly identifies with a ‘self’, there will be selfish desires and attachments. In the phrase, ‘With the arising of the taints there is the arising of ignorance’, the taints of sense-desire, becoming, and views (*kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava*, and *diṭṭhāsava*) are all connected to craving and grasping. Therefore, whenever ignorance is mentioned, there is always a link to craving and grasping.

Similarly, in the explanations of craving and grasping there is always a link to ignorance. When there is an identification with ‘self’, there is craving and grasping. The many forms of selfishness stem from not knowing the truth of conditioned phenomena. The more people generate desire and attachment, the more impaired are their critical faculties. They increasingly fail to apply mindfulness and wisdom, and their true discernment of things decreases. {176}

Therefore, ignorance as a past cause and craving and grasping as present causes have essentially the same meaning. The reason ignorance is used in the past and craving and grasping are used in the present is to show the chief determining factors in different sections of the cycle.

2. Volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) corresponds with becoming (*bhava*):

The definitions for *saṅkhāra* and *bhava* are almost identical. The difference lies in the principal agent that is emphasized or in the range of focus. The definition for *saṅkhāra* emphasizes intention, which is the principal agent behind action (*kamma*). The definition for *bhava* is broader, distinguishing between the active process of becoming (*kamma-bhava*) and the passive process of becoming (*uppatti-bhava*). The active process of becoming also has intention as the principal agent (like *saṅkhāra*), but the term *kamma-bhava* has a wider meaning than *saṅkhāra*, encompassing the entire range of human behaviour. The passive process of becoming refers to the five aggregates, arising from the active process of becoming.

3. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to feeling (*vedanā*) corresponds with birth and aging-and-death (*jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa*; and sorrow, lamentation, etc.):

The factors of consciousness to feeling refer to results in this life. The reason these factors are listed in detail here is to show how present resultant factors interact and produce present causal factors, which then lead to future results.

Birth and aging-and-death, as future results, demonstrate that when present causal factors exist, there will inevitably be future results. *Jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa* are here used only as a summary, referring to the arising and ceasing of consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact, and feeling. And they are used to emphasize the arising of suffering, to reveal the point linking the process to the beginning (at ignorance). Therefore, the factors of consciousness to feeling and the dual factors of birth and aging-and-death are essentially the same and can be used interchangeably.

By integrating these matching definitions, each stage in the group of four causes and results (see above) comprises five factors:

1. Five past causes: ignorance, volitional formations, craving, grasping, and becoming.

2. Five present results: consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact and feeling (= birth and aging-and-death).
3. Five present causes: ignorance, volitional formations, craving, grasping, and becoming.
4. Five future results: consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact and feeling (= birth and aging-and-death).

Compiled in this way, these factors are known as the twenty ‘conditions’ (*ākāra*).

**(4)** In accord with the preceding definitions, it is possible to classify the twelve factors of Dependent Origination into three groups, which are called the three rounds (*vaṭṭa*):

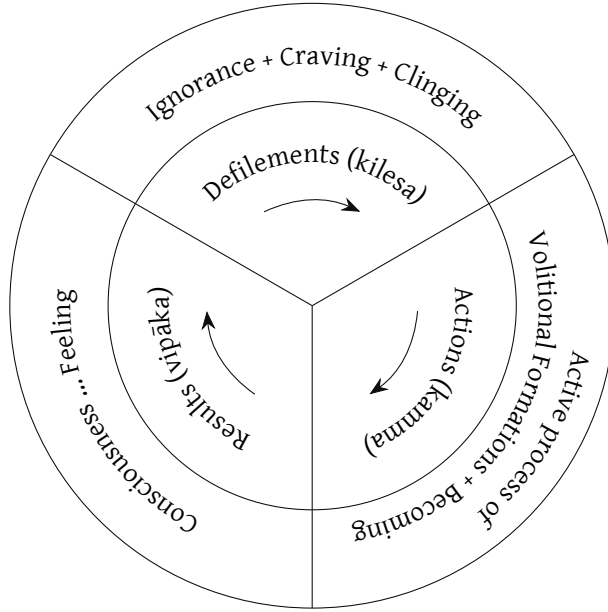
1. Ignorance, craving, grasping are defilements (*kilesa*). They are the causes behind thinking and acting. This group is called the round of defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*).
2. Volitional formations and becoming (i.e. the active process of becoming – *kamma-bhava*) refer to actions (*kamma*) that shape the course of life. They are known as the round of intentional action (*kamma-vaṭṭa*).
3. Consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact and feeling are results (*vipāka*). They are the fruits of karma, and become the conditions for producing subsequent defilements. Collectively, they are known as the round of results (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*).  
{177}

The relationship between these three rounds can be illustrated as shown at Figure 4.2.

These three rounds are depicted in the commentaries. They are a simple, down-to-earth way of explaining Dependent Origination and the round of rebirth. For example, a person may act prompted by defilement in order to acquire a desired object. If the result of this action is a



Figure 4.2: Rounds of Defilements, Actions and Results



pleasurable feeling, desire is increased, leading to further actions and results. If, however, a person's actions do not lead to the desired object, the result is an unpleasant feeling; a defilement in the form of anger arises, which becomes an additional result of the person's actions.

**(5)** As mental defilements are the source of various forms of karma, shaping the course of life, defilements are thus designated as the beginning of the cycle. Following this designation, there are two starting points to the cycle, known as the two roots (*mūla*) of the wheel of becoming (*bhava-cakka*):

1. Ignorance is the starting point from the past, influencing the present up to feeling.
2. Craving is the starting point in the present, resulting from feeling and influencing the future up to aging and death.

## NOTE 4.1: TWO ROOTS

The commentaries state the different purposes for distinguishing and explaining these two ‘roots’: *avijjā* refers to people who are opinionated (*diṭṭhi-carita*); *taṇhā* refers to people who are greedy (*taṇhā-carita*). Alternatively, the section with ignorance as root is used to eliminate an annihilationist view, whereas the section with craving as root is used to eliminate the eternalist view; or, the former section refers to beings who dwell in the womb, while the latter refers to spontaneously born beings. See: *Vism.* 578.

As mentioned earlier, these two factors are the prominent defilements in each respective stage: ignorance follows from sorrow, lamentation, etc., while craving follows from feeling (see Note 4.1).

In reference to rebirth, the orthodox explanation distinguishes between the case wherein ignorance is prominent and that wherein craving is prominent, as follows:

Ignorance is a primary agent causing beings to be reborn in a bad destination (*duggati*). When ignorance dominates the mind, people are unable to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, helpful and harmful. They tend to act in a deluded and unprincipled way, opening the door to serious misconduct.

The craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), on the other hand, induces people to be born in good destinations (*sugati*). When such craving leads the way, people tend to focus on the good qualities of life. When thinking of the future, they want to be born in heaven or to be reborn as a Brahma. In this life they seek wealth, honour, and fame. {178}

Prompted by such desire driven by a craving for existence, they calculate and act to achieve their goal. In order to become a Brahma they develop *jhāna*, in order to go to heaven they are generous and morally upright, in order to be wealthy they diligently earn money, or in order to seek honour they are charitable. With this care and effort they are able to perform good deeds better than someone dwelling in ignorance.

Although ignorance and craving are designated as ‘starting points’, they are not a ‘first cause’:

Bhikkhus, the beginning point of ignorance is not apparent, so that one may say: ‘Ignorance was not before; it has since come to be.’ Concerning this matter, I say: ‘Indeed, with this as condition, ignorance is apparent.’<sup>44</sup>

A. V. 113; *Vism.* 525.

There is an identical passage concerning craving for existence:

Bhikkhus, the beginning point of craving for existence is not apparent, so that one may say: ‘Craving for existence was not before; it has since come to be.’ Concerning this matter, I say: ‘Indeed, with this as condition, craving for existence is apparent.’<sup>45</sup>

A. V. 116; *Vism.* 525.

The following passage addresses both ignorance and craving as ‘root causes’:

Bhikkhus, for the fool, obstructed by ignorance and bound by craving, this body has thereby originated. As a result, there is this pair of conditions, of body and external name-and-form. Dependent on this pair there is contact by way of only six sense bases. The fool contacts by way of these sense bases, or by way of one among them, and thus experiences pleasure and pain.<sup>46</sup>

S. II. 23-4.

**(6)** The interconnection between the factors of Dependent Origination corresponds to the connections collectively known as the twenty-four ‘supports’ (*paccaya*), following the explanation in the *Abhidhamma*.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Following from this passage, ignorance is said to have the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) as ‘nourishment’. [Trans.: see the section: ‘Breaking the Cycle’.]

<sup>45</sup>The nourishment for *bhava-taṇhā* is ignorance.

<sup>46</sup>Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi posits that ‘external name-and-form’ here represents the entire field of experience available to consciousness; see n. 48, p. 740, ‘The Connected Discourses of the Buddha’, Wisdom Press.

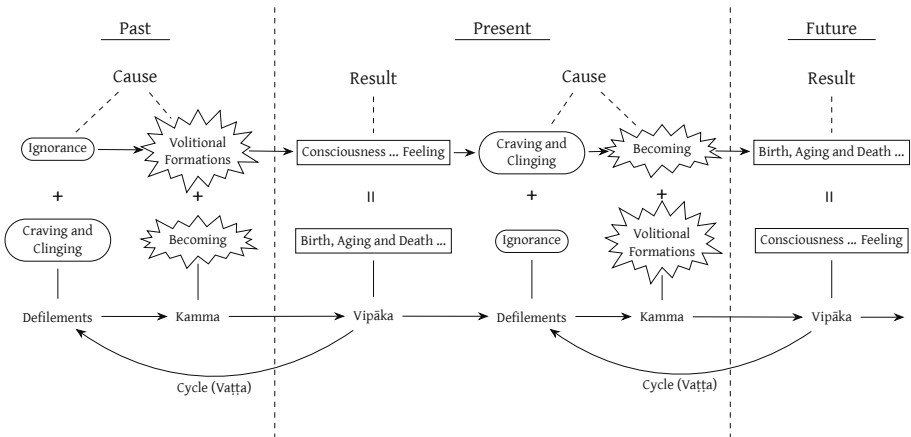
<sup>47</sup>*Paṭṭhāna* (Pali Canon volumes 40–45); the explanation is called the *Paṭṭhāna-nāya*. See also Comp.: *Paccayaparicchedo*, *Paṭṭhānanāya*.

Moreover, each factor can be expanded upon. For example, consciousness (or the mind) can be analyzed according to its quality (as wholesome or unwholesome), its level, and its destination in a particular state of existence. Similarly, form (*rūpa*) can be analyzed according to different types, properties, and states of existence.

It does not seem necessary here to present these twenty-four supports or the elaborate details for each factor. Readers who take a special interest may investigate these matters directly in the Abhidhamma texts. {179}

The preceding explanations can be illustrated as shown on Figures 4.3 and 4.4.

Figure 4.3: Past, Present and Future as Stages

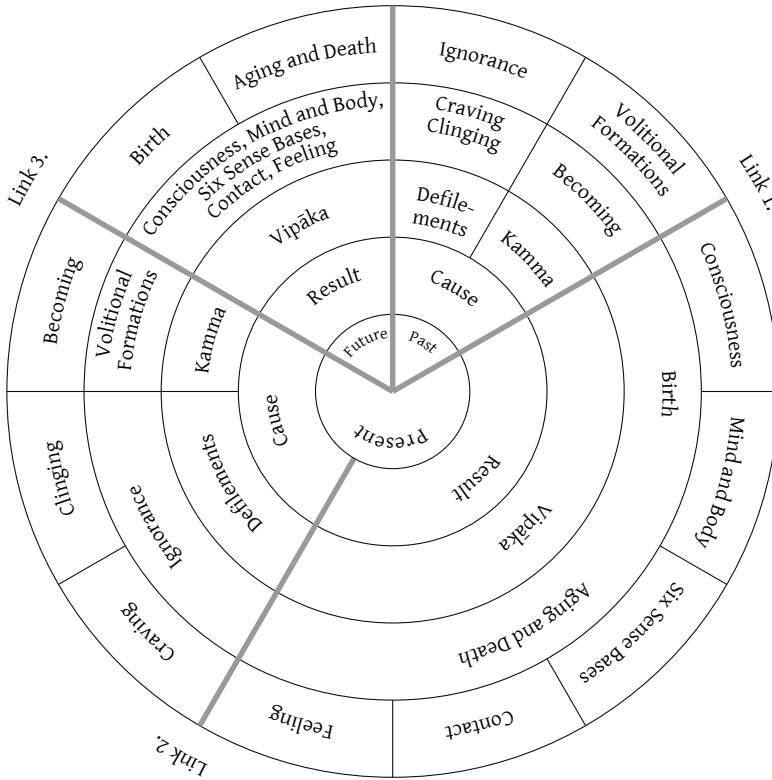


Note: The section on causal factors corresponds to ‘origin’ (*samudaya*) in the Four Noble Truths, because these factors are the agents of suffering. The section on results corresponds with ‘suffering’ (*dukkha*) in the Four Noble Truths. {180}

Alternatively, the section on causes is called active-process becoming (*kamma-bhava*), because this process generates causes. The section on results is called the passive process of becoming (*uppati-bhava*), because this process contains results.

There are three ‘links’ (*sandhi*) between cause (*hetu*) and effect (*phala*):

Figure 4.4: Past, Present and Future as a Cycle



- (the first) cause-effect link (*hetuphala-sandhi*);
- the effect-cause link (*phalahetu-sandhi*); and
- (the second) cause-effect link (*hetuphala-sandhi*).

#### 4.6 APPLICATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The previous explanations are the traditional, orthodox explanations; they are found in the commentaries and have been passed down through

the ages. These explanations emphasize the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*): the passing from one life to another. They demonstrate the connection between three lifetimes: the past, the present, and the future, and they have been developed into a fixed, strictly-defined system.

Some people are not content with these explanations and wish to define Dependent Origination in the context of everyday life. They cite explanations in the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries that describe the entire sequence of Dependent Origination arising in a single moment.<sup>48</sup> They can draw upon the same scriptural passages referred to in the orthodox explanations to support their own interpretation. Moreover, they can find evidence in other texts to substantiate their claims. As will be seen below, this alternate explanation has interesting and distinctive features.

There are many justifications for this alternate explanation. For example, the end of suffering for an arahant occurs in this very life; he or she does not need to die first in order to achieve this state of peace. An arahant is not reborn: there is no aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, etc. in a future life. Even in this life, an arahant experiences no sorrow, lamentation, etc.<sup>49</sup> The complete cycle of Dependent Origination in relation to the arising (or ceasing) of suffering occurs in the present time; one need not trace back to a previous life or wait for a future life. And whenever one understands the presently occurring cycle, one also understands the cycles incorporating the past and future, because these respective cycles are all essentially the same.

The following teachings by the Buddha are referred to as corroboration for this alternative interpretation:

Udāyin, if someone should recollect his manifold past lives ... then either he might ask me a question about the past (*pubbanta* – past life) or I might ask him a question about the past, and he might

<sup>48</sup> *Vibhaṅga*.: *Abhidhammabhājanīya*: pp. 138-92; *Sammohavinodanī*: *VbA.*: 199-213.

<sup>49</sup> In the orthodox interpretation of Dependent Origination, birth, aging, death, etc. are associated with a future life.

satisfy my mind with his answer to my question or I might satisfy his mind with my answer to his question. If someone with the divine eye ... should see beings passing away and reappearing then either he might ask me a question about the future (aparanta – next life) or I might ask him a question about the future, and he might satisfy my mind with his answer to my question or I might satisfy his mind with my answer to his question. But let be the past, Udāyin, let be the future. I shall teach you the Dhamma: when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. {181}

*M. II. 31-2.*

Bhadraka the headman approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: ‘It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would teach me about the origin and the passing away of suffering.’

‘If, headman, I were to teach you about the origin and the passing away of suffering with reference to the past, saying, ‘So it was in the past’, perplexity and uncertainty about that might arise in you. And if I were to teach you about the origin and the passing away of suffering with reference to the future, saying, ‘So it will be in the future’, perplexity and uncertainty about that might arise in you. Instead, headman, while I am sitting right here, and you are sitting right there, I will teach you about the origin and the passing away of suffering.’

*S. IV. 327.*

Some feelings, Sīvaka, arise originating from bile disorders ... originating from phlegm disorders ... originating from wind disorders ... originating from a combination of causes ... produced by a change of climate ... produced by irregular exercise ... caused by assault ... produced as the result of karma. How feelings arise originating [from the aforementioned causes] one can know for oneself, and that is considered to be true in the world. Now when those ascetics and brahmins hold such a doctrine and view as this, ‘Whatever

feeling a person experiences, whether it be pleasant or painful, all that is caused by what was done in the past’,<sup>50</sup> they overshoot what one knows by oneself and they overshoot what is considered to be true in the world. Therefore I say that this is wrong on the part of those ascetics and brahmins.

S. IV. 230-31.

Bhikkhus, what one intends, what one pays attention to, and what one thinks about: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence. When there is the production of future renewed existence, future birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

S. II. 65.

Although the alternative explanation of Dependent Origination has distinctive features, it does not abandon the definitions contained in the standard exposition. Therefore, to understand the alternative explanation it is useful to define the factors of Dependent Origination in this context in a way that is consistent with the standard exposition: {182}

#### A. FACTORS OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

1. *Avijjā*: ignorance; lack of knowledge; an absence of wisdom; not seeing the truth; being misled by conventional reality; ignorance inherent in certain beliefs; non-understanding of causality.
2. *Sanikhāra*: volitional activities; thoughts, intentions, deliberations, and decisions; to direct one’s thoughts and to seek agreeable sense impressions that correspond with one’s temperament, proclivity, abilities, beliefs and opinions; the ‘fashioning’ of the mind, thoughts, and actions by habitual tendencies.

<sup>50</sup>‘Caused by what was done in the past’: *pubbekata-hetu*.



3. *Viññāṇa*: consciousness; the awareness of sense impressions: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mental objects, and the awareness of one's particular state of mind.
4. *Nāma-rūpa*: mind-and-body;<sup>51</sup> the elements of materiality and mentality within the process of cognition; the coordination by all components of the body and mind conforming to the arisen state of consciousness; the progression and alteration of physical and mental factors in accord with the particular state of mind.
5. *Salāyatana*: six sense bases; the functioning of the associated sense bases in accord with the specific circumstances.
6. *Phassa*: contact; cognition of sense objects; the connection between consciousness and the outside world.
7. *Vedanā*: feeling; the sensation of pleasure, pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure.
8. *Taṇhā*: craving; desire; a yearning for pleasant sensations and an aversion to painful sensations; the wish to obtain, become, or sustain particular states of mind, or the wish for extinction and annihilation.
9. *Upādāna*: attachment; grasping; clinging to pleasant or unpleasant sensations; engaging with and attaching to things that provide such sensations; this attachment leads to an evaluation of things according to how they support or gratify craving.
10. *Bhava*: process of becoming; the entire range of behaviour in response to craving and grasping (*kamma-bhava* – active process), and the subsequent condition of life (*uppati-bhava* – passive process) conforming to craving, grasping and personal behaviour.
11. *Jāti*: birth; the arising of self-perception as existing (or not existing) in a particular state of life; to occupy this existence and to adopt the corresponding behaviour (*kamma-bhava*) by affirming this existence and behaviour as one's own.

<sup>51</sup>Trans.: the author uses the English translation: 'animated organism'.

12. *Jarā-maraṇa*: aging-and-death; decay-and-death; the awareness that one will be separated from this state of existence. The feeling of being threatened by the loss and decay of such an existence. As a consequence people experience the entire range of suffering: sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, stress, annoyance, depression, disappointment, anxiety, etc. {183}

## **B. PRELIMINARY EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTORS**

1. Ignorance conditions volitional formations: because of not knowing the truth and not wisely investigating different situations, people create various mental fabrications: they speculate, fantasize, and conceptualize in terms of established beliefs, inhibitions, and habits, and they then determine how to speak and act.
2. Volitional formations condition consciousness: when there is intention or the determination to engage with something, consciousness arises: to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to feel, and to think about that thing. In particular, intention induces conscious awareness to acknowledge and think about the desired object, resulting in an endless stream of mental proliferation. Intention also conditions a person's state of mind, endowing it with particular qualities, as positive or negative, virtuous or defiled.
3. Consciousness conditions mind-and-body: consciousness is accompanied by corresponding physical and mental attributes. Consciousness functions in conjunction with physical and mental factors, such as bodily organs, sensation, perception, and volitional formations. Moreover, in whatever way consciousness has been conditioned, the accompanying physical and mental factors function in concert with this consciousness. For example, when consciousness has been conditioned by angry volitional formations, accompanying perceptions are associated with coarse language, insults, and violence. A person's countenance will appear sullen, his muscles will be tense, his pulse will quicken, and he will feel

stressed. When consciousness is repeatedly conditioned in a particular way, a person's mental and physical attributes develop into specific personality traits.

4. Mind-and-body conditions the six sense bases: when mind-and-body has been activated in a particular configuration or direction, it relies on the support from the sense bases, which supply information or act as channels for behaviour. The sense bases are roused to perform their particular duty.
5. The six sense bases condition contact: when the six sense bases exist, contact with and cognition of sense objects is possible. Cognition depends on the individual sense bases.
6. Contact conditions feeling: with contact there must be feeling, either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
7. Feeling conditions craving: when experiencing a pleasing sense object, a person feels delight; he or she becomes attached to that object and wants more of it. Consequently, there is craving for sense objects (*kāma-taṇhā*). One wishes to maintain or abide in a state where one can further experience the pleasure from that object: there arises the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). When experiencing a painful sense object, one feels aversion; one wants to escape from or eliminate it. Consequently, there is the craving for extinction (*vibhava-taṇhā*). And when experiencing a neutral object, one is indifferent, indecisive, and deluded. The object is experienced as a mild form of pleasure, leading to attachment and a desire for more pleasant sensations. {184}
8. Craving conditions grasping: when desire intensifies, it leads to attachment. The desire is lodged in the heart and a person is unable to let go of it. This gives rise to particular behaviour in relation to an object. If one likes the object, one binds oneself to it and submits to it; whatever is associated with the object is viewed as good; whatever disturbs it is viewed as disturbing one's 'self'. If one dislikes an object, one feels as if one is encountering an opponent. One feels repulsed by and in conflict with anything associated with this object. One sees nothing redeeming about the object and

feels personally offended by it. One's behaviour, both in relation to pleasing and displeasing objects, reinforces and validates the following four things:

- A. objects of sensual gratification (*kāma*), which are acquired or lost;
  - B. views and understanding of things associated with sense objects, including one's views on life and the world (*diṭṭhi*);
  - C. practices, rules and customs (*sīlabbata*) maintained for acquiring and avoiding sense objects;
  - D. a sense of a 'self' (*attavāda*), which acquires things or is impeded.
9. Grasping conditions becoming: when there is grasping and particular ways of behaving towards objects, people, and states of mind, a person generates a corresponding state of existence, both in regard to general behaviour (*kamma-bhava*), beginning with patterns of thought, and in regard to personality, which are the mental and physical traits of that person's life at that time (*uppatti-bhava*). Examples of this are the distinct behaviour and personality of people who seek material wealth, people who seek power, people who seek fame, people who seek physical beauty, and people who are antisocial.
  10. Becoming conditions birth: with the arising of a personally occupied state of existence, there is a sense of 'self': a distinct awareness of abiding in or embodying this state of existence. A person believes, for example, that he or she is the owner, the recipient, the agent, the winner, or the loser in this state of existence.
  11. Birth conditions aging-and-death: with the arising of a 'self' that occupies a state of existence, it is natural to experience both growth and decline within that state, including a weakening of one's strength, a buffeting by various forces, and a threat of impending loss. In particular, one is anxious about falling away from this state and one continually tries to preserve it. Such waning of strength and foreboding of death causes constant grief and suffering.

### C. EXPANDED EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACTORS

*Avijjā* → *saṅkhāra*: By not knowing the truth and not seeing clearly, a person creates mental fabrications, speculations, and deliberations. For example, a superstitious person may see the reflection of light from an animal's eyes and believe he is seeing a ghost; he becomes afraid and runs away. In the event that an object is hidden from view, a person may spend time guessing and arguing about the nature of this object. A person who believes that the gods bestow blessings when pleased will offer prayers, entreaties and propitiatory sacrifices to them. {185} A person who does not know the true nature of conditioned phenomena, that they are impermanent, inconstant, and formed by causal factors, sees them as lovely and desirable, and strives to acquire and possess them.

*Saṅkhāra* → *viññāṇa*: With intention, purpose, and deliberate engagement, a consciousness (say of hearing or seeing) arises. On the other hand, if one does not pay attention to or engage with an object, consciousness does not arise, even if one is within range of the object. A person focused on an activity is not distracted by other things. For example, someone reading a fascinating book is only aware of the book's content; she may not notice loud noises or physical discomfort. When intensely searching for something, one may not pay attention to surrounding people and objects. People will look at an identical object with different intentions and from different perspectives. Take for example an empty plot of land: a child may see it as a playground, a contractor as a building site, a farmer as a plantation, and a manufacturer as a factory site. For each of them the land has a different significance. Similarly, one will see an object from different perspectives depending on one's mood. If one is thinking good thoughts, one notices the positive aspects of an object, whereas bad thoughts will lead one to notice negative aspects.

Imagine several objects lying together, which include a bouquet of flowers and a knife. A person who loves flowers may only notice the flowers, without paying attention to the knife. The stronger the

interest is for flowers, the more exclusively the person's attention will dwell on the flowers and the less the person will notice other things. Other people may only notice the knife, and they will associate the knife with different things, according to their thoughts and aims: a thief may see it as a weapon, a cook as a kitchen utensil, and a metal dealer as a source of income.

*Viññāṇa* → *nāma-rūpa*: Consciousness and mind-and-body are mutually dependent in the way described by Ven. Sāriputta:

Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand leaning against each other, so too, with mind-and-body as condition, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition, mind-and-body comes to be ... If one were to remove one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall, and if one were to remove the other sheaf, the first would fall. So too, with the cessation of mind-and-body comes cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of mind-and-body ...

S. II. 114.

In this sense, when there is the arising of consciousness there must also be the arising of mind-and-body. When volitional formations condition consciousness, they also condition mind-and-body. But because mind-and-body relies on consciousness to exist – because it is linked to and is an attribute of consciousness – the distinction is made: volitional formations condition consciousness, and consciousness conditions mind-and-body. Here, there are two important points to be mentioned on how consciousness conditions mind-and-body: {186}

1. When cognizing an object (e.g. a visual form or a sound), a person is in fact experiencing mind-and-body.<sup>52</sup> The presently existing object for that person is none other than the presently cognized object, and as such it cannot be separated from mind-and-body

<sup>52</sup>Here, mind-and-body is defined as body, feeling, perception, and volitional formations.

experienced in that moment by consciousness. For example, when seeing a rose, the rose that exists in that moment is the rose that is known through the eye or is known by way of the ‘mind-door’ in that moment of consciousness.<sup>53</sup> It is inseparable from the mental concept of a ‘rose’ and from the feeling, perception and other volitional formations present in that moment. Thus, consciousness and mind-and-body exist together and are mutually supportive.

2. The attributes of mind-and-body, especially the mental factors, correspond to the consciousness on which they depend. When a person’s thoughts (*saṅkhāra*) are wholesome, they condition a wholesome consciousness. In that moment the mind is bright and consequent physical conduct is also wholesome. When a person has bad thoughts, he or she focuses on the negative aspects of things; the mind becomes clouded and subsequent physical conduct is strained.

Accompanying mental and physical factors act in unison with the corresponding volitional formations and consciousness. When there is an emotion (*saṅkhāra*) of love, a person is attentive (*viññāṇa*) to the positive side of things; one’s mind is cheerful (*nāma*), one’s complexion is bright, and one’s physical conduct is positive (*rūpa*). When one is angry one focuses on the negative side of things; one’s mind is clouded, one’s face is scowling, and one’s behaviour is stressful; all the factors are primed to follow this negative line of thought.

The thoughts and intentions of an athlete at the start of a sporting event are absorbed in that activity. His attention is commensurate to his interest in the competition. All aspects of his mind and body participating in this event are prepared to function accordingly.

The interrelationship of factors here includes the arising and ceasing of newly formed physical and mental properties, which shape or

<sup>53</sup>Trans.: ‘known through the eye’ here refers to the direct act of seeing. In this case, it refers to seeing the colour, shape, etc. of the rose without interpreting what is seen as a ‘rose’. ‘By way of the mind-door’ refers to the next stage, in which a person cognizes the object. In this case, one recognizes the visual object as a ‘rose’.

strengthen the personality in line with the corresponding consciousness and volitional formations.<sup>54</sup> This process involving the first three links of Dependent Origination is an important stage concerning karma and the fruits of karma (*vipāka*): a small revolution of the cycle is complete (*avijjā = kilesa → saṅkhāra = kamma → viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa = vipāka*), and begins to revolve again from the beginning.<sup>55</sup> This stage is pivotal in forming habits, temperament, understanding, skill, and personality.

*Nāma-rūpa → saḷāyatana*: The factors of mind-and-body rely on a knowledge of the external world to function, or else they draw on stored knowledge for deciding what course of action to take. Therefore, the aspects of mind-and-body acting as channels for receiving sense impressions, that is, the relevant sense bases, are in a state of receptivity and act in unison with the preceding factors of Dependent Origination. {187} For example, the sense organs (e.g. the eye and ear) of a football player during a match are in a heightened state of alertness and are prepared to receive relevant sense impressions. Simultaneously, the functionality of the sense organs unassociated with this activity is reduced and they are not in a state of alertness. While absorbed in playing football a person's sense of smell or taste, for example, may be dormant.

*Saḷāyatana → phassa*: When the sense bases are engaged and there is the conjunction of three things, cognition arises. The three things are: one of the six sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind), one of the six corresponding sense objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or mental objects), and one of the six corresponding kinds of consciousness (by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind).

*Phassa → vedanā*: With the arising of contact, there is inevitably one of the three kinds of accompanying feeling: pleasure (*sukha-vedanā*), pain (*dukkha-vedanā*), or a neutral feeling (*upekkhā* or *adukkhamasukha-vedanā*).

<sup>54</sup>Note the relationship with 'becoming' (*bhava*).

<sup>55</sup>See the illustration in the previous section.



The third to the seventh factors of Dependent Origination (*viññāṇa* to *vedanā*) comprise a section called the ‘fruits of karma’, especially factors five, six and seven (the six sense bases, contact, and feeling). In themselves, they are neither good nor bad, neither skilful nor unskilful, but they act as causes for future good and bad results.

*Vedanā* → *taṇhā*: When a person experiences a pleasant sensation, he is pleased and delighted; he becomes attached and craves for more. When a person experiences a painful sensation, he is annoyed; he wants the painful object to vanish, he wants to escape from the pain, and he searches for a pleasant substitute. When a person experiences a neutral sensation, there tends to be apathy and complacency. Neutral sensation is a subtle form of pleasure; it can lead to attachment and a yearning for further pleasure.

There are three kinds of craving (*taṇhā*):

1. Craving for sense pleasure (*kāma-taṇhā*): the search for gratification by way of the five senses; desire for acquisition (of pleasurable sense objects).
2. Craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*): desire for things associated with particular states of existence, or desire for a state of existence (e.g. as a millionaire, a celebrity, or a deva) bestowing such coveted things. More profoundly, it is a desire to sustain the ‘self’ in a permanent state of existence.
3. Craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*): the desire to escape from an undesirable object or state of existence. This craving often manifests as coarse mental states, for example apathy, loneliness, boredom, hopelessness, self-hatred, self-pity, or a wish for self-annihilation (see Note 4.2). {188}

Craving has these three manifestations: a desire for sensuality, a desire for a pleasant state of existence, and a desire to escape from an unpleasant state of existence. When a person’s desires are thwarted there is a feeling of annoyance, aversion, and ill-will. When this reaction is expressed externally it leads to thoughts of aggression and violence.

Tañhā → upādāna: when there is desire for an object, a person clings to it. The greater the desire the greater the attachment. When a person experiences pain and wishes to escape the source of that pain, attachment takes the form of hostility. At the same time, there is a corresponding degree of attachment to things that one believes will gratify desire: to favourable states of existence, to a sense of self, to views, practices, and theories that satisfy personal desires, and to customs and practices that answer to personal needs.

Upādāna → bhava: grasping is connected to a particular state of existence. Attachment involves a process of binding oneself to or identifying with a state of existence, which either provides desired sense objects or helps to escape from undesirable objects. At the same time, when there is a desired state of existence, there invariably must be undesired states of existence. The state of existence grasped on to is called *uppatti-bhava* ('passive process of becoming'). When there is attachment to a state of existence, one strives to sustain certain aspects of this state and to escape from other aspects. All of one's thoughts and actions, however, are propelled by grasping; they are influenced by established beliefs, opinions, theories, habits, and preferences, and they manifest as behaviour corresponding to this grasping.

Take for example a person who wishes to be reborn as a god: he will attach to certain belief systems, traditions, ceremonies, and practices that he believes will lead to heaven. He will think and act according to these beliefs and as a consequence may even develop idiosyncratic behaviour. A person who seeks honour will attach to a set of values she believes to be honourable and to a corresponding standard of behaviour. Her thoughts, actions and behaviour will conform to his attachment. A person who covets an object belonging to someone else attaches to the idea of ownership and attempts to acquire the object. By not discerning the harm in wrong conduct, he will think and act out of habit. His initial covetousness may even lead him to steal; his wish to be an 'owner' results in him becoming a 'thief'.

Based on correct or false beliefs, a person responds to situations either skilfully or unskilfully. {189} The specific pattern of behaviour driven and shaped by grasping is the active process of becoming (*kamma-bhava*). The state of existence resulting from this behaviour, say of being a deva, an honourable person, an owner, or a thief, is the passive process of becoming (*uppatti-bhava*). This state of existence may conform to a person's desires or it may conflict with them.

This section of Dependent Origination is a crucial stage for the creation of karma, the receiving of the fruits of karma, and for the development of habits and personality.

Bhava → jāti: accurately speaking, existence in various states of being is equivalent to the five aggregates arising, transforming, and ceasing. The aggregates possess various properties, which increase or decrease according to internal and external conditions. Of all of these factors, intention is chief, determining the appearance and qualities of the general flow of existence.

The five aggregates are in constant flux, arising and ceasing in every moment. Conventionally speaking, one can say a 'person' is born, ages, and dies in every moment, as described in the commentaries:

In the ultimate sense, as the aggregates are arising, declining, and passing away, when the Blessed One says: 'Monk, you are born, you are aging, and you are dying in every moment', it should be understood here that, as regards all living beings, he has made a reference to the aggregates.

*KhA. 78.*

For unawakened beings, however, there is not simply an arising and ceasing of the five aggregates according to a natural process. When becoming follows on from grasping, there arises a sense of 'self', the perception of an 'I', as existing in a particular way, either conforming to a person's desires or not.<sup>56</sup> In short, a 'self' is born

<sup>56</sup>See Appendix 3: 'Me and Mine'.

within that state of existence, as in the former examples of an ‘owner’, a ‘thief’, or an ‘honourable person’.

The birth of a ‘self’ is seen clearly in times of personal conflict involving strong emotions, for instance in the course of arguments, even apparently rational ones. If a person succumbs to mental defilement rather than applies wisdom, a distinct sense of self is generated, for example: ‘I am in charge’, ‘I am respectable’, ‘he is unworthy’, ‘he is inferior’, ‘this is my opinion’, or ‘I am being contradicted’. Consequently, the sense of being a certain kind of person may be discredited or lost. The birth of a ‘self’ is especially distinct at times of aging and death, but as is evident from the next link in the cycle, aging and death are only possible because of birth:

Jāti → jarāmaraṇa: when there is a ‘self’ existing in a particular way, then there is a ‘self’ that is separated from particular states of existence, and a ‘self’ that is impeded, agitated, diminished, and unfulfilled. With the birth of a ‘self’, there is a wish to sustain a desired state of existence: a wish for stability and permanence. But the birth of a self inevitably brings the end of the self. There is a constant threat of weakness and loss, producing a fear of disturbance, conflict, and death, and leading a person to cling more tightly to that state of existence. {190} A fear of death is embedded in people’s subconscious and affects their behaviour. It leads people to grasp after desired states of existence, to be intimidated by discomfort, and to experience pleasure with anxiety, fearing that it will disappear.

When the ‘self’ is born in an undesired state of existence or when it is born in a desired state from which it must pass away, the various forms of suffering arise: sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. People suffering in this way are misguided and blinded. They vainly seek an escape using methods tainted by ignorance, thus continuing the cycle of Dependent Origination.<sup>57</sup>

In a competitive world, an ordinary person experiences two kinds of ‘success’: there is conventional (*sammati*) success, with its socially agreed-upon definition; and there is the subjective idea

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix 4: ‘Birth and Death in the Present Moment’.

of success that is held by grasping – the act of ‘becoming’ (*bhava*). It is often the case for people, especially those who are proud, to have the thought: ‘I am successful’ (i.e.: ‘I am born into the state of being a success’). This is then followed by the thought: ‘But for success to be complete, I deserve prestige, praise, recognition and reward.’ Success is thus linked to praise, to the failure of others, and to a sense of fulfilled ambition. In the moment when the sense of success arises along with its related attributes, there is a feeling of being fulfilled or unfulfilled.

With fulfilment comes the feeling of having to firmly attach to success, out of fear that the success will disappear and that the praise and admiration will wane. When others do not express the desired amount of praise, the person feels unhappy, since the sense of being a ‘success’ is affected and threatened. One is threatened by decay (*jarā*) and by the passing away (*maraṇa*) from the cherished state of success (*bhava*) along with its attendant benefits. In this circumstance, the feelings of disappointment, worry, and despondency, which have not been uprooted by mindfulness and clear comprehension, preoccupy and entangle people. They become innate characteristics, shaping personality, affecting behaviour, and continuing the cycle of Dependent Origination. {191}

The fabricated idea of ‘self’ takes up space in the heart, which leads to a sense of confinement and limitation. This feeling of limitation induces people to separate themselves from others and gives rise to the ideas of ‘me’ and ‘other’. When the sense of self becomes further inflated, a person wants to acquire, to accomplish, and to impress others. But the sense of self must be checked and suppressed by people themselves. If people are overly egotistical or follow desires without restraint, external conflict arises. Such unrestrained behaviour also leads to a loss of vitality, by increasing the power of desire and a sense of personal inadequacy. Overall conflict is thus augmented and contentment decreases. There is then no satisfaction and each moment is an opportunity for stress to arise.

## NOTE 4.2: THREE KINDS OF CRAVING

There are two or three conflicting ways of translating these three kinds of craving, especially the second and third kinds (see, e.g.: Vbh. 365; Vism. 567-8). Some scholars associate *bhava-taṇhā* with a life-instinct or life-wish, and associate *vibhava-taṇhā* with a death-instinct or death-wish, corresponding to the psychological terminology of Sigmund Freud (see: M. O'C. Walshe, *Buddhism for Today*, George Allen and Unwin, London, © 1962, pp. 37-40). One very clear definition for *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* is found at It. 43-4. See Appendix 8 for more on this subject.

**D. EXAMPLES FROM EVERYDAY LIFE**

Tom and Ben are students and intimate friends; everyday at school they greet each other cheerfully. One day Tom sees Ben and greets him in a friendly manner, but Ben frowns and does not reply. As a consequence Tom gets angry and stops speaking with Ben. In this situation the process occurs in this way:

1. Ignorance: Tom does not know the reasons behind Ben's bad mood and he does not reflect with wisdom to work out the truth of the situation. Ben may be upset about something or have an unresolved problem.
2. Volitional formations: Tom forms various ideas corresponding to his personal habits and opinions. He speculates about what Ben must be thinking or feeling, and mental defilements may make Tom feel confused, angry or offended.
3. Consciousness: in his disturbed state, Tom notices those of Ben's actions that fuel and confirm his current prejudices and interprets them accordingly. And the more he does this, the more convinced he is that he is right. Tom finds all of Ben's expressions and actions annoying.
4. Mind-and-body: the various aspects of Tom's mind and body – feelings, thoughts, mental states, facial expressions, gestures, etc. – manifest as symptoms of anger and conceit. The physical and mental factors that arise match consciousness.

5. Six sense bases: the sense bases involved in this situation are alert and fully primed.
6. Contact: there is contact (particularly eye or ear contact) with those characteristics and traits of Ben that are particularly pronounced or arresting, for example sullenness, unresponsiveness, and apparent scorn and disrespect.
7. Feeling: a feeling of discomfort, stress, pain, or sadness.
8. Craving: a desire for the destruction and end of the discomforting, oppressive sense impressions. {192}
9. Grasping: Tom grasps onto the idea that Ben's behaviour is deliberately aimed at him and that the issue must somehow be sorted out.
10. Becoming: Tom's behaviour is conditioned by grasping. His behaviour (*kamma-bhava*) is adversarial; his existence at this moment (*uppatti-bhava*) is as an adversary.
11. Birth: Tom embraces this existence as an adversary. He clearly sees himself as Ben's foe. He separates 'me' and 'him', and identifies himself as one who must confront Ben.
12. Aging-and-death: the 'self' arising in this state of conflict is sustained by various perceptions, for example as being a person who is able, skilled, honourable, dignified, or successful. These qualities, however, have opposing qualities, say of inferiority, failure, dishonour, or defeat. As soon as the desired 'self' arises it is threatened by the possibility of turning into its opposite.

Tom may not be able to sustain the identity of a skilled and effective adversary; rather he may become weak and unable to defend his honour. Suffering continually assails him. It ranges from the fear that he will not get what he wants, the tension and worry involved in the search for a desired state of being, right up to the disappointment if he is unsuccessful. And even in the case that he is successful, a waning of enjoyment inevitably follows. This suffering envelops and overshadows the mind, conditioning further ignorance and another turning of the wheel.

This suffering is like a festering wound, which steadily releases toxins; it causes problems for the person and for others, affects behaviour, and shapes the entire course of life. In the above example, Tom may be unhappy all day, be unable to concentrate on his studies, act and speak badly towards others, and cause further conflicts.

If Tom were to respond correctly from the beginning, this cycle of problems would not occur. When Ben does not smile or return his greeting, Tom would reflect with wisdom that Ben may have encountered some trouble; perhaps he was scolded by one of the teachers, is short of money, or is suffering from some other unresolved issue. Thinking in this way he will not be upset; rather, his heart will remain spacious and full of compassion. He may inquire after the cause, comfort Ben, help him find a solution to the problem, or simply allow Ben to have some quiet time to himself.

Even if a negative cycle begins to turn there is an opportunity to make amends. Say the cycle has reached contact (*phassa*), where Tom is aware of Ben's unpleasant behaviour and Tom begins to suffer as a result. Tom can give rise to mindfulness instead of falling victim to an ensuing craving for escape (*vibhava-taṇhā*). By considering the situation, wisdom severs the cycle and Tom experiences Ben's actions in a new way. Tom uses reason to reflect on Ben's actions and on his own appropriate response. Tom's mind will be clear and free from stress, and he will think of ways to help his friend. {193}

The arising of wisdom brings freedom to the mind; no 'self' is fabricated that is prone to disturbance. Apart from not creating personal problems, wisdom gives rise to the compassionate wish to reduce others' suffering. This has the opposite effect from ignorance, which leads to the 'wheel of rebirth' (*saṃsāra*), to craving and attachment, and to a restricted sense of 'self' which is subject to pain and has far-reaching consequences.



At this point let us review some important aspects of Dependent Origination:

- The entire process of Dependent Origination described above occurs rapidly – it is completed in an instant. For example, a student who has failed his exams, a person who has lost a loved one, or a person who sees his beloved with another partner may be anguished, frightened, or in shock; he may even scream or faint. The stronger the attachment and importance bestowed on something, the more intense the reaction.
- The conditional factors need not follow a set temporal sequence. In a similar manner, a piece of chalk, a blackboard, a clean surface, and the act of writing are all conditions for written words (on the blackboard).
- The teaching of Dependent Origination emphasizes an understanding of a natural law – a process found in nature – for discerning the source of problems and the specific points that require correction. The details of that correction – the methods of practice – are not directly connected to the teaching of Dependent Origination, but are matters related to the ‘Path’ (*magga*) or the ‘Middle Way’ (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*).<sup>58</sup>

Some of the former examples are superficial and lack subtlety, especially those illustrating the link between ignorance and volitional formations, the link between craving and clinging, and the link in which sorrow, lamentation, etc. induce a further rotation of the cycle. Some of the examples describing ignorance are limited to specific circumstances – they are not matters present in each moment of life. This may lead some people to think that ordinary people can live much of their lives without ignorance or that Dependent Origination does not give a true account of daily life. Therefore, it is important to provide a clearer, more detailed explanation of some of the difficult points.

<sup>58</sup>Discussed in Part II of *Buddhadhamma*.

## E. DEEPER EXPLANATIONS

When encountering an object or a situation, people normally interpret it, create ideas about it, and respond to it influenced by the following four predispositions or subconscious impulses:

1. *Kāma*: the desire for gratification by way of the five senses.
2. *Bhava*: the desire for or anxiety over self-existence; the desire to be a particular way and to maintain a desired state of existence.
3. *Diṭṭhi*: habitual views, beliefs, doctrines and theories that are attached to and cherished.
4. *Avijjā*: delusion; ignorance; a lack of true awareness and comprehension of causes, effects, meanings, values, and objectives, and of the natural relationship between things or between events; a lack of discernment of the law of causality; the mistaken view that a ‘self’ acts and is acted upon; an understanding of things conditioned by personal conjecture or mental fabrication. {194}

These four predispositions, especially factors three and four, are connected. When one does not clearly understand the truth (*avijjā*), one tends to act in accord with habitual views, beliefs, ideas and concepts (*diṭṭhi*), many of which one assimilates from society. Factors three and four also influence factors one and two: ignorance and socially conditioned views determine and control people’s thoughts and actions – what they like, what they need, and how they seek satisfaction; they lie buried in a person’s subconscious and dictate behaviour without the person being aware of them.

It is a common perception that people act entirely out of free will, but this is a delusion. If one investigates closely and asks what people really want, why they want these things, and why they follow a particular course of action, one sees that there is no real freedom of choice for most people. Their behaviour is conditioned by their upbringing and education, by culture, by religious beliefs, and by social conventions. They choose and act within the confines of these social factors; even if they depart from

## NOTE 4.3: THE FOUR TAINTS

The four taints are known as *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava*, *diṭṭhāsava*, and *avijjāsava*, respectively. This group of four taints is found in the Abhidhamma; in the suttas only three are mentioned – *diṭṭhāsava* does not appear. *Diṭṭhāsava* is an intermediate factor between *avijjāsava* and *bhavāsava*: it relies on ignorance to be established and it expresses itself through the taint of becoming. Three *āsava*: see e.g. D. II. 81; S. IV. 256. Four *āsava*: see e.g. Vbh. 373-4. Alternative English translations for *āsava* are: ‘inflowing impulses’, ‘influxes’, ‘biases’, and ‘cankers’. The four taints are sometimes referred to as the taint of sense-gratification, the taint of becoming (or of ‘self-centred pursuits’), the taint of views, and the taint of ignorance, respectively. MA. I. 67 claims that *diṭṭhāsava* is incorporated into *bhavāsava* because the desire for existence or the attachment to *jhāna*, for instance, is linked to an eternalist or an annihilationist view. See more material at: Nd. II. 7; DA. III. 999; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā.

usual (i.e. ‘normal’) forms of behaviour, they still use these factors as a standard for comparison.

All the things that ordinary people identify with lie within the framework of these four predispositions (and are part of the five aggregates). Apart from being absent of any real ‘substance’ or ‘self’, these things exert an unrelenting power over people, who, while under their sway, have no independence.

These four predispositions are called *āsava*, often translated as ‘effluent’ or ‘outflow’ – something that leaks out; or as ‘taint’ – something that ‘festers’ and ‘ferments’ in the heart. (See Note 4.3.) These defilements leak out and stain the mind when a person encounters sense objects. Whenever a person contacts something by way of the senses or thinks of something, these ‘*āsavas*’ permeate and contaminate the mind. One’s experience of sense objects is not guided by wisdom, but is mediated by the taints.<sup>59</sup> This state of affairs prevents objective knowing and leads to continual problems. {195}

These taints govern unenlightened people’s behaviour, including their thoughts and actions, without people being aware of them. They are the

<sup>59</sup>Trans.: from this point on I will refer to the *āsavas* as the ‘taints’.

agents behind the basic mistake of viewing things as ‘me’ or ‘mine’, which is the most fundamental level of ignorance. They are the starting point for Dependent Origination: when there is the arising of the taints, there is the arising of ignorance. Ignorance is then the condition for volitional formations, by which people act with a deluded sense of ‘self’. Similarly, one can say that people are not free because their behaviour is ruled by unrecognized volitional impulses.

One definition for ignorance is a lack of discernment of the three universal characteristics, especially the quality of nonself. A person is unaware that the things considered to be a ‘being’, a ‘person’, a ‘self’, ‘me’, and ‘you’, etc., exist as a stream of myriad physical and mental components that are interrelated and mutually dependent. The continual arising and dissolution of these components causes this stream to perpetually change shape. People exist as a collection of thoughts, desires, habits, inclinations, opinions, values, perceptions, insights, and beliefs (both irrational, erroneous beliefs and well-grounded, correct beliefs). These thoughts, etc. are the result of cultural transmission, education, and ongoing responses both to internal events and to one’s environment.

When people are unaware of this fact, they identify with one or another of these components. Through such self-identification, these things deceive and subjugate people; they lead one to see things in the context of a ‘self’ and to believe that one is a free agent behind action.

At this point, let us look at another link that is difficult to understand: the link between craving and clinging, which is similarly a stage involving mental impurity.

The three kinds of craving mentioned earlier are all expressions of a single form of basic craving, which all unawakened people possess. This craving is evident when one investigates the deeper workings of the mind, beginning with its lack of understanding of the interdependent relationship of things. This misunderstanding produces the distorted sense of ‘self’, which in turn generates an underlying desire for existence – the desire for this illusory ‘self’ to exist forever.

The desire for existence is not abstract, but is connected to the desire for sense objects: a person desires existence in order to experience

desirable objects and to gratify sense desire. People want to 'be' because they want to 'get'. The desire for sense objects amplifies the desire for existence.

When the desire for existence is strong but a person does not acquire desirable sense objects, however, the reaction is a state of existence (*bhava*) that is unsatisfactory, objectionable, and unendurable. The person then wants this state of existence to end. But as soon as there is a desire for extinction the desire for acquisition resurfaces, since there is the fear that with extinction one may not experience desired pleasure; the desire for existence thus follows in its wake. {196}

The same process occurs when one acquires an object of desire but not to a satisfactory degree, or when one acquires an object but one starts to desire something else. The most basic and all-encompassing desire is the desire for more. One finds that human beings are perpetually searching for a happiness that surpasses the happiness they are currently experiencing. Unawakened beings constantly miss or forsake the present moment. People find the present moment hard to endure; they want to escape from it and seek a more gratifying state of existence. The desire to get, the desire to be, and the desire to cease existing, thus continually spin around in a vortex within the lives of ordinary people. Because this cycle is subtle and occurs in every moment, people are not aware that they are constantly struggling to escape from the previous moment and to seek gratification from each subsequent moment.

Craving stems from ignorance: because people do not understand the interdependent nature of things, a fundamental error occurs. They see things either as substantial, as possessing a stable and permanent core or self,<sup>60</sup> or see things as existing for a period of time in a stable, substantial way and then dissolving.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> An 'eternalist' view (*sassata-ditṭhi*).

<sup>61</sup> An 'annihilationist' view (*uccheda-ditṭhi*). Both this and the eternalist view are mistaken views of 'self' but in different forms. The first is obvious, but the second is described as follows: a person believes that an object has a distinct core or self and believes that this essence or 'self' is cut short and perishes. See the following section on 'Dependent Origination and the Middle Way'.

All unawakened people hold these two views in subtle degrees, and hence are subject to the three kinds of craving. Because of the deluded and deep-seated view that things possess a permanent, solid ‘self’, there arises the craving for existence. And because of ignorance and doubt, there arises the competing view that things possess a solid substance, but that this substance or ‘self’ perishes and disappears. Consequently, there arises the craving for extinction.

These two wrong views give the opportunity for craving to arise. If a person understands the fluid, interdependent nature of things, there can be no permanent, solid ‘self’, nor can there be a real, objective ‘self’ that dissolves and disappears. Neither craving for being nor craving for extinction has any foundation to stand on. Craving for sense pleasure also results from these two wrong views: fearing that the ‘self’ or the pleasure may disappear, people anxiously search for personal gratification. And because they see things as permanent and solid, they grab onto things in order to reinforce a sense of stability.

On a coarse level, craving manifests as the search for sensual pleasure and for situations providing such pleasure, or as boredom with pleasures already acquired. People who have no inner independence feel tedium and agitation when they are unable to experience gratifying sense objects. They constantly search around for new forms of pleasure to escape their disquiet and discomfort. When they do not get what they want they feel disappointment, discouragement, and self-loathing. Their happiness and unhappiness are entirely dependent on external conditions. Time without stimulation or activity then becomes a punishment or a misfortune. {197}

Boredom, depression, loneliness, and discontentment increase both for the individual and in society, even though there is an increase of stimulating objects, and the search for stimulation becomes more crude and passionate. A deeper inspection reveals that problems like drug abuse and teenage delinquency stem from a lack of patience, boredom, and the wish to escape from the state of existence one is born into in that moment.

The mental impurity resulting from craving is grasping (*upādāna*), of which there are four kinds:

1. *Kāmapādāna*: grasping onto sensuality;<sup>62</sup> as a consequence of craving, the mind firmly attaches to desired objects. When one acquires a desired object, one attaches to it because one wishes for further gratification and because one fears separation. Attachment arises when a person experiences a moment of gratification and then wishes to repeat the experience, or else when desired objects do not provide gratification. Loss or disappointment may then lead to greater fixation and longing. Although objects of desire do not truly belong to people, they try to persuade themselves that in some way they do possess them. The minds of ordinary people are therefore constantly tangled up with desirable objects and it is difficult for them to reach objectivity, security, and freedom.
2. *Diṭṭhupādāna*: grasping onto views; the desire for something to exist or to be eradicated produces biased views and beliefs, which correspond to people's desires. The search for gratification leads people to grasp onto teachings, theories, philosophical doctrines, etc. that serve and minister to their desire. When people attach to a view, then they appropriate it and identify with it. Apart from thinking and acting in accord with such a view, they feel personally threatened whenever they encounter an opposing view. They feel this opposing view may diminish, weaken, or destroy their 'self' in some way, and they therefore feel the need to defend their cherished view in order to maintain dignity. This reaction produces conflict, narrow-mindedness, and obstructed wisdom. They are unable to truly benefit from new ideas and teachings, and they are unable to advance their knowledge in an optimal way.<sup>63</sup>
3. *Sīlabbatupādāna*: grasping onto moral precepts and religious practices. The desire for acquisition and existence, the ungrounded fear of the dissolution of the self, and the attachment to views and doctrines all lead to correspondingly superstitious behaviour in the face of those things considered sacred and promising fulfilment,

<sup>62</sup>The term *kāma* has two definitions: (1) objects that gratify desire by way of the five senses, and (2) the desire for these objects.

<sup>63</sup>The most basic views conforming to craving are the two views of eternalism and annihilationism, along with views directly related to these two.

even when people cannot rationally understand the link between these things and desired results. {198}

The firm belief in a self manifests externally as an unyielding attachment to behaviour, rules, practices, customs, traditions, religious ceremonies, and established institutions, without an awareness of their meaning, objectives and value. As a consequence, human beings create such rules, customs, etc. to limit and confine themselves. They end up becoming narrow-minded and obstinate, and they find it difficult to improve themselves and truly take advantage of what they experience.

The following passage from the late Ven. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu<sup>64</sup> may clarify this attachment to rules and practices:

When a person upholds a moral precept or follows a teaching without applying reasoned awareness, he simply assumes that this action possesses some kind of sacred power, which will naturally produce positive results. Such a person acts merely by following forms, customs, conventions, and scriptures passed down by society, without understanding their true meaning. Because he repeats these actions until they become a habit, attachment becomes more pronounced. This form of grasping varies from the second form, which is a grasping onto mistaken views and opinions. This third form is very hard to rectify – it is a grasping onto spiritual practices and their external manifestations.

Ven. Buddhadāsa (Ariyanandamuni); *The Teachings of Buddhism*; Suvijāna Press, 1955; p. 60.

4. *Attavādupādāna*: grasping onto the concept of self. The mistaken belief in a true, substantial self is native to the unawakened mind. This belief is reinforced by linguistic conventions, which lead people to see things as distinct, solid entities. This belief in self, however, becomes a form of grasping when craving acts as a condition: with a desire for acquisition a person attaches to the idea of a

<sup>64</sup>Trans.: Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 1906-1993; one of the most influential Buddhist thinkers in contemporary Thailand.



self which will experience or own the desired object; with a desire for a state of existence there is grasping onto a 'self' that dwells in that state; with a desire for non-existence there is grasping onto a 'self' that perishes. And fear of extinction leads a person to struggle to consolidate the sense of self.

These forms of desire are linked to the idea of possession or control: people believe that there is a 'self' manipulating events in accord with desire. And because events occasionally do follow desire, they believe that they have mastery over things. But such control is limited and temporary. The various factors attached to as comprising the 'self' are merely isolated conditions in a larger causal process. Indeed, there is no factor in this process that can be truly or permanently controlled. People, however, interpret even this experience of partial control as proof of a permanent 'self'.

When people grasp onto the idea of self they are unable to deal with things in harmony with conditional factors. Instead, they are deluded into trying to make things comply with their desires. If people do not act in line with causality and things do not proceed as wished, then they feel oppressed by inadequacy and loss. The grasping onto an idea of self is central and acts as a basis for all other forms of grasping. {199}

These four forms of grasping are connected: an encounter with a pleasurable object gives rise to craving and covetousness. This is followed by grasping onto sensuality: people attach to the desired object, thinking they must acquire, experience, or possess it. Grasping onto views then follows: they think, 'This is good', 'This will provide happiness', 'Life will be meaningful when I get this object' or, 'Any teaching that promotes the acquisition of this object must be correct'. Similarly, there arises the grasping onto rules and practices: people consequently uphold rules, traditions, moral codes, etc. as a means to acquire the desired object. Furthermore, there arises the grasping onto a 'self', as that which experiences or controls the object.

Clinging prevents mental freedom and clarity. People subject to clinging are unable to think reasonably, interpret events accurately, make

wise decisions, or act responsibly in relation to the law of cause and effect. Instead, they experience continual prejudice, limitation, conflict and stress because they hold firmly to such ideas as ‘me’ and ‘mine’.

Clinging to such ideas demands that things accord with desire, even though things must exist in line with causes and conditions and are not subject to a person’s will. Whenever things deviate from a desired outcome, people feel oppressed. When a cherished object is adversely affected by something, those who grasp onto it are similarly affected. The degree of impact or disturbance is proportional to the degree of attachment and identification. Suffering is not the sole consequence of this attachment: a person’s entire life and scope of activity is ruled by desire and grasping, rather than by wisdom.<sup>65</sup>

Following on from grasping, the Dependent Origination sequence proceeds to becoming, birth, aging-and-death, and sorrow, lamentation, etc., as described earlier. When people experience sorrow, etc. they seek an escape. Their thoughts, choices, and actions, rather than being based on a discernment of the truth of things, are based on accumulated habits, prejudices, perceptions and opinions. The cycle thus resumes at ignorance and rotates further.

Although ignorance is a fundamental defilement of the mind and engenders other mental impurities, craving tends to be the catalyst and plays the more dominant role in external behaviour. For this reason, in teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the source of suffering is defined as craving (*taṇhā*).

When ignorance is unchecked – when the mind is in a state of blindness and confusion – then craving is unconstrained and people’s intentional actions (*karma*) are more likely to be bad than good. But if people receive spiritual training and develop confidence in a correct path, craving can

<sup>65</sup>The four forms of grasping are found at e.g.: D. III. 229; Vbh. 375. Grasping onto the idea of ‘self’ (*attavādupādāna*), in particular, is an attachment to one or several of the five aggregates, as confirmed by the Pali Canon: *An untaught, ordinary person ... regards material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He regards feeling as self.... He regards perception as self.... He regards volitional formations as self.... He regards consciousness as self... or self as in consciousness* (M. I. 300).

be used to their advantage. When ignorance is corrected by wholesome beliefs, right thoughts, and reasoned understanding, then craving is ‘deflected’ to a virtuous goal; it is disciplined and purposeful, and can lead to wholesome actions and beneficial results. {200}

With proper encouragement, craving may be a support for efforts to eliminate ignorance and craving. In such cases a person strives to be a good person, makes good use of idle time, applies effort to achieve longterm goals, and tries to gain social standing or go to heaven. A good person and a bad person are both subject to suffering, but only the method of transforming ignorance and overcoming craving leads to freedom and true happiness.

The following passage demonstrates how craving can be used to a person’s advantage for the highest goal:

Sister, a monk hears it said: ‘They say that a monk of such and such a name, by the destruction of the taints, in this very life enters and dwells in the taintless liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom’.... Then he thinks: ‘Oh, when shall I too realize the taintless liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom?’ Then, some time later, based on that craving, he abandons craving. It is on account of this that it was said: ‘This body has come into being through craving; yet based on craving, craving can be abandoned.’

*A. II. 145-6.*

If there is no alternative but to choose between two forms of craving, one should choose a craving that leads to the good and acts as an impetus for constructive action. But if possible, one should refrain from both advantageous and destructive craving, and choose the way of wisdom, which is pure, unfettered, and free from suffering. {201}

#### 4.7 DEPENDENT ORIGATION AND THE MIDDLE TEACHING

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An understanding of Dependent Origination is considered equivalent to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is objective and unbiased. The teaching of Dependent Origination is an ‘impartial teaching of truth’ or a ‘middle teaching’.<sup>66</sup> This teaching is differentiated from doctrines and views that are considered ‘extreme’.<sup>67</sup> Following are some of these ‘extreme’ or ‘dualistic’ views, along with scriptural passages explaining them.

##### A. DUALITY #1

1. Extreme realism (*atthika-vāda*):<sup>68</sup> the belief that things exist absolutely.
2. Nihilism (*natthika-vāda*): the belief that nothing has any real existence.

This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends on a duality: on the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world. This world for the most part grasps after theories and is imprisoned by dogmas. But the noble disciple does not become engaged with, hold, and cling to an adherence to theories, beliefs, dogmas, and

<sup>66</sup>The Buddha used the expression ‘impartial teaching of truth’ (*majjhena dhammaṃ deṣeti*). SA. II. 36 defines this as ‘established in the Middle Way, he teaches (in this way)’. At Vism. 522 the impartial teaching of truth is equated to the Middle Way. [Trans.: the author continues to use the expression ‘impartial teaching of truth’ throughout the text. For simplicity, I use the expression ‘Middle Teaching’.]

<sup>67</sup>Trans.: they may also be called ‘polar’ or ‘dualistic’.

<sup>68</sup>In the case of a doctrine or belief system, the term *vāda* (‘doctrine’, ‘theory’, ‘creed’) can be replaced by the term *diṭṭhi* (‘view’). Therefore, these beliefs can be referred to as *atthika-diṭṭhi*, *natthika-diṭṭhi*, *sassata-diṭṭhi*, etc. *Atthika-vāda* is also known as *sabbatthika-vāda*.

the underlying bias of ‘my self’. He has no perplexity or doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing. A noble disciple’s knowledge about this is independent of others. It is in this way that there is right view.

‘All exists.’: Kaccāna, this is one extreme. ‘All does not exist’: this is the second extreme. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness.... But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness ...

*S. II. 17, 76; S. III. 134-5.*

A brahmin philosopher approached the Blessed One and said to him:

‘How is it, Master Gotama: does all exist?’

“‘All exists’: this, brahmin, is the primary cosmology.’

‘Then does all not exist?’

“‘All does not exist’: this is the second cosmology.’

‘How is it, Master Gotama: is all a unity?’

“‘All is a unity’: this, brahmin, is the third cosmology.’

‘Then is all a plurality?’

“‘All is a plurality’: this is the fourth cosmology. {202}

‘Without veering towards any of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be.... With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation ...’

*S. II. 77.*

**B. DUALITY #2**

1. Eternalism (*sassata-vāda*)
2. Annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*)

**C. DUALITY #3**

1. Self-generationism or karmic autogenesisism (*attakāra-vāda*):<sup>69</sup> the belief that happiness and suffering, for instance, are self-generated.
2. Other-generationism or karmic heterogenesisism (*parakāra-vāda*): the belief that happiness and suffering, for example, are produced by an external agent.

A proper investigation of duality #3 and duality #4 (below) helps to prevent misunderstandings concerning the law of karma. Here are several sutta passages in which the Buddha addresses this subject:

The naked ascetic Kassapa: ‘How is it, Master Gotama: is suffering created by oneself?’

The Buddha: ‘Not so, Kassapa.’

‘Then is suffering created by another?’

‘Not so, Kassapa.’

‘Then is suffering created both by oneself and by another?’

‘Not so, Kassapa.’

‘Then has suffering arisen randomly,<sup>70</sup> being created neither by oneself nor by another?’

‘Not so, Kassapa.’

<sup>69</sup>Also known as *sayañkāra-vāda*.

‘Then is there no suffering?’

‘It is not that there is no suffering; there is suffering.’

‘Then is it that Master Gotama does not know and see suffering?’

‘It is not that I do not know and see suffering, Kassapa. I know suffering, I see suffering.’

‘... Venerable sir, let the Blessed One explain suffering to me. Let the Blessed One teach me about suffering.’

‘Kassapa, if one asserts as in the first statement, “Suffering is created by oneself”, this is the same as saying, “The one who acts is the same as the one who experiences [suffering].” When one asserts thus, this amounts to eternalism. If one asserts like someone stricken by a feeling, “Suffering is created by another”,<sup>71</sup> this is the same as saying, “The one who acts is one, the one who experiences [suffering] is another.” When one asserts thus, this amounts to annihilationism. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be.... With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation ...’ {203}

*S. II. 19-21.*

‘Are pleasure and pain created by oneself?’

‘Not so.’

‘Are pleasure and pain created by another?’

‘Not so.’

‘Are pleasure and pain created both by oneself and by another?’

‘Not so.’

‘Then have pleasure and pain arisen randomly, being created neither by oneself nor by another?’

‘Not so.’

‘Then is there no pleasure and pain?’

‘It is not that there is no pleasure and pain; there is pleasure and pain.’

‘Then is it that Master Gotama does not know and see pleasure and pain?’

‘It is not that I do not know and see pleasure and pain. I know pleasure and pain, I see pleasure and pain.’

‘... Venerable sir, let the Blessed One explain pleasure and pain to me. Let the Blessed One teach me about pleasure and pain.’

‘If one thinks as in the first statement, “The feeling and the one who feels it are the same”, there arises the belief: “Pleasure and pain are created by oneself.” I do not speak thus. If one thinks, “The feeling is one, the one who feels it is another”, there arises the belief like one who is stricken by feeling: “Pleasure and pain are created by another.” I do not speak thus. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be.... With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation ...’

*S. II. 22-3.*

I have said, Ānanda, that pleasure and pain are dependently arisen. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact....

When there is the body, because of bodily volition, pleasure and pain arise internally; when there is speech, because of verbal volition, pleasure and pain arise internally; when there is the mind, because of mental volition, pleasure and pain arise internally.

With ignorance as condition, one generates on one’s own initiative that bodily volitional formation that conditions internal pleasure and pain; or prompted by others one generates that bodily volitional formation that conditions internal pleasure and pain. Either deliberately one generates that bodily volitional formation that



conditions internal pleasure and pain; or undeliberately one generates that bodily volitional formation that conditions internal pleasure and pain.... One generates on one's own initiative that verbal volitional formation.... One generates on one's own initiative that mental volitional formation ... or prompted by others.... Either deliberately ... or undeliberately one generates that mental volitional formation that conditions internal pleasure and pain. In all of these circumstances ignorance is involved. {204}

*E.g.: S. II. 39-40; cf.: D. I. 53-4; D. III. 137; S. I. 134; A. III. 336-7, 440; Ud. 69-70; Vbh. 376-7.*

#### D. DUALITY #4

1. The extremist view of a self-identical soul or the monistic view of subject-object unity (*kāraṇavedakādi-ekatta-vāda*).
2. The extremist view of individual discontinuity or the dualistic view of subject-object distinction (*kāraṇavedakādi-nānatta-vāda*).<sup>72</sup>

‘How is it, Master Gotama: is the one who acts the same as the one who experiences [the result]?’

“‘The one who acts is the same as the one who experiences [the result]’: this, brahmin, is one extreme.”

‘Then is the one who acts one, and the one who experiences [the result] another?’

“‘The one who acts is one, and the one who experiences [the result] is another’: this is the second extreme. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations

<sup>70</sup>*Adhicca-samuppanna*.

<sup>71</sup>Trans.: ‘another’ here refers to one’s (previous) ‘self’ as an agent of this act.

<sup>72</sup>Both of these terms have been newly established. These views are a form of eternalism and a form of annihilationism, respectively.

come to be.... With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation....’

*S. II. 75-6.*

‘Venerable sir, what now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there this aging-and-death?’

‘Not a valid question’, the Blessed One replied. ‘Bhikkhu, whether one says, “What now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there this aging-and-death?” or whether one says, “Aging-and-death is one thing, the one for whom there is this aging-and-death is another” – both these assertions are identical in meaning; they differ only in the phrasing. If there is the view, “The life principle and the body are the same”, there is no living of the holy life; and if there is the view, “The life principle is one thing, the body is another”, there is no living of the holy life. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With birth as condition, aging-and-death comes to be ...’

‘Venerable sir, what now is birth, and for whom is there this birth? ... becoming ... grasping ... clinging ... feeling ... contact ... six sense bases ... mind-and-body ... consciousness ... volitional formations?’

‘Not a valid question.... But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, whatever kinds of distorted views, vacillations and contradictions there may be – “What now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there this aging-and-death?” or “Aging-and-death is one thing, the one for whom there is this aging-and-death is another”, or “The life principle and the body are the same”, or “The life principle is one thing, the body is another” – all these are abandoned, eradicated, destroyed, obliterated so that they are no more subject to future arising.’

*S. II. 60-63.*

‘Venerable sir, who makes contact?’

‘Not a valid question’, the Blessed One replied. ‘I do not say, “One makes contact.” If I should say, “One makes contact”, in that case

this would be a valid question: “Who makes contact?” But I do not speak thus. Since I do not speak thus, if one should ask me, “With what as condition does contact come to be?” this would be a valid question. To this the valid answer is: “With the six sense bases as condition, contact comes to be; with contact as condition feeling comes to be.”’

‘Who feels.... Who craves.... Who grasps?’

‘Not a valid question.... If one should ask me, “With what as condition does feeling come to be?” ... “With what as condition does craving come to be?” ... “With what as condition does grasping come to be?” this would be a valid question. To this the valid answer is: “With contact as condition, feeling comes to be; with feeling as condition craving comes to be....”’ {205}

*S. II. 13-14.*

‘Bhikkhus, this body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. It is to be seen as old karma produced by conditioning factors and generated by volition, as the foundation for feeling. Therein, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple investigates carefully Dependent Origination thus: “When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations, consciousness comes to be ... With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness ...”

*S. II. 64-5.*

The teaching of Dependent Origination reveals the natural law that all conditioned things are marked by the three characteristics (impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself) and exist subject to causality. Buddha-Dhamma does not concern itself with such questions as: Do things exist absolutely? Do things lack a real existence? Do things exist in a state of permanence? Or do things exist in a substantial way temporarily and then disappear?

Those people who do not correctly understand Dependent Origination tend to misunderstand the teaching of the Three Characteristics, especially the quality of nonself. Having only a superficial understanding of nonself, they interpret this quality to mean nothing exists and thus adhere to nihilism, which is a serious wrong view.

A person who understands Dependent Origination correctly will escape the misunderstandings stemming from the theories and beliefs mentioned above, for example the belief in a first cause or a belief in the supernatural. The Buddha addresses this topic in the following passage:

When, bhikkhus, a noble disciple has clearly seen with correct wisdom as it really is this Dependent Origination and these dependently arisen phenomena, it is impossible that he will run back into the past, thinking: ‘Did I exist in the past? Did I not exist in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past?’ Or that he will run forward into the future, thinking: ‘Will I exist in the future? Will I not exist in the future? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I become in the future?’ Or that he will now be inwardly confused about the present thus: ‘Do I exist? Do I not exist? What am I? How am I? This being – where has it come from and where will it go?’

For what reason [is this impossible]? Because the noble disciple has clearly seen with correct wisdom as it really is this Dependent Origination and these dependently arisen phenomena.

*S. II. 26-7.*

A person who understands Dependent Origination is not confused by the metaphysical dilemmas known as the ‘unanswerable questions’ (*abyākata-pañhā*). When people asked these questions, the Buddha remained silent. He said that he would not explain them because when a person sees the interdependent nature of things these questions are considered trivial and worthless. These dilemmas are also known as the ten ‘erroneous, extremist views’ (*antaḡāhika-diṭṭhi*), as illustrated below:

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‘What, Master Gotama, is the cause and reason why, when wanderers of other sects are asked such questions:

1. Is the world eternal?
2. Is the world not eternal?
3. Is the world finite?
4. Is the world infinite?
5. Are the life principle and the body the same?
6. Is the life principle one thing, the body another?
7. Does a being<sup>73</sup> exist after death?
8. Does a being not exist after death?
9. Does a being both exist and not exist after death?
10. Does a being neither exist nor not exist after death?

... they give such answers as: “The world is eternal”, “The world is not eternal”, ... “a being neither exists nor does not exist after death”? And what is the cause and reason why, when Master Gotama is asked such questions, he does not give such answers?’

‘Vaccha, wanderers of other sects regard form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. They regard feeling as self ... perception as self ... volitional formations as self ... consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. Therefore, when the wanderers of other sects are asked such questions, they give such answers as: “The world is eternal ...” But the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, does not regard form as self ... or self as in consciousness. Therefore, when the Tathāgata is asked such questions, he does not give such answers.’<sup>74</sup> {207}

*E.g.: S. IV. 395-6.*

<sup>73</sup>The use of the word ‘being’ (*satta*) here follows the commentarial interpretation (MA. III. 142); the term used in the original Pali is *tathāgato*. According to SA. III. 113, this term refers specifically to the Buddha, while at UdA. 339 it means the ‘self’ or ‘soul’ (*attā*).

There are other erroneous doctrines and theories concerning karma that conflict with the teaching of Dependent Origination, but these will be discussed in the separate chapter on karma.<sup>75</sup>

#### 4.8 DEPENDENT ORIGINATION IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT

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So far the discussion has focused only on Dependent Origination as it occurs in the minds and lives of individual people. In the Mahānidāna Sutta,<sup>76</sup> however, which is a very important teaching and is the longest of all suttas describing Dependent Origination, the Buddha explained conditionality both in a person's mind and between people or in society. Following is a brief explanation of how Dependent Origination works on a social level:

The origination of suffering, or the origination of evil, in society proceeds in the same fashion as the origination of suffering in an individual, but the manifestation of social ills begins with craving. In the following passage the Buddha highlights this link in the chain of Dependent Origination:

And so, Ānanda, feeling conditions craving, craving conditions seeking (*pariyesanā*), seeking conditions acquisition (*lābha*), acquisition conditions appraisal (*vinicchaya*), appraisal conditions passionate attachment (*chanda-rāga*), passionate attachment conditions preoccupation (*ajjhosaṇa*), preoccupation conditions possessiveness (*pariggaha*), possessiveness conditions stinginess (*macchariya*), stinginess conditions protectiveness (*ārakkha*), and dependent on protectiveness, as a consequence of protectiveness, there arise

<sup>74</sup>For more on these metaphysical questions see Appendix 10.

<sup>75</sup>See Chapter 5.

<sup>76</sup>D. II. 55-71. Note here that when the Buddha discusses conditionality in relation to a person's mind, he defines craving (*taṇhā*) as the six forms of craving: craving for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and mental objects. When he discusses conditionality in relation to society, however, he defines craving as the three forms of craving: *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā*.

the taking up of stick and sword, quarrels, disputes, arguments, strife, abuse, lying and other evil unskilful states.<sup>77</sup> {208}

*D. II. 58-9.*

The Mahānidāna Sutta thus introduces an alternative sequence of Dependent Origination, containing factors different from those manifesting in an individual. The factors shared by both formats are illustrated thus:

Ignorance → volitional formations → consciousness →  
mind-and-body → six sense bases → contact → feeling → craving.

Within an individual, when craving (*taṇhā*) arises, the process continues as follows:

Craving → grasping → becoming → birth → aging-and-death,  
sorrow, lamentation, etc. = individual suffering.

In society, however, craving leads to these alternative factors:

Craving → seeking → acquisition → appraisal → passionate  
attachment → preoccupation → possessiveness → stinginess →  
protectiveness → quarrels, disputes, arguments, strife, etc. = social  
problems. {209}

The Kalahavivāda Sutta contains similar material but it is in the form of questions and answers and is composed in verse, so differs in some of the details.<sup>78</sup>

To help explain Dependent Origination as it relates to social conditions one can examine associated processes that are mentioned elsewhere in the scriptures, for example the process of differentiation (*nānatta*):

The existence of various elements (*dhātu-nānatta*) → the various  
forms of contact (*phassa-nānatta*) → the various kinds of feeling

<sup>77</sup>This group of qualities, from craving onwards, occurs in many places but is referred to as the nine 'qualities rooted in craving' (*taṇhāmūlaka-dhamma*), e.g.: D. III. 288-9; A. IV. 400-401; Vbh. 390. Ps. I. 130 states that the worldly abode is bound by these nine qualities.

<sup>78</sup>Sn. 168-9.

(*vedanā-nānatta*) → various perceptions (*saññā-nānatta*) → various thoughts (*saṅkappa-nānatta*) → various desires (*chanda-nānatta*) → various passions (*pariḷāha-nānatta*) → various forms of seeking (*pariyesanā-nānatta*) → various forms of acquisition (*lābha-nānatta*).<sup>79</sup>

The first section of the above passage, from the elements to perception, can be summarized as ‘various elements generate various perceptions’. Another passage in the Canon therefore presents this outline as follows:

Various elements → various perceptions → various thoughts → various desires → various passions → various forms of seeking → various forms of acquisition.<sup>80</sup>

These alternative presentations of Dependent Origination combine internal human dynamics with external social affairs. They present a wide perspective, revealing the source of social problems to be people’s mental defilements. It may be said that those suttas explaining the wider implications of mental defilement, for example the Aggañña Sutta,<sup>81</sup> the Cakkavatti Sutta,<sup>82</sup> and the Vāseṭṭha Sutta,<sup>83</sup> are working models of Dependent Origination in a social context. {210}

There are a couple of important points to keep in mind when examining this form of presentation: the law of conditionality implies a dependency and necessity between factors. In the phrase ‘feeling conditions craving’, the arising of craving depends on feeling; feeling is required for craving to arise. However, when feeling exists, it does not necessarily lead to craving. It is at this link between feeling and craving that the cycle of Dependent Origination can be severed, as corroborated by the sutta passages mentioned earlier, which describe the arising of feeling without subsequent craving. When a person experiences feeling with adequate

<sup>79</sup>D. III. 289; Ps. I. 87. ‘Elements’ (*dhātu*) here refer to the eighteen conditions: the six internal sense bases, the six sense objects, and the six forms of consciousness.

<sup>80</sup>S. II. 146; see the entire section of S. II. 140-49.

<sup>81</sup>D. III. 80-98.

<sup>82</sup>D. III. 58-79.

<sup>83</sup>M. II. 196; Sn. 115-23.



mindfulness and clear comprehension, the link is cut and craving does not arise.

Note from the Mahānidāna Sutta that the Buddha began his analysis of social woes at this juncture, where feeling conditions craving (*vedanaṃ paṭicca taṇhā*). This link between feeling and craving is a crucial stage and has a direct bearing on human behaviour and social wellbeing.

The suttas cited above describe how aspects of human society, like the caste system and differences in individual circumstances, result from human interactions and are influenced by the natural environment. Social conditions are shaped by the interdependency between human beings (beginning with people's mental qualities), society, and the natural environment. For example, a person's feelings rely on contact, which is affected by social and environmental factors as well as internal factors like perception. When craving follows feeling, subsequent behaviour may have an impact on other people and on the environment so that all factors are affected. Human beings are not the only factor influencing society and the environment, neither are society or the environment the only factor in influencing the other two: the three are interdependent.

Sections of the Aggañña Sutta illustrate the process of conditionality:

Idle individuals hoard grain and this practice becomes popular

→ areas are established for allocating grain

→ greedy individuals steal grain from others to increase their share

→ there arises censure, deceit, punishment, and fighting

→ wise individuals see the need for government; there develops the practice of electing a leader or king (*khattiya*); some people become disillusioned with the corruption in society and go to live in the forest to free themselves from evil and develop jhāna; some of these people live near populated areas; they study and compose texts, and the term 'brahmin' (*brāhmaṇa*) is coined; those people who have families and pursue various forms of enterprise are

called ‘merchants’ (*vessa*); others whose behaviour is considered vulgar or inferior are branded as ‘low class’ (*sudda*)

→ members of each of these four groups abandon their personal customs, renounce the household life, and go forth as ascetics (*samaṇa*). {211}

This sutta shows that various castes and social classes are formed and conditioned by naturally occurring human relationships; they are not created by a creator God. Every person has the choice to perform good or bad deeds and everyone will equally receive the fruits of their actions in accord with natural laws. And every person who cultivates the Dhamma correctly can reach liberation – can reach Nibbāna.

The Cakkavatti Sutta (mentioned above) describes the conditions underlying crime and other social ills:

Government leaders do not provide financial assistance to the poor

→ poverty is rampant

→ theft is rampant

→ the use of weapons is rampant

→ killing is rampant

→ the spread of lying, divisive speech, harsh and frivolous speech, sexual misconduct, covetousness, hostility, wrong views, attachment to unrighteousness (*adhamma-rāga*), greed, injustice (*micchā-dhamma*), lack of respect for parents, ascetics and brahmins, and lack of respect according to social standing

→ the decline of beauty and longevity.

#### 4.9 THE LINK BETWEEN THE MIDDLE TEACHING AND THE MIDDLE WAY

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(Trans.: in the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*, this section is at the beginning of chapter 12, introducing the Middle Way.)

The Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*) is the objective truth revealed by the Buddha – the truth that all things naturally accord with causes and conditions and that they are not subject to the extreme or biased views fabricated by people to match their erroneous perceptions and their desires for the world to be a certain way. The Middle Teaching refers to Dependent Origination: the process of the interdependent arising of things. As outlined earlier, there are two formats or courses of Dependent Origination in reference to the suffering of human beings. The first format illustrates the arising of suffering. The second format illustrates the cessation of suffering.

The Middle Teaching describes these two processes:<sup>84</sup>

1. Origination (*samudaya*): the origination cycle of dependent origination: *avijjā* → *saṅkhāra* → *viññāṇa* → ... *jāti* → *jarāmarāṇa* → *soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā* = the origin of suffering.
2. Cessation (*nirodha*): the cessation cycle of dependent origination: ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases → ... birth ceases → aging and death cease → sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease = the cessation of suffering.

Suffering is of primary concern to human beings. The origination cycle is presented to identify the source of suffering, and the first step is to outline the factors acting as a foundation for suffering.

As for the cessation cycle, the term *nirodha* in the Middle Teaching has a broad range of meaning. Besides referring to the process leading to the

<sup>84</sup>The expression ‘Middle Teaching’ comes from the Pali: *majjhena dhammaṃ deseti*. This expression is found frequently in the Nidāna Vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya (S. II. 17-77).

cessation of suffering, it also refers to Nibbāna – freedom from suffering. The Middle Teaching incorporates both the cessation cycle and Nibbāna. {514}

By describing the teachings on suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation cycle, and the freedom from suffering, one may conclude that the entire essence of Buddha-Dhamma has been captured, but this is not the case. The reason for this is that the Middle Teaching purely describes naturally occurring phenomena; it does not include the means of spiritual practice applied by human beings.

The cessation cycle as found in the Middle Teaching is depicted as a pure (i.e. ‘theoretical’ or ‘mechanical’) process of nature. It describes the necessary interrelated causes and conditions that lead to the end of suffering, but it does not explain the details of practical application: it does not specify what needs to be done in practical terms to reach this end.

People may study the Middle Teaching and gain a gradual understanding of the cessation cycle and the principle of ending suffering, but they still require practical advice to achieve results conforming to this principle. Our responsibility in regard to nature is to gain knowledge (initially an intellectual grasp of natural truths) and then to apply this knowledge to spiritual practice. This is the link between objective, natural processes and Dhamma practice.

The Pali term for Dhamma practice, including methods of practice, is *paṭipadā*. This term specifically refers to rules of practice, methods of practice, or ways of conducting one’s life in order to reach the end of suffering. The Buddha set down this practice in conformity with the Middle Teaching on the cessation of suffering, and he called this practice the ‘middle way of practice’ (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*) or simply the ‘Middle Way’. It is a balanced practice corresponding with the laws of nature, and it gives results according to the natural cycle of cessation. It is impartial; it does not swing to either of the two extremes that cause entanglement or deviation from the correct path.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup>Trans.: as mentioned earlier, there are many ways to describe dualistic or ‘extreme’ views and practices. One of the most well-known pairs of extremes is

The Middle Way can be simply referred to as the ‘Path’. The Path is comprised of eight factors and because it leads to awakening (i.e. the state of a ‘noble person’) it is called the ‘Noble Eightfold Path’ (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*).<sup>86</sup> The Buddha said that this is an ancient Path, which has been traversed by the Perfectly Enlightened Ones of the past. The Buddha rediscovered this path and revealed it to others, showing the way to those who are ready to be trained.<sup>87</sup> {515}

This path of practice produces results in accord with the cessation cycle; it enables causes and conditions to proceed in an interconnected way until the natural process reaches its end. The achievement of the Path marks the transition from the theoretical cycle of cessation, or from a preliminary knowledge of truth, to practical application.

The transition from the theoretical cycle of cessation to practical application can be illustrated in this way:

Cessation (*nirodha*): cessation of ignorance → cessation of volitional formations → cessation of consciousness ... → cessation of birth → cessation of aging-and-death, sorrow ... despair = cessation of suffering.

Path (*magga*): right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) + right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) + right speech (*sammā-vācā*) + right action (*sammā-kammanta*) + right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) + right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) + right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) + right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) → cessation of suffering.

Here are some significant points concerning the connection between the cessation cycle and the practice of the Path:

The cessation cycle is a process occurring in nature; the Path is a way of practice for human beings to achieve results in accord with this natural process. The Path arises from applying knowledge of the cessation

found in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: the extreme of sensual indulgence (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*).

<sup>86</sup> Alternatively: *ārya-aṭṭhāṅgika-magga*.

<sup>87</sup> S. II. 105-106.

cycle. This knowledge is developed into a method of practice and one who follows this practice must have at least a rudimentary understanding of the cessation cycle. For this reason, the Path begins with ‘right view’.

The cessation cycle deals directly with the relationship between causes and conditions; it is described as the cessation of causes and conditions that give rise to suffering. Cessation in this context is decisive and complete: it is an end to and a freedom from all problems. The Path of practice, on the other hand, is flexible. The details of practice can be described in terms of different degrees of difficulty, and the eight factors of the Path can be expanded upon into various levels of complexity. The path to liberation is gradual, and the reduction or elimination of problems is commensurate with the extent or degree of a person’s practice.

The cessation cycle focuses explicitly on causes and conditions – it is impersonal – and it points to the utter elimination of such causes and conditions. It includes little mention of good and bad or good and evil. The Path is gradual; it constitutes an increase in the power of goodness to combat and vanquish negative, obstructive forces. It emphasizes the abandonment of the bad and the cultivation of the good at many levels. {516}

The cessation cycle is theoretical; the Path is practical and methodical.

To use an analogy, the cessation cycle is like the set of principles involved in extinguishing a fire: fuel must be removed, the oxygen supply cut off, and the temperature reduced. The Path is similar to the methods used to achieve results based on these principles: what is needed to remove the fuel, cut off oxygen, and reduce temperature. This requires much effort, both in acquiring the necessary equipment and planning tactics: should water or an alternative fire retardant be used? What tools are needed? How should one respond in the case of ordinary fires, electrical fires, oil fires, and gas fires? How does one access the fire and protect oneself? And how does one train people to act as firefighters?

Similarly, the cessation cycle is like the set of principles involved in treating disease, which refers directly to the removal of pathological elements: the elimination of germs, the removal of toxins and foreign substances, the repair of faulty or weakened tissues and organs, the supply of

deficient nutrients, and the improvement of one's mental condition. The Path is like the treatment of disease, which may only involve a brief review of medical principles and yet comprise elaborate and complex procedures, including: examination, diagnosis, medication, surgery, nursing, physiotherapy, the manufacture and use of medical equipment, the creation of clinics and hospitals, health administration, and the training of medical staff.

The eight fundamental factors of the Path can be expanded on and rearranged into many formats, groups and stages, to correspond with various objectives, persons, circumstances, conditions, and levels of readiness, all of which requires detailed study. The Middle Way is therefore explained in a separate section of *Buddhadhamma*.<sup>88</sup> This explanation can be divided into two parts: first is a description of the eight factors, which is a basic, preliminary structure; and second is an expansion and rearrangement of these factors into new outlines, according to specific circumstances.

At this point let us look again at the transition from the theoretical description of phenomena to the way of practice, a transition that can be explained by different formats.

The Buddha described two modes of practice:

1. Wrong practice (*micchā-paṭipadā*): the incorrect path: the path giving rise to suffering.
2. Right practice (*sammā-paṭipadā*): the correct path: the path leading to the end of suffering. {517}

On one occasion he equated the origination cycle of Dependent Origination with wrong practice and the cessation cycle with right practice.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup>Trans.: a description of the Middle Way comprises the second section of *Buddhadhamma*.

<sup>89</sup>S. II, 4-5.

1. Wrong practice: *avijjā* → *saṅkhāra* → *viññāṇa* → ... *jāti* → *jarāmarāṇa* → *soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā* = the origin of suffering.
2. Right practice: ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases → ... birth ceases → aging and death cease → sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease = the cessation of suffering.

On another occasion he described the factors that are contrary to the Path as wrong practice and the factors of the Path as right practice:<sup>90</sup>

1. Wrong practice: wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) + wrong intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*) + wrong speech (*micchā-vācā*) + wrong action (*micchā-kammanta*) + wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) + wrong effort (*micchā-vāyāma*) + wrong mindfulness (*micchā-sati*) + wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*).
2. Right practice: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) + right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) + right speech (*sammā-vācā*) + right action (*sammā-kammanta*) + right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) + right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) + right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) + right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Dependent Origination describes a natural, causal process of phenomena; it is not an outline of practice. Nevertheless, in the first pair of right and wrong practice above, practice is defined by way of Dependent Origination. An answer to whether or not this is a contradiction is that here Dependent Origination emphasizes practice.<sup>91</sup>

The commentary to this sutta poses the question that if ignorance can act as a condition for wholesome, meritorious intentions (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*) and as a catalyst for highly concentrated states of mind (*āneñjābhisāṅkhāra*), then why should it be classified as wrong practice?

<sup>90</sup>S. V. 18-19.

<sup>91</sup>This example appears only once in the Pali Canon.



The commentary goes on to reply to its own question that someone who desires existence aims for acquiring and becoming; whatever they do, even developing the five higher psychic attainments (*abhiññā*) or the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*), is ‘wrong practice’. On the contrary, one who aspires for Nibbāna with thoughts of relinquishment (with a clear mind) does not aim for becoming; even if he or she offers a small gift, this action is ‘right practice’.<sup>92</sup>

In any case, the reason for placing these two preceding pairs of definitions for right and wrong practice together is simply to help explain the transition from the cessation cycle to the path of practice. We can observe here, however, that besides describing a positive cycle and a correct form of practice, the Buddha also described a negative cycle and an incorrect form of practice.

#### 4.10 BREAKING THE CYCLE

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The Buddha described another format for the cessation cycle of Dependent Origination. The initial part of this format begins with the standard origination cycle, from ignorance to the arising of suffering. From there, instead of describing the cessation cycle, it describes a connected process of wholesome qualities leading up to and ending with awakening. This is a completely new format which does not refer to the cessation of any of the factors in the origination cycle. {518}

This outline is an important example of applying the factors of the Path in a system of Dhamma practice; in other words it is a process that occurs for a person who successfully follows the Path and reaches perfect realization. The Buddha described this format for liberation on many occasions, with slight variations in detail:

*Avijjā* → *saṅkhāra* → *viññāṇa* → *nāma-rūpa* → *saḷāyatana* → *phassa*  
 → *vedanā* → *taṇhā* → *upādāna* → *bhava* → *jāti* → suffering (*dukkha*)  
 → faith (*saddhā*) → joy (*pāmojja*) → delight (*pīti*) → tranquillity  
 (*passaddhi*; ‘relaxation’) → happiness (*sukha*) → concentration

<sup>92</sup>See: SA. II. 18.

(*samādhī*) → knowledge and vision according to reality  
 (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*) → disenchantment (*nibbidā*) →  
 dispassion (*virāga*) → liberation (*vimutti*) → knowledge of the  
 destruction of mental defilement (*khaya-ñāṇa*).<sup>93</sup>

S. II. 31.

This process begins with ignorance until it reaches suffering (the word *dukkha* here replaces the terms *jarāmaraṇa* and *soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā*). But from this point, instead of linking with ignorance and resuming the cycle of origination, it proceeds in a wholesome, positive direction, with faith taking over from ignorance. It finally reaches knowledge of the destruction of the taints and does not link up with ignorance again. If one counts suffering as the pivotal factor, the number of factors both preceding and following suffering is identical.

This new outline can be divided into two parts: first, from ignorance to suffering, and second, from faith to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. In the second part, faith replaces ignorance as the initial factor. Referring back to an earlier section in this book, one can recognize that faith here is equivalent to a ‘disciplined’ or weakened form of ignorance. At this stage ignorance is no longer totally ‘blind’, but is imbued with a grain of understanding, which buds as an aspiration to reach a virtuous goal and blossoms into true knowledge and complete liberation.

In this instance, when the cycle has proceeded from ignorance and reached suffering, one seeks an escape. If one receives correct instruction or considers carefully the law of cause and effect, and one has gained confidence in goodness (the arising of faith – *saddhā*), then there will arise joy, contentment, and a determination to gradually advance in virtue until the end is reached.

The second part of the new outline is in fact the same as the standard cessation cycle of Dependent Origination (ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases, etc.). This new outline merely describes the prominent factors of the cycle in greater detail, and emphasizes the connection between the origination cycle and the cessation cycle.

<sup>93</sup> *Virāga* can also be translated as ‘detachment’. *Khaya-ñāṇa* = the attainment of arahantship.

In the Nettipakaraṇa<sup>94</sup> the following teaching by the Buddha is interpreted as a transcendent form of Dependent Origination (i.e. the mode of cessation): {519}

Virtuous conduct, Ānanda, has the benefit<sup>95</sup> and reward of non-remorse....<sup>96</sup> Non-remorse has the benefit and reward of joy.... Joy has the benefit and reward of delight.... Delight has the benefit and reward of tranquillity.... Tranquillity has the benefit and reward of happiness.... Happiness has the benefit and reward of concentration.... Concentration has the benefit and reward of knowledge and vision of things as they really are.... Knowledge and vision of things as they really are has the benefit and reward of disenchantment.... Disenchantment has the benefit and reward of dispassion.... Dispassion has the benefit and reward of the knowledge and vision of liberation.... In this way, Ānanda, virtuous conduct brings the succeeding qualities to perfection, for reaching step by step the fruit of arahantship.<sup>97</sup>

A. V. 311.

This teaching can be illustrated easily as follows:

Virtuous conduct → non-remorse → joy → delight → tranquillity  
→ happiness → concentration → knowledge and vision of things  
as they really are → disenchantment → dispassion → knowledge  
and vision of liberation.

This process is almost identical to the outline above, except that it begins with moral conduct and non-remorse instead of faith, and it only describes the cessation cycle – it does not refer to the origin of suffering. It is fair to say, however, that the meanings of the two formats are essentially the same.

<sup>94</sup> Nett. 65; Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, *The Guide*, P.T.S., 1962, p. 97.

<sup>95</sup> *Attha*: ‘purpose’, ‘result’.

<sup>96</sup> Alternatively, of an ‘untroubled mind’.

<sup>97</sup> The same passage occurs at A. V. 1-2, except that disenchantment and dispassion are combined as a single factor. Cf.: A. III. 19-20.

The first format focuses on a situation where faith is the predominant factor. When a person has faith – faith in virtue and confidence in the law of cause and effect – this state of mind is connected to conduct. Faith is supported by virtuous conduct and thus leads to gladness. The second format focuses on conduct as the predominant factor. In this situation, the mind has a foundation of faith and confidence, which promotes virtuous conduct. Virtuous conduct leads to an untroubled mind – one has self-confidence in one's good actions. This self-confidence is an attribute of faith (*saddhā*), which also leads to gladness, the following factor. The final factors of the first format end with liberation and with knowledge of the destruction of the taints, while the second format ends with knowledge and vision of liberation. These two endings are identical in meaning; the second format combines liberation with knowledge of the destruction of the taints into a single factor.

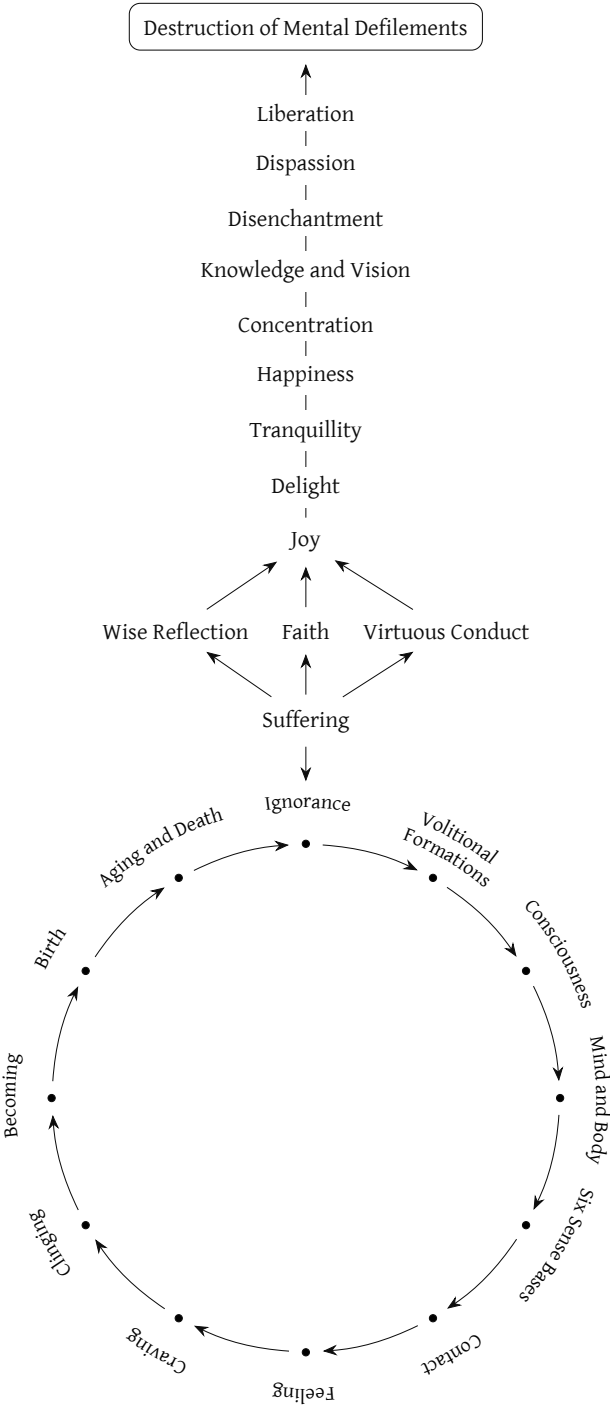
There is another outline similar to the one beginning with faith, but here faith is replaced by wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*):

Wise reflection → joy → delight → tranquillity → happiness →  
 concentration → knowledge and vision according to reality →  
 disenchantment → dispassion → liberation. {520}

*D. III. 288.*

This teaching does not introduce a radically different idea; the process simply begins with a person's ability to analyze and to apply wisdom to investigate cause and effect. Instead of beginning with faith, which is equivalent to entrusting one's wisdom to someone or something else, the process begins with proper attention, which leads to an understanding of things as they truly are and to a bright and joyous mind. The subsequent factors are the same as in the preceding formats.

Figure 4.5: Destruction of Mental Defilements



These processes of cessation shed light on the path of practice and on the tasks required by human beings. However, they still lack sufficient details for a comprehensive practice; the question remains as to what is required to bring about and fulfil these cycles of cessation.

At this point, in order to gain a new perspective let us look at another format of Dependent Origination:

#### **A. NUTRIMENT OF IGNORANCE**

Monks, and ignorance too, I declare, is a specific condition. And due to its nutriment, it manifests. I declare:

1. Ignorance has its nutriment: the five hindrances.
2. The five hindrances have their nutriment: the three ways of wrong conduct.
3. The three ways of wrong conduct have their nutriment: lack of sense restraint.
4. Lack of sense restraint has its nutriment: lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension.
5. Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension has its nutriment: improper attention.
6. Improper attention has its nutriment: lack of faith.
7. Lack of faith has its nutriment: not listening to the true teachings.
8. Not listening to the true teachings has its nutriment: not associating with superior people.

When non-association with superior people prevails, not listening to the true teachings will prevail. When not listening to the true teachings prevails, it will make a lack of faith prevail.... When the five hindrances prevail, they will make ignorance prevail. In this way, ignorance has its nutriment and becomes complete.

**B. NUTRIMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION**

1. Supreme knowledge and liberation have their nutriment: the seven factors of enlightenment.
2. The seven factors of enlightenment have their nutriment: the four foundations of mindfulness.
3. The four foundations of mindfulness have their nutriment: the three ways of good conduct.
4. The three ways of good conduct have their nutriment: restraint of the senses.<sup>98</sup> {521}
5. Restraint of the senses has its nutriment: mindfulness and clear comprehension.
6. Mindfulness and clear comprehension has its nutriment: wise reflection.
7. Wise reflection has its nutriment: faith.
8. Faith has its nutriment: listening to the true Dhamma.
9. Listening to the true Dhamma has its nutriment: association with superior people.

When association with superior people prevails, it will make listening to the true Dhamma prevail. When listening to the true Dhamma prevails, it will make faith prevail.... When the seven factors of enlightenment prevail, they will make supreme knowledge and liberation prevail. In this way, supreme knowledge and liberation have their nutriment and become complete.

A. V. 114-15.

In this teaching two factors play a pivotal role: wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is the principle of Buddhist application of thought

<sup>98</sup>Restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṁvara*) does not mean sense deprivation – for example shutting one's eyes to the world. At early stages of practice, it implies a degree of caution and skill when receiving sense impressions, not allowing the mind to be overwhelmed by evil unwholesome states. At higher levels of realization, one can develop the sense bases and gain mastery over sense impressions; one has the ability to control one's responses according to one's wishes. See the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*: M. III. 298-302.

and is a key internal attribute; and association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṁseva* = having a ‘beautiful friend’ – *kalyāṇamitta*),<sup>99</sup> which reveals the importance of social factors and is a key external factor. Faith acts as the link between these two factors.<sup>100</sup>

The various outlines of the cessation cycle mentioned above along with particular forms of practice can be summarized as follows:

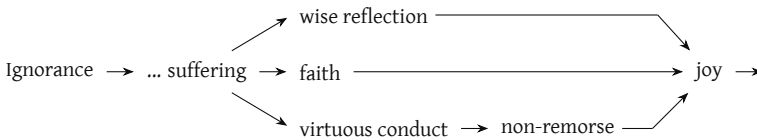
1. The cessation cycle and the path of practice:

Cessation cycle of Dependent Origination: ignorance ceases  
→ volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases → ...  
birth ceases → aging and death cease → sorrow,  
lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease = the cessation of  
suffering.

The Middle Way: right view + right intention + right speech +  
right action + right livelihood + right effort + right  
mindfulness + right concentration → cessation of suffering.

2. The cessation cycle explained as a process of wholesome qualities leading to liberation, in which suffering is the starting point. This cycle proceeds in an opposite direction to the origination cycle of suffering, as illustrated on Figure 4.6.<sup>101</sup> {522}

Figure 4.6: From Ignorance to Liberation and the Destruction of Defilements



delight → tranquillity → happiness → concentration → knowledge and vision according to reality → disenchantment → dispassion → liberation → knowledge of the destruction of mental defilement.

<sup>99</sup>Trans.: or ‘spiritual friend’. This term refers to moral or spiritual beauty.

<sup>100</sup>Trans.: these subjects are discussed in chapters 13-15.

<sup>101</sup>‘Liberation’ and ‘knowledge of the destruction of mental defilement’ are equivalent to ‘knowledge and vision of liberation’.



3. A gradual way of practice comprised of (subsidiary) factors of the Path. This way of practice is not an automatic causal process, but each step of this process acts as a support for the subsequent stages of practice. Here is an example of this outline:

Mutually sustaining qualities: association with superior people → listening to the true Dhamma → faith → wise reflection → mindfulness and clear comprehension → sense restraint → good conduct → foundations of mindfulness → factors of enlightenment → supreme knowledge and liberation.

The placement of Path factors into a way of practice (as shown above) can result in many different detailed stages of practice, corresponding to the specific objective and emphasis of the compiler. The stages of practice, however, generally conform to the framework and sequence of the threefold training (moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom),<sup>102</sup> which is a key principle in the application of the Path factors in Dhamma practice. Following is a brief summary of three further examples of this last outline of practice which are mentioned frequently in the scriptures.

### **1. The Fulfilment of the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*)**

*(This way of practice is found frequently in the scriptures. It is referred to as the fulfilment of the holy life (M. I. 521-2); and it is equivalent to the threefold training (D. I. 206-209). According to this format, sense restraint is grouped under 'concentration', but in later texts, e.g. Vism. 15-16 and Comp.: Kammaṭṭhāna-paricchedo, Vipassanākammaṭṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo, it is grouped under moral conduct and is called the 'virtuous conduct of sense restraint' (indriyasaṃvara-sīla), where it is the second factor of the four 'modes of pure conduct' (pārisuddhi-sīla). On many occasions contentment is not mentioned. See also: D. I. 62-85; M. I. 178-84, 265-71, 344-9, 412; M. II. 38, 162-4, 226-7; A. II. 207-208; A. V. 203; Dhṭk. 27.)*

<sup>102</sup>Wisdom (*paññā*) = right view and right intention; moral conduct (*sīla*) = right speech, right action, and right livelihood; concentration (*samādhi*) = right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

**Moral conduct:**

Encountering the Buddha (= association with superior persons) → listening to the Dhamma → faith → ('going forth' as a monk) → noble moral conduct (the happiness of leading a faultless life – *anavajja-sukha*) +

**Concentration:**

Restraint of the senses (untarnished happiness – *avyāseka-sukha*) + mindfulness and clear comprehension + contentment (*santosa*) → (developing concentration in secluded places) → eliminating the hindrances (= joy – *pāmojja*) → four *jhānas* (= the bliss of *jhāna* – *jhāna-sukha*) →

**Wisdom:**

Three kinds of supreme knowledge – *vijjā* (or the six kinds of direct knowledge – *abhiññā*; or the eight kinds of supreme knowledge) → liberation → knowledge of the destruction of the taints.

**2. Seven Kinds of Purity**

(M. I. 149-50; also, the entire text of the *Visuddhimagga*. At D. III. 289, two more kinds of purity are added at the end: *paññā-visuddhi* and *vimutti-visuddhi*. The commentaries explain that these two refer to *arahattaphala-paññā* and *arahattaphala-vimutti*, respectively (DA. III. 1062).)

**Moral Conduct:**

1. Purity of moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*) = pure conduct in accord with a person's personal circumstances →

**Concentration:**

2. Purity of mind (*citta-visuddhi*) = 'access concentration' and higher forms of concentration →

**Wisdom:**

3. Purity of views (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*) = knowledge of mind-and-body →

4. Purity of knowledge leading to the end of doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) = an understanding of Dependent Origination →
5. Purity of knowledge regarding Path and not-path (*maggāmaggañāṇadassana-visuddhi*) = encountering and going beyond the 'defilements of in-sight' (*vipassanūpakilesa*) →
6. Purity of knowledge of the way of practice (*paṭipadāñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) = 'insight knowledge' (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) →
7. Purity of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) = Path knowledge (*maggā-ñāṇa*). {523}

### 3. Fifteen Modes of Conduct and the Three Kinds of Knowledge

Fifteen Modes of Conduct (= moral conduct and concentration):<sup>103</sup>

'Practice of a trainee' – *sekha-paṭipadā*: (1) perfect moral conduct (*sīla-sampadā*) + (2) sense restraint + (3) moderation in eating (*bhojane-mattaññutā*) + (4) practice of wakefulness (*jāgariyānuyoga*) +

Seven essential qualities (*saddhamma*): (5) faith; (6) moral shame – *hiri*; (7) fear of wrongdoing – *ottappa*; (8) great learning – *bāhusacca*; (9) energy – *virīya*; (10) mindfulness – *sati*; and (11) wisdom; + (12-15) four *jhānas* →

Three Kinds of Supreme Knowledge (= wisdom). The three *vijjā*: reminiscence of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*); knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*); knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*).

Occasionally the Buddha emphasized the development of wisdom, for example:

Gradual training (*anupubba-sikkhā*) or gradual practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*).<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup>D. I. 100; M. I. 354; Nd. II. 47.

<sup>104</sup>M. I. 480; M. II. 174. The Pali terms for these factors are: *saddhā*, *upasaṅkamana*, *payirupāsana*, *sotāvadhāna*, *dhmma-savana*, *dhmma-dhāraṇā*, *atthupaparikkhā*,

Faith (in a teacher) → one seeks out (the teacher) → one approaches (the teacher) → one is eager to listen (to the teacher) → one listens to the Dhamma → one memorizes the Dhamma → one examines the meaning of the teachings → one gains a reflective understanding of the teachings → enthusiasm → perseverance → one examines the truth and gains a clear understanding → resolute effort → one penetrates the truth with wisdom.

A well-known teaching that applies to daily life is the teaching on the ten ‘righteous ways of conduct’ (*dhamma-cariyā*),<sup>105</sup> which are also known as the ten ‘wholesome ways of action’ (*kusala-kammaṭṭhā*).<sup>106</sup> In the Pali Canon these qualities are sometimes referred to as ‘noble qualities’ (*ariya-dhamma*).<sup>107</sup> The commentaries refer to them as ‘human qualities’ (*manussa-dhamma*).<sup>108</sup> This teaching is an example of applying the factors of the Path to Dhamma practice:

#### 4. Righteous Ways of Conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*)

##### Moral Conduct:

Right Action: abstaining from injury to living creatures – *pāṇātipātā* (= mutual kindness and support) + abstaining from taking what is not freely given – *adinnādāna* (= respect for personal property) + abstaining from improper sexual relations – *kāmesumicchācāra* (= not violating cherished persons) +

Right Speech: abstaining from lying – *musāvāda* (= truthful speech) + abstaining from malicious speech – *pisuṇā vācā* (= harmonious speech) + abstaining from harsh speech – *pharusa vācā* (= polite

*dhamma-nijjhānakkhanti, chanda, ussāha, tulanā, padhāna, aññārādhanā* (or *saccānubodhi*).

<sup>105</sup> M. I. 287-8.

<sup>106</sup> E.g.: A. V. 266; alternatively, ‘wholesome actions leading to a happy destination’.

<sup>107</sup> A. V. 274; alternatively, ‘qualities leading to nobility’.

<sup>108</sup> Alternatively, ‘humanizing qualities’. E.g.: MA. II. 21; SA. III. 101; AA. I. 58; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Iddhividhaniddesaṇṇanā, Dasa-iddhikathāvaṇṇanā.

speech) + abstaining from frivolous speech – *samphappalāpa* (= reasoned, constructive speech) +

### **Wisdom:**

Right Intention: non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*) + non-aggression – *abyāpāda* (= lovingkindness) + Right View → happiness (*sugati*) → liberation (*vimutti*). {524}

Some people may object that this process does not contain any factors related to concentration. Although the development of concentration is generally not emphasized in the context of people's everyday lives, the factors related to concentration are included in this process. Right effort and right mindfulness are necessary factors when developing all the other factors of the Path.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, one definition for *samādhi* is the absence of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), which corresponds to the eighth and ninth factors of the righteous ways of conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*): non-covetousness and non-aggression. (*Abhijjhā* – covetousness, or *kāma-chanda* – sensual desire, is the first hindrance, and *byāpāda* – ill-will – is the second). The Buddha classified non-covetousness and non-aggression as forms of mental excellence (*citta-sampadā*).<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, from the perspective of internal spiritual growth, the entire process of 'righteous conduct' is a preparation for the development and fulfilment of concentration.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup>M. III. 71-78. [Trans.: the Eightfold Path may be divided into three parts, corresponding to the threefold training: factors 3, 4 and 5 comprise the training in higher morality, factors 6, 7 and 8 (including right effort and right mindfulness) comprise the training in higher mentality (as a group they are sometimes referred to simply as *samādhi*), and factors 1 and 2 comprise the training in higher wisdom.]

<sup>110</sup>A. I. 269. On the classification of the wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṭṭhāna*), or the righteous ways of conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*), into the threefold training and the Eightfold Path, see the appendix in chapter 17 on virtuous conduct.

<sup>111</sup>The teaching on 'righteous conduct' emphasizes morality. An important Buddhist principle is that well-developed moral conduct is conducive to concentration. One attribute of coarse language is that it is an obstacle to concentration (*asamādhi-samvattanikā*), and an objective of polite speech is to act as a support for concentration. See: M. I. 286-7; M. III. 48; A. V. 265, 292-3; Dhs. 230; Vbh. 360.

#### 4.11 APPENDIX 1: INTERPRETATIONS OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

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Earlier, I referred to the passages in the Vibhaṅga (the second volume of the Abhidhamma) and the Sammohavinodanī (the commentary to the Vibhaṅga) describing the entire sequence of Dependent Origination occurring in a single mind moment.<sup>112</sup> The main commentarial interpretation of Dependent Origination, however, explains the teaching exclusively in the context of several lifetimes. When the teaching of Dependent Origination is interpreted in the context of everyday experience, those people who hold to the mainstream interpretation may feel uneasy and object that this former interpretation is unorthodox and baseless.

Scriptural evidence does exist, however, for the interpretation of Dependent Origination in the context of everyday life. Although the interpretation of Dependent Origination as occurring subtly and rapidly in the present moment differs from the orthodox interpretation, the evidence is clear and compelling that this former interpretation is valid. Granted, the remaining traces of evidence are scanty and obscure. This alternative interpretation was likely overlooked or forgotten. The reason it survives is because there is substantiating proof in the Tipiṭaka itself.

The interpretation of Dependent Origination in the context of several lifetimes originates in the Visuddhimagga, composed by Ven. Buddhaghosa in the 5th century AD. The Sammohavinodanī, however, composed by the same author, provides an alternative interpretation. {212}

The Sammohavinodanī divides the analysis of Dependent Origination into two sections. Whereas the first section explains the teaching in the same way as the Visuddhimagga, in the context of several lifetimes, the second section explains it as occurring in a single mind moment.

It is recorded that Ven. Buddhaghosa wrote the Sammohavinodanī after he wrote the Visuddhimagga. The difference between the two texts is that Buddhaghosa was free to use a wide range of sources to compose

<sup>112</sup>Vbh.: Abhidhamma-bhājanīya: pp. 138-192; Sammohavinodanī: VbhA.: 199-213.

the *Visuddhimagga*, while the *Sammohavinodanī* is a commentary exclusively on the *Vibhaṅga* of the *Abhidhamma*.

In the introduction to the *Sammohavinodanī*, Ven. Buddhaghosa claims in reference to this text: *I have compiled and clarified the meaning of an ancient commentary.*<sup>113</sup> In the section of the *Visuddhimagga* dealing with Dependent Origination, he writes:

It is inherently difficult to explain Dependent Origination ... Whilst now I wish to describe the structure of conditions, I find no footing and seem to founder in a sea. However, the teaching on Dependent Origination is graced by many modes of exposition, and the ancient teachers' way of teaching is handed down unbrokenly. Relying on these two supports, I now begin to elucidate its meaning.

*Vism.* 522-3; identical to *VbhA.* 91.

In contrast to the *Sammohavinodanī*, the *Visuddhimagga* contains only the several lifetime explanation and is almost identical to the first section of the *Sammohavinodanī*, with only a few added details.<sup>114</sup>

One may ask why there is no equivalent second section in the *Visuddhimagga*. A probable answer is that by the time of Ven. Buddhaghosa the several lifetime explanation had become the prevailing orthodoxy.

And he may have felt more comfortable with this explanation because, although he considered the whole subject difficult, this explanation was supported by an unbroken lineage of teachers. The transmission of the single mind moment explanation had probably been broken, as suggested by the extreme brevity of this section in the *Sammohavinodanī*. Ven. Buddhaghosa may have felt obliged to include this second section, however brief, in the *Sammohavinodanī* in order to be true to the evidence in the Pali Canon and the traces in the older commentaries.

<sup>113</sup>VbhA. 1. [Trans.: the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* used by Ven. Buddhaghosa to write the *Sammohavinodanī* has been lost.]

<sup>114</sup>The explanation in the *Visuddhimagga* contains 69 pages (*Vism.* 517-86); the explanation in the *Sammohavinodanī* contains 70 pages (*VbhA.* 129-99).

The Sammohavinodanī is a commentary on the Vibhaṅga, the second volume of the Abhidhamma. The section in the Vibhaṅga explaining Dependent Origination is called the Paccayākāra-vibhaṅga and is divided into two parts: the Suttanta-bhājanīya (an analysis conforming to the suttas) and the Abhidhamma-bhājanīya (an analysis conforming to the Abhidhamma).<sup>115</sup> {213}

The Sammohavinodanī is similarly divided into two parts and it explains the difference between the two as follows:

The Teacher describes conditionality ... in the sutta chapter as occurring in different mind moments. Conditionality does not exclusively occur in different mind moments, but also occurs in a single mind moment. The intent here is to describe the ways in which conditionality occurs in a single mind moment according to the Abhidhamma chapter.

*VbhA. 199.*

In the sutta chapter, conditionality is determined as occurring in many mind moments; in the Abhidhamma chapter, conditionality is described in the context of a single mind moment.

*VbhA. 200.*

Here is an example from the Sammohavinodanī of Dependent Origination functioning in everyday life (i.e. in a single mind moment):

Birth [aging, and death] here refers to the birth [aging, and death] of immaterial things, not to a broken tooth, greying hair, wrinkled skin, dying, or passing [from this state of existence].

*VbhA. 208.*

It is noteworthy that the sutta chapter of the Vibhaṅga dealing with conditionality in the context of several mind moments (i.e. emphasizing several lifetimes) covers only four pages; in contrast, the Abhidhamma

<sup>115</sup>Note that in the Burmese texts the section on Dependent Origination is called the Paṭiccasamuppāda Vibhaṅga.



chapter concerning conditionality in the context of a single mind moment covers fifty-four pages.<sup>116</sup> In the *Sammohavinodanī*, however, these proportions are reversed: the sutta chapter runs to seventy pages, while the *Abhidhamma* chapter covers fourteen pages.<sup>117</sup> The reason this latter division in the *Sammohavinodanī* is so brief may be because Ven. Buddhaghosa did not have much to say about this subject, or it may be because he felt the subject had already been covered in great detail and therefore it did not need to be expanded upon.

In sum, the basis for the interpretation of Dependent Origination in the context of everyday life is found in the Pali Canon and traces of it remain in the commentaries. It has merely faded in prominence, been forgotten, or been overlooked. {214}

#### 4.12 APPENDIX 2: LAWS OF NATURE (DHAMMA-NIYĀMATĀ)

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The Buddha presented two key classifications which he referred to as *dhamma-niyāmatā*, which may be translated as ‘certainty of nature’, ‘natural order’, or ‘law of nature’. This term refers to naturally existing principles of truth or to independently existing truths of nature (whether a Buddha appears or not, these truths exist according to their own inherent properties).

These two classifications of *dhamma-niyāmatā* are as follows:

1. *Idappaccayatā*: ‘specific conditionality’; the law of Dependent Origination comprising twelve factors.<sup>118</sup>
2. *Aniccatā*, *dukkhatā* and *anattatā*: the laws of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself. Beginning with the commentaries, these three factors are referred to as the ‘Three Characteristics’ (*tilakkhaṇa*).<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup>Vbh.: *Suttanta-bhājanīya*: pp. 134-8; *Abhidhamma-bhājanīya*: pp. 138-92.

<sup>117</sup>VbhA.: *Suttanta-bhājanīya*: pp. 129-99; *Abhidhamma-bhājanīya*: pp. 199-213.

<sup>118</sup>See: 16th volume of the *Tiṭṭaka*: *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Nidānavagga*.

<sup>119</sup>See: 20th volume of the *Tiṭṭaka*: *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *Tikanipāta*.

Technically, these dual principles are referred to by a pair of terms – *dhammaṭṭhitatā* and *dhammāniyāmatā*.<sup>120</sup>

Although these two classifications have been explained at length in chapter 3 and in this present chapter, at this point it is useful to provide a summary.

#### **A. THESE NATURAL LAWS COMPRISE FOUR FACTORS LINKED TO THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

The law of Dependent Origination (or ‘specific conditionality’) combined with the three laws of impermanence, dukkha, and nonself, comprise four factors, which in the Pali Canon are described as follows:

1. ‘Whether Tathāgatas appear or not, this truth exists as constant and stable, that is, specific conditionality.’

*(Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitāva sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā.)*

2. ‘Monks, whether Tathāgatas appear or not, this truth exists as constant and stable, that is, all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’

*(Uppādā vā bhikkhave tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitāva sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhamma-niyāmatā sabbe saṅkhārā aniccāti.)*  
{215}

3. ‘Monks, whether Tathāgatas appear or not, this truth exists as constant and stable, that is, all conditioned phenomena are unending.’

*(Uppādā vā bhikkhave tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitāva sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhamma-niyāmatā sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhāti.)*

4. ‘Monks, whether Tathāgatas appear or not, this truth exists as constant and stable, that is, all things are nonself.’

<sup>120</sup>raggedright In the Thai language, *dhammaṭṭhitatā* is shortened to *dhammaṭṭhiti* and *dhammāniyāmatā* is shortened to *dhamma-niyāma*; moreover, this pair of terms is generally referred to by the single term *dhamma-niyāma*.

(Uppādā vā bhikkhave tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ñhitāva  
sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhātī.)

In brief, the factors are:

1. *Idappaccayatā*: the law of specific conditionality (= *paṭiccasamuppāda* – Dependent Origination).
2. *Aniccatā*: the law of impermanence.
3. *Dukkhatā*: the law of unendurability.
4. *Anattatā*: the law of nonself.

The law of Dependent Origination reveals how the five aggregates exist as mutual, interrelated causes and conditions. This law deals with the existence of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*), which comprise all phenomena in the realm of conventional reality.

The laws of *aniccatā* and *dukkhatā* reveal how all conditioned phenomena (i.e. the five aggregates) are without exception impermanent and unenduring.

The law of *anattatā* reveals how all things – both conditioned things and the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), things both within the five aggregates and transcending the five aggregates (*khandha-vimutti*) – are nonself.

The law of Dependent Origination reveals how the interrelationship between the five aggregates creates a dynamic that gives rise to suffering, which is specifically referred to as the ‘cycle of origination’ (*paṭiccasamuppāda-samudayavāra*). This corresponds to the second noble truth: the noble truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya-ariyasacca*).

Specific conditionality by itself indicates the impermanence and unendurability of the five aggregates – of all conditioned phenomena. (*Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā.*)

Because the five aggregates are subject to ‘specific conditionality’, are marked by impermanence and unendurability, and in addition to this fall

under the sway of the law of nonself, they act as a basis and cause for suffering, or they are the gathering point for potential suffering to arise. This corresponds to the first noble truth: the Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha-ariyasacca*).

In the end analysis, conditioned formations (*saṅkhāra*) are natural phenomena (*sabhāva-dhamma*), which means that they have their own character or nature (*bhāva*). They do not constitute a stable, fixed, substantial identity, they do not belong to anyone, nor can they be governed or dictated by anyone in any real sense. As conditioned phenomena, they exist according to specific causes and conditions; their impermanence and unendurability is a result of this conditionality. No one can force them to be otherwise. They are thus included within the province of the law of nonself (*sabbe dhammā anattā*).

Apart from conditioned phenomena, there also exists the Unconditioned, which transcends specific conditionality and is not created by conditioning factors. It is permanent (*nicca*) and free from *dukkha*; it constitutes the cessation of *dukkha* (*dukkha-nirodha*). This corresponds to the third noble truth: the noble truth of the cessation of suffering (*nirodha-ariyasacca*), namely, Nibbāna.

The Unconditioned, likewise, is a natural phenomenon, which means that it too does not constitute a stable, fixed, substantial identity, it does not belong to anyone, nor can it be governed or dictated by anyone. It too is nonself (*anattā*). For this reason, the fourth law – of nonself – pertains to all things, both conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*) and the Unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*), both constructed things (*saṅkhata-dhammā*) and the Unconstructed (*asaṅkhata-dhamma*). {216}

The Unconditioned is not subject to the ‘cycle of origination’ (*samudaya-vāra*); instead, it is realized as the final goal of the ‘cycle of cessation’ (*nirodha-vāra*). It is reached by the stopping, ceasing, non-existence, and non-arising of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Although it passes beyond the realm of conditioned phenomena, and it is permanent and free from *dukkha*, it shares the characteristic of nonself with all other natural phenomena. It does not belong to anyone, it does

not manifest as some form of being, it does not constitute a ‘self’, nor is it subject to anyone’s will. It exists according to its own inherent nature.

The noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā-ariyasacca*), or the Path (*magga*) for short, comprises those means applied for ending and eliminating the cycle of origination or for reverting to the cycle of cessation. There are many details to this path of practice (referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path), which is fulfilled by completing the threefold training. Essentially, the entire Path involves abandoning the unwholesome and developing the wholesome, both of which exist within the sphere of the five aggregates. (One may describe this as ‘developing the wholesome aggregates (*kusala-khandha*), or even as ‘developing the aggregates’.) This factor of the Path is thus characterized by impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself.

In sum:

- The first law of nature (*idappaccayatā*) reveals the state of conditioned phenomena (this is the gist of the second noble truth).
- The second and third laws of nature (*aniccatā* and *dukkhatā*) reveal the shared attributes of conditioned phenomena (encompassing the first, second, and fourth noble truths).
- The fourth law (*anattatā*) reveals the shared attribute of all things – of all phenomena (encompassing all four noble truths).

## B. SUCHNESS (TATHATĀ)

Both when introducing specific conditionality and when introducing the Three Characteristics, the Buddha used the two terms *dharmmaṭṭhitatā* and *dharmmaniṣamatā*. Yet at the end of these passages, in the context of specific conditionality the term *idappaccayatā* is preceded by three additional terms (*tathatā*, *avithatā*, and *anaññathatā*), which are absent in the passages describing the three characteristics:

*Iti kho bhikkhave yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā  
ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo.*

‘Monks, suchness (tathatā; the state of existing ‘just so’), inerrancy (avitathatā; the state of not deviating from existing as such), and invariability (anaññathatā; the state of not being otherwise) is specific conditionality; indeed, all this cited here is Dependent Origination.’

These three additional terms are used for special emphasis or to draw special attention. But because they are concise and striking, they are alluded to frequently, to the extent of being well-known and finding public favour. The term *tathatā*, in particular, is mentioned frequently in Buddhist circles, and because this term is only found in connection with specific conditionality (Dependent Origination), people may believe that it only refers to this subject.

The following words of the Buddha provide a broad perspective on this matter:

Monks, these four things are actual (*tathā*), unerring (*avitathā*), not otherwise (*anaññathā*). What four? ‘This is suffering’.... ‘This is the origin of suffering’.... ‘This is the cessation of suffering’.... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’: this is actual, unerring, not otherwise....

Therefore, monks, you should make an exertion to understand: ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’ {217}

S. V. 430; Ps. II. 104.

Note that in this context the three aforementioned terms refer to the Four Noble Truths, and they are used to supplement the meaning of the word *sacca* (‘truth’). In the commentaries and sub-commentaries, the Four Noble Truths are sometimes referred to as *tatha-dhamma* (‘true phenomena’), in a similar way as they are sometimes referred to as *sacca-dhamma* (‘truths’). (The term *sacca-dhamma*, however, does not always refer to the Four Noble Truths.

There are other noteworthy passages in the Tipiṭaka in which the Four Noble Truths are referred to by these three aforementioned terms. The passage below follows on from the passage cited above:

How is suffering (*dukkha*) a truth (*sacca*) in the sense that it is ‘just so’ (*tathā*)? There are four definitions of suffering characterizing it as being just so (*tathā*), inerrant (*avitathā*), and invariable (*anaññathā*). There is the definition of suffering as oppression, there is the definition of suffering as compounded, there is the definition of suffering as a state of burning, and there is the definition of suffering as fluctuation....

How is the origin (*samudaya*; cause of suffering) a truth in the sense that it is ‘just so’? There are four definitions of the origin characterizing it as being just so, inerrant, and invariable. There is the definition of the origin as the merging of originating factors, there is the definition of the origin as cause (*nidāna*; ‘source’), there is the definition of origination as bound, and there is the definition of origination as obstructed....

How is cessation (*nirodha*) a truth in the sense that it is ‘just so’? There are four definitions of cessation characterizing it as being just so, inerrant, and invariable. There is the definition of cessation as freedom, there is the definition of cessation as tranquil, there is the definition of cessation as uncompounded, and there is the definition of cessation as deathless....

How is the Path (*magga*) a truth in the sense that it is ‘just so’? There are four definitions of the Path characterizing it as being just so, inerrant, and invariable. There is the definition of the Path as a factor for release, there is the definition of the Path as cause, there is the definition of the Path as discernment, and there is the definition of the Path as sovereignty.

Here are the concluding passages summarizing the Four Noble Truths:

By way of how many attributes are the four truths realized in unison? The four truths are realized in unison by way of four attributes: in the sense of being actual; in the sense of being nonself; in the sense of being true; in the sense of being penetrating.

The four truths are integrated as one by way of these four attributes, seeing that each one of these unified truths is constant, realized by an equivalent knowledge. For this reason these four truths are realized in unison.

Ps. 105.

The term *tathatā* refers to the state of being ‘such’ (*tatha*), just as *aniccatā* refers to the state of being impermanent (*anicca*), *dukkhatā* refers to the state of being subject to stress (*dukkha*), and *anattatā* refers to the state of being nonself (*anattā*). (Here, the suffix *-tā* means ‘state’.)

The fundamentals of the Pali language in the original texts makes it quite clear for distinguishing the meanings of various terms. Later on, however, some of these meanings have become mixed up, which may cause confusion.

The important feature to note here is that in the context of these various laws the suffix *-tā* is frequently applied. For example, when the Buddha spoke about the law of nature, he used the term *dharmā-niyāmatā*, which refers to the state (*-tā*), the properties, the qualities, or the existence of phenomena, which are part of a natural order.

The shorter term *dharmā-niyāma* began to be used in the commentaries, and it was used here in a broader sense. It is sometimes synonymous with *dharmā-niyāmatā* (as defined above), while at other times it refers to specific phenomena acting as conditions within the process of Dependent Origination.

Likewise, the term *dharmatthitatā* refers to the state, properties, or existence of phenomena that accord with causes and conditions. The



shorter term *dharmatthiti* may also convey this same meaning, but it usually refers to specific phenomena which act as conditions or are subject to causes and conditions. {218}

The terms *aniccatā*, *dukkhatā*, and *anattatā* refer to the state, property, or existence of phenomena marked by impermanence, stress, and nonself, as described earlier.

In this book *Buddhadhamma*, the term *dhamma-niyāma* is generally used as synonymous with *dhamma-niyāmatā*, referring to the properties and qualities of things, rather than to the things themselves.

Therefore, the terms *dhammaniyāmatā*, *idappaccayatā*, *tathatā*, *aniccatā*, *anattatā*, etc. are not interchangeable with such terms as the ‘five aggregates’, ‘Nibbāna’, ‘conditioned phenomena’, ‘compounded things’, and the ‘Unconditioned’.

### C. TERMS PERTAINING TO THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS (TILAKKHAṆA)

The Pali term *tilakkhaṇa* (‘three characteristics’) is familiar to many students of Buddhism. This is not an original term and it does not appear in the *Tipiṭaka*; rather, it became a popular term in the commentaries. In the *Tipiṭaka*, the Three Characteristics are referred to as the three laws of nature (*dhamma-niyāmatā*), and there is no collective term for these three factors. Although they are described in many different formats, they are mentioned separately. For example:

Monks, form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, volitional formations are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent.... Form is subject to stress, feeling is subject to stress, perception is subject to stress, volitional formations are subject to stress, consciousness is subject to stress.... Form is non-self, feeling is nonself, perception is nonself, volitional formations are nonself, consciousness is nonself.

S. III. 21.

Although there is a term in Pali that translates as ‘three characteristics’, namely, *tīṇi lakkhaṇāni*, it refers to distinct groups of characteristics.

The closest group to this context contains the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*): *uppāda-lakkhaṇa* (the characteristic of arising), *vaya-lakkhaṇa* (the characteristic of passing away), and *ṭhitaññathatta-lakkhaṇa* (the characteristic of abiding and becoming otherwise), but this group has its own collective term (i.e. *saṅkhata-lakkhaṇa*).<sup>121</sup>

The term *sāmañña-lakkhaṇa* ('universal characteristics') likewise is not an original term from the Tipiṭaka, but is used frequently in the commentaries. It is used for comparison, describing how all things are endowed with two kinds of attributes: unique attributes (*paccatta-lakkhaṇa*) and shared attributes (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*). For example: a unique attribute of physical form (*rūpa*) is that it is under strain, and a unique attribute of feeling (*vedanā*) is that it feels sense impressions, but both form and feeling share the attributes of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself.

The term *visesa-lakkhaṇa* ('unique characteristic', 'special characteristic') is occasionally used in place of *paccatta-lakkhaṇa*. In this case, the same distinction is made, between unique characteristics and universal characteristics.

There are other similar distinctions occurring in the scriptures. For example, ultimate truths (*paramattha-dhamma*) are endowed with two attributes: attributes of an individual nature (*sabhāva-lakkhaṇa*) and universal attributes (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*). Attributes of an individual nature are sometimes referred to simply as 'individual attributes' (*salakkhaṇa*).

'Direct knowledge' (*abhiññā*) is a unique kind of wisdom, the function of which is to understand the individual attributes of things (*sabhāva-lakkhaṇa*). It may also be translated as 'penetrative knowledge'. (It is equivalent to *abhijāna*. Note that this is not the same definition of *abhiññā* used to denote the five or six kinds of supreme knowledge.)

By understanding clearly with direct knowledge, one has reached an initial stage of 'thorough knowledge' (*pariññā*) called 'knowledge of recognition' (*ñāta-pariññā*). The understanding of universal attributes, on the

<sup>121</sup>Ps. II, 179.

other hand, is the function of wisdom called ‘investigative knowledge’ (*tīraṇa-pariññā*). {219}

Note also that the term *sāmañña-lakkhaṇa* (‘universal characteristic’) is not fixed to the principles of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself. For example, it is sometimes stated in the scriptures that all formations (*saṅkhāra*) possess the universal characteristic of existing according to causes and conditions.

These three terms – *aniccatā*, *dukkhatā*, and *anattatā* – in this particular grammatical structure do not appear anywhere in the Tipiṭaka as a group; instead, they are used separately, according to different circumstances.

Although the term *aniccatā* is found fairly frequently in the Tipiṭaka, it is most often used while explaining the breaking up of material things (*rūpa-dhamma*), including in the context of physical death (*maraṇa*). It is never used explicitly by the Buddha himself (it is used by Ven. Sāriputta and by other disciples, and in explanations within the Abhidhamma). The term *dukkhatā* was used by the Buddha, but only in the context of the three kinds of *dukkha* (*dukkha-dukkhatā*, *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*, and *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*). The term *anattatā* does not appear anywhere in the Tipiṭaka.

Because the commentators regularly mentioned and explained this collection of three factors, they came up with a convenient abbreviation to refer to them individually, by simply adding the term *ādi* (‘beginning with’) to *aniccatā*, e.g.: *aniccatādi-paṭisaṃyuttaṃ*, *aniccatādi-lakkhaṇattayaṃ*, *aniccatādi-vasena*, *aniccatādi-sāmaññalakkhaṇaṃ*, and *aniccatādinam*. Only in the sub-commentaries were these three terms combined into a distinct group, although, even here, this presentation is not common.

#### **D. TERMS PERTAINING TO SPECIFIC CONDITIONALITY (IDAPPACCAYATĀ)**

The principle of the first law of nature (of specific conditionality) is acknowledged to be profound and extremely difficult to understand. From an initial and incomprehensive examination, it appears that this principle was almost not mentioned at all in traditional Thai texts and literary works. Only in the last century was it included in formal Dhamma

educational systems, and at the beginning of this period the most popular term for this principle was *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

As far as I can discern, the reason why in scholarly circles this principle was specifically referred to as *paṭiccasamuppāda* stems from Somdet Phra Mahāsamaṇa Chao Krom Phraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa establishing the system of Dhamma studies known as *nak tham*. He wrote an explanation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the book titled *Dhammavibhāga Pariccheda Vol. II*, which is assigned to second level *nak tham* students in Dhamma studies (*pariyatti-dhamma*).

The term *paṭiccasamuppāda* appears frequently in the *Tipiṭaka*, the commentaries, and the sub-commentaries. It is thus apt that students of Buddhism are familiar with it. It is noteworthy, however, that *idappaccayatā*, which is a key term in this context (it usually accompanies and precedes the term *paṭiccasamuppāda*) seems to have gone unnoticed. This seems to indicate that those students engaged in this recent system of Dhamma studies did not extend their research beyond the course books assigned to them. Only within the past fifty years did this latter term become more prominent. As far as I can gather, the reason for this resurgence stems from Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's determined teachings on this principle, along with his frequent emphasis on the term *idappaccayatā*.

There were two occasions when the Buddha mentioned this term *idappaccayatā*. First, soon after his awakening, he stated that ordinary people would find it extremely difficult to understand the truth that he had realized, and therefore it would cause him hardship to try and teach it to them. The second time he mentioned this term was in his frequent exposition of this first law of nature. Apart from these occasions, the term only appears in the two forms of *idappaccayā* and *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppannesu*.

The term *paccayākāra* ('mode of conditionality'), which is another synonym for *paṭiccasamuppāda* and is included in the second level *nak tham* textbooks, was coined later. It does not appear in the main body of the *Suttanta Piṭaka*; it first appears in the *Apadāna*, which is a later addition to the collection of suttas. The term appears twice in the same section (in

a heading and in the text) describing the biography of Ven. Khemā Therī, the chief bhikkhuni disciple of the Buddha, who sat at his righthand side and was foremost in wisdom.<sup>122</sup>

Although the Vinaya Piṭaka contains a lengthy biography of the Buddha, beginning with the period after his awakening when he was experiencing the bliss of deliverance and contemplating the law of Dependent Origination, there is no mention in the entire Tipiṭaka of this term *paccayākāra*. {220}

The Abhidhamma contains a lengthy section – the Vibhaṅga (approx. 75 pages) – devoted entirely to the subject of Dependent Origination, but nowhere in this text does the word *paccayākāra* appear. Nor does the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* appear in this text; there are only references to phenomena being ‘conditionally arisen’ (*paṭiccasamuppanna*) or ‘specifically conditioned and conditionally arisen’ (*idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppanna*). The terms appear here only in headings, which later compilers of this text created, and these headings differ according to various editions. The Thai Siam Raṭṭha edition contains the heading *Paccayākāra Vibhaṅgo*, while the Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti edition contains the heading *Paṭiccasamuppāda Vibhaṅgo*.

In sum, the word most often used in the Tipiṭaka for this law of nature is *paṭiccasamuppāda*, occurring either on its own or in conjunction with *idappaccayatā*. Most of these references occur in the Suttanta Piṭaka. Only seldom is this word used in the Vinaya Piṭaka. In the Abhidhamma, it occurs explicitly only in the Kathāvatthu. Apart from this, the Dhammasaṅgaṇī contains the word *paṭiccasamuppāda-kusalatā*, and there is a single passage in the Dhātukathā (at the end of the tabulated summary – *mātikā*) with an interesting sequence of qualities: *pañcakkhandhā dvādasāyatanāni aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo cattāri saccāni bāvisatindriyāni paṭiccasamuppādo cattāro satipaṭṭhānā cattāro sammappadhānā cattāro iddhipādā*.<sup>123</sup>

Beginning with the commentaries, the terms *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *paccayākāra* were used frequently. The term *idappaccayatā* was also used, but less frequently.

<sup>122</sup> *Paccayākāra-kusalā*: Ap. 544-5; *paccayākāra-govidā*: Ap. 550.

<sup>123</sup> Dhk. 1.

Another interesting observation is that stemming from the combined terms *dharmatthitatā dhammaniyāmatā*, which together constitute a name for this law of nature, there was derived another important term – *dharmatthiti-ñāṇa*, which appears in the Buddha's words: *dharmatthitiñāṇaṃ pubbe pacchā nibbāne ñāṇaṃ* ('knowledge of constancy first, knowledge of Nibbāna afterwards', or 'endowed first with knowledge of constancy, knowledge of Nibbāna ensues').<sup>124</sup>

The Buddha spoke these words to Ven. Susima, who had previously been a religious wanderer (*paribbājaka*) and had asked to be ordained in the Buddhist Dhamma and Discipline. He maintained the misunderstanding that arahants must all be endowed with psychic powers, for instance the divine ear and the divine eye. The Buddha spoke this passage to free him from this misunderstanding and to explain to him that those arahants who are 'liberated by way of wisdom' (*paññā-vimutta*) realize full awakening by generating 'knowledge of constancy' (*dharmatthiti-ñāṇa*), followed by a knowledge of Nibbāna, without requiring any sort of psychic powers.

Knowledge of constancy (*dharmatthiti-ñāṇa*) is equivalent to an insight into laws of nature: the clear understanding that all phenomena (as part of the five aggregates) are impermanent, *dukkha*, and nonself, and that they are mutually conditioned, giving rise to results within the origination cycle of Dependent Origination. Eventually, one discerns the end of causes and conditions within the origination cycle and realizes the cessation cycle, culminating in a realization of Nibbāna.

Although according to the Buddha's words above, the knowledge of constancy (*dharmatthiti-ñāṇa*) encompasses both the insight into the Three Characteristics and into Dependent Origination culminating in the completion of the cessation cycle, concise explanations, for example in the description of the seventy-seven kinds of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) found in the very same volume, the Buddha mentions or emphasizes only Dependent Origination (the origination cycle).<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> S. II. 124-5.

<sup>125</sup> S. II. 60.

In later texts of the Tipitaka, the knowledge of constancy (*dhammaṭṭhiti-ñāṇa*) was more frequently mentioned, and its meaning or emphasis was associated specifically with Dependent Origination. The Paṭisambhidāmagga, for instance, defines it as wisdom that comprehends conditioning factors (*paccaya-pariggaha*; this knowledge was later referred to as *paccayapariggaha-ñāṇa*).<sup>126</sup> *Dhammaṭṭhiti-ñāṇa* (or *paccayapariggaha-ñāṇa* or *paccayakāra-ñāṇa*) is also frequently mentioned and explained in the commentaries and sub-commentaries. For example, in these texts it is equated with ‘purity of transcending doubts’ (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*). It is sometimes called ‘knowledge according to reality’ (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*), ‘right vision’ (*sammā-dassana*), or ‘insight knowledge’ (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). It is occasionally described as knowledge reaching the pinnacle of insight into specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). The knowledge of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-ñāṇa*) is equated with Path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*).<sup>127</sup>

#### E. ALL-ENCOMPASSING PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH

In the Buddha’s own words describing his awakening, he outlined the two truths that he had realized. This appears very clearly in his reflection several weeks after his awakening, when he states that he had realized *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppāda* and *Nibbāna*, truths that go against the stream and are difficult for ordinary people to understand. Consequently, he was disinclined to teach the Dhamma.<sup>128</sup> {221}

In the Vinaya Piṭaka the Buddha describes the events after his awakening, during which time he experienced the bliss of liberation under the Bodhi tree, taught the First Sermon, acquired his first disciples, performed various ordinations resulting in the creation of the monastic community (*saṅgha*), and finally established the monastic discipline.

<sup>126</sup>Ps. I. 50.

<sup>127</sup>E.g.: DA. III. 1062; SA. II. 68, 126; PsA. I. 128; VbhA. 422; Vism. 604-605; VismT.: Paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā, Vuṭṭhānagāminīvipas-sanākathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>128</sup>Vin. I. 4-5. According to the sequence of events described in the Tipiṭaka, this occurs in the fifth week after the Buddha’s awakening, but according to the commentarial account, which inserts an additional three weeks to this period, it occurs at the beginning of the eighth week.

The Buddha's reflection cited above occurred (according to the commentarial account) after he had enjoyed the bliss of liberation for seven weeks, and before he departed from the place of awakening in order to teach the Dhamma in the Deer Park at Isipatana near the city of Varanasi.

Let us go back to the very beginning of this period. During the first night of experiencing the bliss of liberation, he gave three inspired utterances, one during each of the three watches of the night. Here, he contemplates Dependent Origination, both in its forward and reverse sequences (*paṭiccasamuppādaṃ anuloma-paṭilomaṃ manasākāsi*; note that here the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* appears alone, without the accompanying term *idappaccayatā*).

In contrast to later teachings, here the Buddha does not clearly name the truths that he had realized, but it is not difficult to discern that he is using synonyms for Dependent Origination and Nibbāna:

Verse no. 1: 'When truths manifest to a purified one,<sup>129</sup> diligent and meditative, all doubts vanish away, since he knows the truth together with its cause' (*sahetu-dhamma* = suffering and its origin).

Verse no. 2: 'When truths manifest to a purified one, diligent and meditative, all doubts vanish away, since he has realized the cessation of conditioning factors' (*khayaṃ paccayānaṃ* = Nibbāna).

Verse no. 3: 'When truths manifest to a purified one, diligent and meditative, then he dispels Māra and his forces, and remains like the sun illuminating the sky.'

The gist of the first verse is the forward sequence (*anuloma*) of Dependent Origination (which is sometimes referred to in the commentaries as the origination cycle – *samudaya-vāra*). This verse reveals the origin of suffering – the process of causes and conditions giving rise to suffering. In other words, it describes suffering along with its causes.

<sup>129</sup>The term 'purified one' is a translation of the Pali term *brāhmaṇa*, referring here to an arahant, one who is taint-free (*khīṇāsava*). The brahmins used this term *brāhmaṇa* to describe someone who is purified and has passed beyond sin.



The gist of the second verse is the reverse sequence (*paṭiloma*) of Dependent Origination (which is sometimes referred to in the commentaries as the cessation cycle – *nirodha-vāra*). This verse reveals the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), the state free from suffering, the state in which no renewed suffering arises due to the exhaustion of all causes and conditions leading to suffering. This refers to the end of Dependent Origination – to Nibbāna.

The third verse describes the state of awakening, the state of one who has realized cessation – realized Nibbāna – one whose wisdom is clear, spacious, and free. The commentaries explain that this verse describes the splendour and majesty of the noble Path (*ariya-magga*).

This collection of three inspired verses points to and explains the same truths expressed in the Buddha's later reflection cited above. They reveal how the practice for reaching the goal of Buddhism – for realizing the supreme truth of Nibbāna – requires a comprehension of this first law of nature (*dhamma-niyāma*), i.e. the law of Dependent Origination. In this way, one realizes two levels of truth encompassing all things, namely, the truth of all conditioned phenomena and the supreme truth (*parama-sacca*) of the Unconditioned.

It is important to reiterate that a realization of this first law of nature is combined with and equivalent to an understanding of the remaining three laws of nature – of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself.

There are many passages in the Suttanta Piṭaka in which the Buddha recounts his going forth and his spiritual exertions up to the time of his awakening.<sup>130</sup> A key passage in this context pertains to the time when he was awakened: {222}

When my mind was concentrated ... I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is suffering', 'this is the origin of suffering', 'this is the cessation of suffering', 'this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering'. I directly knew as it actually is: 'These are the taints', 'this is the

<sup>130</sup>E.g.: Pāsārāsi Sutta (also called the Ariyapariyesana Sutta): M. 163-4.

origin of the taints’, ‘this is the cessation of the taints’, ‘this is the way leading to the cessation of the taints’. When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated ...

*E.g.: M. I. 247-9.*

This passage indicates clearly that the Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths at the time of his awakening. This may seem to be at variance with the passages cited above, but when one analyses these different passages carefully, one sees that they refer essentially to the same thing.

Technically, the Four Noble Truths are comprised of two pairs of truths: *dukkha/samudaya* and *nirodha/magga*. According to the Buddha’s first sermon, the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, which in the Vinaya Piṭaka follows on from the Buddha’s reflections cited earlier, *samudaya* (‘origin’) refers to the three kinds of craving (*taṇhā*), and *nirodha* (‘cessation’) refers to the renouncing, abandoning, and cessation of all such craving – to complete liberation.<sup>131</sup> At first glance, one may not yet see the connection here to the natural law of Dependent Origination.

Craving (*taṇhā*) is a vital factor in the forward sequence of Dependent Origination (or the cycle of origination) resulting in suffering. The first and second noble truths thus exist as a pair. The reverse sequence of Dependent Origination (the cycle of cessation) is the dissolution of all conditioning factors within the dynamic of suffering – the end of Dependent Origination. This corresponds to cessation (*nirodha*), the third noble truth. The fourth noble truth – the Path (*magga*) – is a formal method of spiritual practice established for people to give rise to the natural process of the reverse sequence. The Path is thus included in the reverse sequence of Dependent Origination. This is a very brief summary of how these principles are interlinked.

The commentaries provide another classification of laws of nature, which can be designated as a subdivision of natural laws. They use the term *niyāma* to refer to these laws, consisting of five factors:

<sup>131</sup>Vin. I. 10.

1. *Utu-niyāma*: laws pertaining to the material world, in particular to those dynamics in the natural environment related to temperature.
2. *Bīja-niyāma*: laws pertaining to heredity.
3. *Citta-niyāma*: laws pertaining to the functions of the mind.
4. *Kamma-niyāma*: law of karma.
5. *Dhamma-niyāma*: the law of the interrelation between causes and conditions, in particular to those laws operating independently according to nature. For example: those things relying on conditions for their existence must naturally come to an end; stream-enterers are naturally beyond spiritual regression; etc.

Although this fifth factor of *dhamma-niyāma* is a key principle in the teachings, which was explained frequently by the Buddha, and for which there are numerous examples, it is surprising that the commentators in this context do not explain it in the same way. In their explanations, they simply refer to the normal attributes of a bodhisattva.<sup>132</sup> For example: when a bodhisattva is conceived, born, and awakened, it is normal for the ten-thousand world systems to shake; when a bodhisattva enters his mother's womb, it is natural that she is endowed with virtue and free from any illness.

In the Mahāpadāna Sutta, which lists sixteen general rules pertaining to the circumstances of a bodhisattva, the term *dhammatā* is used, rather than *dhamma-niyāma*. Although these two terms are synonymous, their meanings are not identical; they simply overlap. {223}

<sup>132</sup>DA. II. 439; [DhsA. 408].

### 4.13 APPENDIX 3: ‘ME AND MINE’

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The attachment to a sense of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ is firmly embedded in the human mind. It has a deep impact on people’s behaviour, on their wellbeing, and on human relationships, and it is connected to almost every social problem. This attachment to a sense of self provides a core focus for Dhamma practice: it must be attended to correctly and many teachings address this issue. Many unique terms and expressions are used to designate this form of attachment. Following is a summary of such terms and expressions, organized into groups:

Group 1: *etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā-ti*: ‘this is mine, I am this, this is my self.’

Group 2: *ahanti vā mamanti vā asmīti vā*: ‘(the belief in) “I”, (the belief in) “mine”, and (the belief), “I exist”.’

Group 3: *ahaṅkāra mamaṅkāra mānānusaya*: ‘(the belief in) “I”, (the belief in) “mine”, and an underlying tendency of conceit.’

Group 4: *mamāyita* (or: *mamatta*) and *asmimāna*: the belief in “mine”, (‘the belief in “I”’), and the conceit “I am”.’

Group 5: *attā, attaniya*, (and *asmīti*): the self, things associated with the self, (and the belief ‘I exist’).

Group 6: *taṇhā, māna*, and *diṭṭhi*: craving, conceit, and fixed views.

**Group 1:** these are the most frequently found terms relating to an attachment to self. Most often this group is found in teachings encouraging an analysis of human beings as consisting of the five aggregates or of other elements like the six senses or the six forms of contact, or in teachings that promote an investigation of the three characteristics, leading to an understanding of things that prevents the attachment: ‘this is mine’, ‘I am this’, or ‘this is my self’.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup>For examples of this group, see: Vin. I. 14; M. I. 40, 135-6, 185-9, 232-5, 421-2; M. III. 240, 271-2; S. II. 94, 124, 245-252; S. III. 18, 45, 67-8, 104, 182, 187, 204, 223; S. IV. 1-4, 24-5, 34-5, 43-5, 54-5, 58-9, 63-4, 105-6, 151-6, 382, 393; A. I. 284; A. II. 164-5, 171, 202; A. V. 187; etc. The passage that conveys the opposite meaning is: *netam mama, nesohamasmi, na eso me attā-ti*.

**Group 2:** this group is an abbreviation of group #1 above: *ahanti* ('a belief in "I"') = *eso me attā*; *mamanti* ('a belief in "mine"') = *etaṃ mama*; *asmīti* (a belief such as 'I am this' or 'I still exist') = *esohamasmi*.<sup>134</sup>

**Group 3:** this is another abbreviation of group #1: *ahaṅkāra* = *eso me attā*; *mamaṅkāra* = *etaṃ mama*; *mānānusaya* = *esohamasmi*. {224} These terms are most often found in the phrase: 'There is an absence of (or 'freedom from', or 'eradication of') "I-making", "mine-making" and an underlying tendency of conceit in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs.'<sup>135</sup>

**Group 4:** the term *mamāyita* is most often used to mean 'an attachment as "mine"' or 'an object attached to as "mine"' and is thus equivalent to *etaṃ mama*.<sup>136</sup> Occasionally it is defined as both a belief in 'I' and a belief in 'mine' (equivalent to *etaṃ mama* and *eso me attā*, or to *taṇhā* and *diṭṭhi*).<sup>137</sup> *Mamatta* (or *mamattā*) has an identical meaning to *mamāyita*, but tends to appear in verses paired with *mamāyita* or in place of *mamāyita*,<sup>138</sup> or as a definition of *mamāyita*.<sup>139</sup> *Asmimāna* is defined as 'the conceit "I am"': a sense of 'I' or the thought 'I exist'. In Pali it is usually described as simply *māna*, but the Abhidhamma classifies it as one of seven different kinds of *māna*. *Asmimāna* is a refined form of conceit,<sup>140</sup> which only arahants have abandoned; non-returners have not yet done so.<sup>141</sup> The Abhidhamma distinguishes *asmimāna* from other, coarser forms of conceit, like scorn and arrogance, which are abandoned by awakened beings of lower levels. *Asmimāna* is usually mentioned as a quality that Dhamma practitioners

<sup>134</sup>This passage occurs in only a few places, e.g.: M. I. 185-9; S. IV. 197.

<sup>135</sup>E.g.: M. I. 485; M. III. 19, 32-6; S. II. 252, 274-5; S. III. 79-81, 103, 136-7, 169-170, 235-8; S. IV. 40-41; A. I. 132; A. III. 444; A. IV. 52-3.

<sup>136</sup>E.g.: S. II. 94; Sn. 22, 82, 152, 158-9, 184-5, 203; SA. II. 98; Nd1A. I. 16; VinA. II. 301.

<sup>137</sup>E.g.: DhA. IV. 97; SnA. II. 407, 517; Nd1A. I. 160; MA. II. 308.

<sup>138</sup>E.g.: Sn. 159, 170, 185; Thag. verse 717.

<sup>139</sup>E.g.: Nd. I. 50, 121-2, 124-5, 128-9, 435, 440; Nd. II. 17.

<sup>140</sup>See: Vbh. 383 and related material at Vbh. 345-6, 353-6.

<sup>141</sup>E.g.: S. III. 128-31; A. III. 85.

should eradicate.<sup>142</sup> Essentially, the term *asmimāna* is identical to *eso-hamasmi* and it can be simply called *māna*: (the most refined form of) conceit.

**Group 5:** the terms in this group do not refer to attachment but rather to things that are attached to, or to the state of affairs arising due to attachment. If one makes a broad comparison with group #1, *attā* is equivalent to *eso me attā* and *esohamasmi*, while *attaniya* is equivalent to *etaṃ mama*. Strictly speaking, however, the term *attā* is confined to the view of possessing or existing as a ‘self’ (i.e. it pertains to ‘views’ – *diṭṭhi*). It therefore refers only to *eso me attā*, not to *esohamasmi*. To encompass the entire meaning of the first group, one needs to add the term *asmīti* to this fifth group. It is possible to translate *attā* as ‘I’<sup>143</sup> and *attaniya* as ‘mine’, but the meaning of the expression ‘I’ is not very precise or constant and can shift to encompass either of the two beliefs in group #1 (*esohamasmi* and *eso me attā*).<sup>144</sup>

**Group 6:** the three unwholesome qualities (craving, conceit, and view) are sometimes collectively referred to as *papañca* or *papañca-dhammā*: ‘encumbrances’, ‘mental proliferation’, ‘things leading to excess’.<sup>145</sup> These qualities give rise to myriad, complicated perceptions (*papañca-saññā*), as described in chapter 2. {225}

They are grouped together here following a commentarial explanation. One can compare and match these unwholesome qualities with the views and attachments contained in the preceding groups as shown on Table 4.1.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>142</sup>E.g.: Vin. I. 3; D. III. 273; M. I. 139, 424-5; M. III. 115; S. III. 83-4, 156-7; S. IV. 180-81; A. I. 44; A. II. 41-2, 216; A. III. 85-6, 325; A. IV. 352, 358; Ud. 10, 37; Thag. verse 428; Nd. I. 224; Ps. I. 26; and see the definition at Vbh. 356.

<sup>143</sup>Trans.: the author is here discussing the Thai expression *dtua goo* (ตัวกู – ‘I’, ‘me’), but similar observations can be made about the English expression ‘I am’.

<sup>144</sup>On the subject of *attā* and *attaniya*, see, e.g.: M. I. 138-41, 297-8, 388-9; S. III. 34, 128; S. IV. 82, 129, 168, 296-7; A. II. 165; Nd. I. 222-3, 438-9; Nd. II. 43; Ps. I. 109; Ps. II. 36.

<sup>145</sup>E.g.: Nd. I. 280-1; DA. III. 721; SA. II. 269.

<sup>146</sup>Commentarial explanations at, e.g.: MA. I. 182; MA. II. 110, 225, 279; SA. II. 213, 215; SA. II. 364; AA. II. 206, 380; AA. III. 152, 415; AA. IV. 31; VismṬ.: *Maggāmaggaññāḍassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Maggāmaggaṭṭhānakathāvaṇṇanā*.

Table 4.1: Craving, Conceit and Views

1.	<i>Taṇhā</i> =	<i>etaṃ mama</i> =	<i>mamanti</i> =	<i>mamaṅkāra</i> =	<i>mamāyita</i>
	⇒ attachment to <i>attaniya</i> .				
2.	<i>Māna</i> =	<i>eso hamasmi</i> =	<i>asmīti</i> =	<i>mānānusaya</i> =	<i>asmimāna</i>
	⇒ <i>asmīti</i> .				
3.	<i>Diṭṭhi</i> =	<i>eso me attā</i> =	<i>ahanti</i> =	<i>ahaṅkāra</i> =	<i>mamāyita</i>
	⇒ attachment to <i>attā</i> .				

The English terms ‘me’ and ‘mine’ (or ‘I’ and ‘mine’) do not entirely cover the meanings of these three groups; it is necessary to add another expression: ‘I’, ‘mine’, and ‘this am I’. In any case, translations for the second group (the ‘māna’ group) are sometimes imprecise and unusual. One solution in the face of such flexible terminology is to use only the two terms ‘I’ and ‘mine’, and then to define ‘I’ so that it covers both *diṭṭhi* and *māna*. When it refers to a belief in a fixed sense of personal identity, then it is equivalent to *diṭṭhi*; when it refers to personal status, or to a personal identity used for comparison with others, for personal evaluation, or as a source of pride, then it is equivalent to *māna*. The term ‘mine’ is an accurate translation for the first group (the ‘taṇhā’ group).

*Diṭṭhi*, comprising *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (the first and third fetters – *saṃyojana*), has been abandoned by stream-enterers. *Taṇhā* (in the form of *kāma-rāga* – the fourth fetter) has been abandoned by non-returners. *Taṇhā* (in the form of *kāma-rāga*, *rūpa-rāga* and *arūpa-rāga* – the fourth, sixth and seventh fetters) and *māna* have been abandoned by arahants.<sup>147</sup>

Following this interpretation one can give the following summary: the fixed view of a sense of self is abandoned at stream-entry, while

<sup>147</sup>There are many commentarial passages confirming an arahant’s abandonment of the conceit ‘I am’, e.g.: MA. I. 87; SA. I. 271; SA. II. 282; SA. III. 75; AA. III. 348; UdA. 102; ItA. II. 15; PsA. 116.

the conceit ‘I am’ and attachment to a sense of personal ownership are abandoned when realizing arahantship.<sup>148</sup> {226}

#### 4.14 APPENDIX 4: BIRTH AND DEATH IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

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The following sutta passage may provide insight to those who wish to research the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*) as it occurs in the present moment – as it occurs in this present lifetime:

‘The festering forms of self-conceiving do not accumulate for a person established in four qualities [wisdom, truth, relinquishment, and peace], and when such defiled self-conceiving is not accumulated he is called a sage at peace.’

So was it said; and in reference to what was it said? ‘I am’ is a conceiving, ‘I am not’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall not be’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be possessed of form’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be formless’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be percipient’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be non-percipient’ is a conceiving, ‘I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient’ is a conceiving.

Bhikkhu, conceiving is a disease, conceiving is an abscess, conceiving is a dart. By overcoming all self-conceivings one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die; he is not anxious and does not crave. For there exists no cause by which he might be born. Not being born, how could he age? Not aging, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be anxious? Not being anxious, how could he crave?

So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘The festering forms of self-conceiving do not accumulate for a person established in

<sup>148</sup>For the similarity between *diṭṭhi* and *māna*, see: Ps. I. 139; PsA. I. 279; DhsA. 240. For an examination of *māna* and other defilements as found in individuals who have attained a higher level of awakening, see the story of Ven. Anuruddha at A. I. 281.



four qualities, and when such defiled self-conceiving is not accumulated he is called a sage at peace.’ Bhikkhu, bear in mind this brief exposition of the six elements.’

*M. III. 246; cf., e.g.: M. III. 225; S. III. 228-9; S. IV. 17; Sn. 184-5; Nd. I. 436 (aging = decay or loss); Thag. verse 247 (jiyyate = aging; the commentaries define this word as ‘decay’ or ‘passing away’); J. IV. 240.*

#### 4.15 APPENDIX 5:

#### ABHIDHAMMA INTERPRETATION OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

The Abhidhamma describes many variations to the process of Dependent Origination, according to the state of mind (*citta*), i.e. as wholesome, unwholesome, or ‘indeterminate’,<sup>149</sup> and according to the level of mind, i.e. as dwelling in the sense sphere, the fine-material sphere, or the immaterial sphere, or as transcendent.<sup>150</sup> The factors of Dependent Origination may vary according to these states of mind and are not always identical to the factors mentioned in the suttas. For example, in some wholesome states of mind the process commences with volitional formations without a mention of ignorance, or it may begin with a wholesome root-cause (*kusala-mūla*) as a substitute for ignorance. Of particular note, craving is only found in unwholesome states of mind; in other states it is replaced by *pasāda* (‘satisfaction’, ‘joy’, ‘confidence’) or left out entirely.

Because the Abhidhamma examines the mind on a momentary basis, it therefore only analyzes the factors present in each specific moment. Factors such as ignorance or craving, which may be temporarily suppressed, are not identified by name; they are inferred by the presence of other clearly manifest factors, or else they are completely overlooked.

The Abhidhamma describes the various factors of Dependent Origination both in forward and in reverse: ignorance conditions volitional formations and volitional formations condition ignorance; volitional formations condition consciousness and consciousness conditions volitional

<sup>149</sup>Indeterminate (*abyākata*) state of mind = ‘kamma-resultant mind’ (*vipāka-citta*) and ‘functional mind’ (*kiriya-citta*); see below.

<sup>150</sup>Vbh. 135-92.

formations; etc. Here I will only present the primary categories for consideration: {227}

#### A. TWELVE UNWHOLESOME STATES OF MIND (AKUSALA-CITTA)

*Avijjā* conditions *saṅkhāra*.

*Saṅkhāra* condition *viññāṇa*.

*Viññāṇa* conditions *nāma* (mentality).

*Nāma* conditions *chaṭṭhāyatana*

(sixth sense base, i.e. the mind – *mano*).

*Chaṭṭhāyatana* conditions *phassa*.

*Phassa* conditions *vedanā*.

*Vedanā* conditions *taṇhā*,

or conditions *paṭigha* (annoyance, hostility),

or conditions *vicikicchā* (doubt),

or conditions *uddhacca* (restlessness).

*Taṇhā* conditions *upādāna*,

or *taṇhā* conditions *adhimokkha* (intent, inclination),

or *paṭigha* conditions *adhimokkha*,

or *uddhacca* conditions *adhimokkha*.

*Upādāna* conditions *bhava*,

or *adhimokkha* conditions *bhava*.

or *vicikicchā* conditions *bhava*.

*Bhava* conditions *jāti*.

*Jāti* conditions *jarāmarāṇa*.

= the arising of the entire mass of suffering.

#### B. WHOLESOME STATES OF MIND

(of the Sense Sphere, the Fine-Material Sphere and the Immaterial Sphere)

*Avijjā* conditions *saṅkhāra*,

or *kusala-mūla* conditions *saṅkhāra*.

*Saṅkhāra* conditions *viññāṇa*.

*Viññāṇa* conditions *nāma*.

*Nāma* conditions *chaṭṭhāyatana*.

*Chaṭṭhāyatana* conditions *phassa*.

*Phassa* conditions *vedanā*.

*Vedanā* conditions *pasāda*.

*Pasāda* conditions *adhimokkha*.

*Adhimokkha* conditions *bhava*.

*Bhava* conditions *jāti*.

*Jāti* conditions *jarāmarāṇa*.

= the arising of the entire mass of suffering. {228}

### C. KAMMA-RESULTANT STATES OF MIND AND FUNCTIONAL STATES OF MIND

(of the Sense Sphere, the Fine-Material Sphere and the Immaterial Sphere)

(*Kusala-mūla* conditions *saṅkhāra*.)

*Saṅkhāra* conditions *viññāṇa*.

*Viññāṇa* conditions *nāma*.

*Nāma* conditions *chaṭṭhāyatana*.

*Chaṭṭhāyatana* conditions *phassa*.

*Phassa* conditions *vedanā*.

*Vedanā* conditions *bhava*.

or *vedanā* conditions *adhimokkha*.

or *adhimokkha* conditions *bhava*.<sup>151</sup>

or *vedanā* conditions *pasāda*.

or *pasāda* conditions *adhimokkha*.

or *adhimokkha* conditions *bhava*.<sup>152</sup>

*Bhava* conditions *jāti*.

*Jāti* conditions *jarāmarāṇa*.

= the arising of the entire mass of suffering.

The first line in this section is in parentheses to indicate that this sequence is not necessarily present. This section can begin with volitional

<sup>151</sup>This alternative grouping occurs in the ‘causeless wholesome kamma-resultant mind states’ (*ahetukakusalavipāka-citta*) #6, #7, and #8, in the wholesome kamma-resultant mind states #6 and #7, and in the three ‘causeless functional states of mind’ (*ahetukakiriya-citta*).

<sup>152</sup>This grouping occurs in all the following mind states: *kāmāvacara-vipāka-citta*, *rūpāvacara-vipāka-citta*, *arūpāvacara-vipāka-citta*, *kāmāvacara-kiriya-citta*, *rūpāvacara-kiriya-citta*, and *arūpāvacara-kiriya-citta*.

formations as a condition for consciousness or with unwholesome root-causes acting as a condition for volitional formations. If the latter is true, then this only occurs in the seven unwholesome kamma-resultant mind states (*akusalavipāka-citta*).

#### D. TRANSCENDENT STATES OF MIND

(*Wholesome and Kamma-resultant*)

Wholesome states:

*Avijjā* conditions *saṅkhāra*,  
or *kusala-mūlā* condition *saṅkhāra*.

Kamma-resultant states:

(*Kusala-mūlā* condition *saṅkhāra*.)

*Saṅkhāra* condition *viññāṇa*.

*Viññāṇa* conditions *nāma*.

*Nāma* conditions *chaṭṭhāyatana*.

*Chaṭṭhāyatana* conditions *phassa*.

*Phassa* conditions *vedanā*.

*Vedanā* conditions *pasāda*.

*Pasāda* conditions *adhimokkha*.

*Adhimokkha* conditions *bhava*.

*Bhava* conditions *jāti*.

*Jāti* conditions *jarāmaraṇa*.

= the arising of all of these qualities.

Note: transcendent wholesome mind states (*lokuttarakusala-citta*) may originate with ignorance or unwholesome root causes, but transcendent kamma-resultant mind states (*lokuttaravipāka-citta*) originate with wholesome roots or simply with volitional formations. Note also the difference in the last line of this section. {229}

#### 4.16 APPENDIX 6: NIRODHA ('CESSATION')

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The term 'cessation' has become the standard translation for *nirodha*.<sup>153</sup> When alternative translations for *nirodha* are used, people may raise objections or they become confused, thinking that these alternatives are derived from other Pali words. In Buddhadhamma, I too have relied on the term 'cessation' for the sake of convenience, and to avoid the misunderstanding that another Pali word is being referred to (and also because I have not found a suitable, concise replacement). But there are many occasions where the term 'cessation' itself may lead to misunderstanding and is technically the incorrect translation.

The word 'cessation' in English generally means the destruction or end of something that has already arisen. *Nirodha* in *Dependent Origination* (and in the third Noble Truth – *dukkhanirodha-ariyasacca*), however, means that something does not arise because no causes exist for it to arise. For example, the phrase *avijjā-nirodhā saṅkhāra-nirodho* is translated as: 'Because ignorance ceases, volitional formations cease'. In fact, this phrase means that because ignorance does not exist, or does not arise, or there are no problems associated with ignorance, volitional formations do not exist, do not arise, and there are no problems associated with volitional formations. It does not necessarily mean that existing ignorance must be terminated in order to terminate existing volitional formations.

There are occasions when *nirodha* is accurately translated as 'cessation', for instance when referring to the nature of conditioned phenomena, and when acting as a synonym for *bhaṅga* ('breaking up'), *anicca* ('impermanence'), *khaya* ('destruction'), and *vaya* ('decay'). For example: *Bhikkhus, these three feelings are impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, subject to destruction, subject to dissolution, subject to vanishing, subject to cessation*.<sup>154</sup> (Every factor of *Dependent Origination* has these attributes mentioned in this quotation.) Having arisen, conditioned phenomena automatically must decline, according to the nature of causes and conditions. One need

<sup>153</sup>Trans.: the author here is discussing the Thai term *dap* (ดับ), but the same observations are relevant to the English translation for *nirodha*: 'cessation'.

<sup>154</sup>S. IV. 214. *Imā kho bhikkhave tisso vedanā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭīcasamuppannā khayadhammā vayadhammā virāgadhammā nirodhadhammā*.

not try to make them decline; they will decline of their own accord. The practical application of this teaching is to see that all that arises must cease.

Although it describes a natural, objective process, the teaching of *nirodha* in the third Noble Truth (= *paṭiccasamuppāda-nirodhavāra*) emphasizes practical application. There are two interpretations of *nirodha* in this context:<sup>155</sup> the first derives from the prefix *ni-* ('non-existence'; 'without') + *rodha* (= *cāraka* = 'prison', 'confinement', 'restriction', 'obstruction', 'impediment'), translated as 'free from limitation', 'free from restriction', 'free from confinement': i.e. free from *saṃsāra*. The second interpretation equates *nirodha* with *anuppāda*: 'non-arising'.<sup>156</sup> In this context *nirodha* does not mean cessation or dissolution (*bhaṅga*).

Although the translation of *nirodha* as 'cessation' is not always accurate, I have so far been unable to find a concise term to use instead and therefore use the customary translation. It is important, however, to understand the meaning of this word in different contexts. For this reason, these alternative translations for the cessation cycle of Dependent Origination are valid: 'With an absence of ignorance, there is an absence of volitional formations'; 'with freedom from ignorance, there is freedom from volitional formations'; 'when ignorance no longer bears fruit, volitional formations cease to bear fruit'; 'when no problems exist as a consequence of ignorance, no problems exist as a consequence of volitional formations'.

There are further complications regarding translation of terms in the origination cycle of Dependent Origination. The Pali terms cover a wider range of meaning than can be captured by single English counterparts. For example, the teaching: *Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā ... jātippaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ* in Pali can also mean: 'Because ignorance exists in this way, volitional formations exist in this way; because volitional formations exist in this way, consciousness exists in this way ... because becoming exists in this way, birth exists in this way; because there is birth, there is aging-and-death.' {230}

<sup>155</sup>Vism. 494-5.

<sup>156</sup>VismṬ.: *Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Saccavittthāarakathāvaṇṇanā.*

#### 4.17 APPENDIX 7: CONCISE DEFINITIONS FOR THE FACTORS OF DEPENDENT ORIGATION

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Because the definitions in this chapter for the factors of Dependent Origination are rather long and drawn-out, here are some short and simple definitions:

1. *Avijjā*: ignorance; not knowing the truth; not applying wisdom.
2. *Sankhāra*: thoughts; intentions; mental disposition; habits.
3. *Viññāṇa*: awareness of the external world and of the content of the mind; state of mind.
4. *Nāma-rūpa*: the constituents of life, both physical and mental.
5. *Salāyatana*: the channels for cognition, i.e.: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
6. *Phassa*: cognition; interaction with the external world; contact with sense objects.
7. *Vedanā*: pleasurable, painful, and neutral feelings.
8. *Taṇhā*: the desire for gain, for existence, for eternal life, for escape, for disappearance, or for annihilation.
9. *Upādāna*: attachment; mental preoccupation; latent desire; ambition; cherished values; identification.
10. *Bhava*: current state of existence; personality; the entire range of human behaviour.
11. *Jāti*: the birth of a 'self' that embodies the state of existence and interacts with the world. This 'self' claims ownership and control over proceedings.
12. *Jarāmaraṇa*: the encounter with decline, instability, loss, and passing away in regard to the 'self's' occupation of this state of existence.

*Soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa*: various forms of suffering, e.g. grief, sadness, lamentation, mourning, distress, self-pity, hopelessness, and despair, all of which resemble toxins festering in the mind, and when outwardly expressed generate more problems.

#### 4.18 APPENDIX 8: BHAVA-TAṆHĀ AND VIBHAVA-TAṆHĀ

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Translation of the three kinds of craving (*kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā*), especially the second and third kinds, may cause problems due to insufficient understanding of these terms and conflicting opinions. The following points may help clarify this matter:

Although there are suttas in which the three kinds of craving are clearly mentioned, for example in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*,<sup>157</sup> the *Saṅgīti Sutta* and the *Dasuttara Sutta*,<sup>158</sup> nowhere in the suttas are the definitions for these three clearly outlined or directly addressed. We therefore must depend on the explanations found in the *Abhidhamma* and the commentaries. However, because people sometimes gather sketchy or incomplete information, or they are unable to clearly interpret such information, there have arisen divergent and conflicting views on this subject.

Despite the fact that there are no explicit definitions in the suttas for these three kinds of craving, there are some teachings by the Buddha and some related passages that cast light on the meanings of these terms. Here I will present evidence from the suttas, the *Abhidhamma*, and the commentaries for contemplation.

The Buddha mentions the three kinds of craving in the *Taṇhā Sutta* of the *Itivuttaka*. Although he does not present explicit definitions, he utters a verse that can be used to further understand their meanings. A literal translation of this sutta (free from commentarial interpretation) appears as follows: {231}

<sup>157</sup> Vin. I. 10; S. V. 421.

<sup>158</sup> D. III. 215-6, 275.



Bhikkhus, there are these three cravings. What three? The craving for sense pleasures, the craving for existence, and the craving for non-existence....

Bound with the bondage of craving,  
People's minds delight in becoming and non-becoming  
(*bhavābhava*).

Bound by the fetters of Māra, with no safety from bondage,  
These beings go through the cycle of rebirth, headed for  
birth and death.

But those in the world who have destroyed craving, free  
from the craving for becoming and non-becoming,  
Reaching the end of the taints, have gone to the other shore.

*It. 50.*

Another sutta in the Itivuttaka describes the two 'views' – *bhava-diṭṭhi* and *vibhava-diṭṭhi* – and by doing so it indirectly describes *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* as well:

Bhikkhus, both devas and humans are under the sway of two views. Some are bogged down, some overreach, while those with vision see.

And how, monks, are some bogged down?

Devas and humans delight in becoming (*bhavārāmā*), rejoice in becoming (*bhava-ratā*), take pleasure in becoming (*bhava-sammuditā*). When the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma for the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), the hearts of those devas and humans do not leap forward, do not gain confidence, do not become settled, do not yield. Thus are some bogged down.

And how, monks, do some overreach?

Some devas and humans are afflicted, depressed, and disgusted by becoming. They delight in non-becoming,<sup>159</sup> saying: 'My good sir, with the breaking up of the body at death, this self is annihilated,

destroyed, and no longer exists. This state is supreme, excellent and true.’ Thus do some overreach.

And how, monks, do those with vision see?

In this case, a monk sees the state of being as the state of being.<sup>160</sup> When he sees the state of being as the state of being, he practises for disenchantment (*nibbidā*), dispassion (*virāga*), and cessation (*nirodha*) in regard to the state of being. Thus do those with vision see.

Whoever sees being as being,  
And sees the state beyond being,  
Surrenders to the Truth,  
Through the exhaustion of lust for existence.  
With full understanding of the state of being,  
One is free from craving,  
For both existence and extinction.  
With the end of becoming in the state of existence,  
A monk comes not to further birth.

*Diṭṭhi Sutta: It. 43-4.*

There are two noteworthy points concerning this sutta:

1. The Buddha mentions craving and views in tandem because they are related and interdependent. One type of person delights in becoming, yearns for existence (*bhava-rama*, *bhava-abhirama* = *bhava-taṇhā*), and holds the firm conviction that this state of existence is desirable and is a place of stability for the ‘self’ (*bhava-diṭṭhi*). Another type of person loathes existence, delights in non-existence, desires extinction (*vibhava-abhinanda* = *vibhava-taṇhā*), and firmly believes that the ‘self’ will expire (*vibhava-diṭṭhi* = *uccheda-diṭṭhi*).

<sup>159</sup> *Vibhavaṃ abhinandanti*; [ItA. 233] interprets *vibhava* as *uccheda* – ‘extinction’.

<sup>160</sup> ‘The state of being’ = *bhūta*; the commentaries say this refers to the five aggregates. ‘Sees the state of being as the state of being’ = ‘sees things as they really are’.

2. The sutta differentiates between *vibhava* (the absence of existence; non-existence; extinction), which is a belief connected to wrong view, and *bhava-nirodha* (the end of becoming), which is the goal of Buddha-Dhamma. *Vibhava* is the opposite of *bhava* – these are the two extremes explained in this sutta: some people get stuck at the extreme of becoming, others at the extreme of extinction. The Buddha taught the escape from these two extremes. His teachings emphasize *bhava-nirodha*, which does not fall into either extreme but rather rests in the middle. If one understands this concept, then one understands the Middle Teaching and the Middle Way. {232}

Craving and views are distinct qualities and yet they are very similar: they are often paired and they are interdependent. When one views something in a positive light, one wants to acquire it. When one wants to get something, one sees it as something worthy of getting, and due to a lack of understanding of the object one creates various opinions about it. In the definitions of craving below, *diṭṭhi* is used to clarify the meaning of *taṇhā*: a particular kind of craving is directly related to a particular kind of view. This explanation notwithstanding, craving and views should be recognized as two distinct qualities.

There is a passage in verse in the Purābheda Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, along with related explanations in the Mahāniddeśa and the commentaries, that clarifies the meaning of the terms *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*:

One who understands the truth, who is independent (free from craving and views), who does not rely on anything (whose mind is emancipated), has no craving for existence or non-existence. Such a person I call one who is calmed.<sup>161</sup>

*Sn. 167-8.*

The important clause in this passage is: *Bhavāya vibhavāya vā taṇhā*, which can be divided into *bhavāya taṇhā* (craving for existence) and *vibhavāya taṇhā* (craving for non-existence).

<sup>161</sup> *Bhavāya vibhavāya vā taṇhā* = the yearning to exist or to cease to exist.

These two terms are expansions on the terms *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*. The Mahāniddeśa interprets this passage of the Sutta Nipāta by defining *taṇhā* as the craving for sights, smells, sounds, tastes, tangibles, and mental objects, and it interprets *bhavāya* and *vibhavāya* in several ways: (1) *bhavāya* is equivalent to *bhava-diṭṭhi* and *vibhavāya* is equivalent to *vibhava-diṭṭhi*; (2) *bhavāya* equals *sassata-diṭṭhi* and *vibhavāya* equals *uccheda-diṭṭhi* (this interpretation is essentially the same as the preceding one); (3) *bhavāya* is defined as a craving for repeated existence, for repeated spheres of existence (*gati*), for repeated arising, for repeated rebirth, for repeated birth of an individuality. In this third interpretation *vibhavāya* is not mentioned, but based on the three definitions of *bhavāya* one can define *vibhavāya* as the craving for non-existence or for extinction.<sup>162</sup>

The Abhidhamma offers several definitions for *taṇhā*. In some places only *bhava-taṇhā* is explained, in which case it is paired with *avijjā*:

Of these two qualities, what is ‘*bhava-taṇhā*’? Pleasure in existence, delight in existence, enjoyment in existence, desire for existence, love for existence, craving for existence, infatuation with existence, obsession with existence. This is called ‘*bhava-taṇhā*.’

*Dhs. 227; Vbh. 358.*

Another passage explains the three kinds of craving thus:

Of these three kinds of craving, what is craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*)? Desire, infatuation, delight, satisfaction, enjoyment, fascination, and mental preoccupation, accompanied by views of existence (*bhava-diṭṭhi*). This is called craving for existence. And what is craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*)? Desire, infatuation, delight, satisfaction, enjoyment, fascination, and mental preoccupation, accompanied by views of annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*). This is called craving for non-existence. Craving apart from this is called sense craving (*kāma-taṇhā*).

<sup>162</sup>Nd. I. 245-6.

[Alternatively], of these three cravings, what is sense craving? Desire, infatuation ... mental preoccupation, accompanied by the elements of sensuality (*kāma-dhātu*). This is called sense craving. Desire, infatuation ... mental preoccupation, accompanied by the fine-material and immaterial elements. This is called craving for existence. Desire, infatuation ... mental preoccupation, accompanied by views of annihilation. This is called craving for non-existence.

*Vbh.* 365.

The commentary to the first sutta from the Itivuttaka mentioned above explains *bhavābhava* as ‘(the mind entangled in) minor and major states of existence’, and offers another definition for *bhava* as an eternalist view and *abhava* as an annihilationist view.<sup>163</sup> The mind is entangled in existence and non-existence, in an eternalist viewpoint and an annihilationist viewpoint, and thus *bhava* and *vibhava* here refer to *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*. The commentary to the second sutta from the Itivuttaka mentioned above explains *bhavābhava* as ‘minor and major states of existence’, or an adherence, for example, to an annihilationist view.<sup>164</sup> Another section of this same commentary explains *bhavābhavo* thus: *bhava* = *sampatti* (‘prosperity’, ‘growth’) and *abhava* = *vipatti* (‘decrease’, ‘decline’).<sup>165</sup> {233}

The explanation of the Purābheda Sutta (see above) found in the commentaries of the Suttanipāṭa and of the Mahāniddeśa offer this interpretation: *Bhavāya vibhavāya vāti sassatāya ucchedāya vā*. This interpretation can be translated as: ‘(Craving for) existence or non-existence, that is, for permanence or for extinction.’<sup>166</sup> (Some translators add the passage ‘for an eternalist view or an annihilationist view’ here to correspond with other texts.)

The commentary of the Paṭisambhidāmagga gives two clear explanations of the three kinds of craving, including a complete reference to

<sup>163</sup> ItA. II. 19.

<sup>164</sup> ItA. I. 180.

<sup>165</sup> ItA. 437.

<sup>166</sup> SnA. II. 550; Nd1A. II. 348.

the definitions presented in the Abhidhamma. The first explanation defines *bhava-taṇhā*, which is paired with *avijjā*, as: ‘The desire for states of existence, for example the sense realm.’<sup>167</sup> It refers to the passages in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī and the Vibhaṅga cited earlier,<sup>168</sup> and explains the three kinds of craving by referring to another passage in the Vibhaṅga, also cited earlier.<sup>169</sup> Finally it states:

The commentaries state:

‘Lust associated with the five strands of sensuality is called *kāma-taṇhā*; lust for the fine-material and immaterial spheres, attachment to *jhāna*, lust connected to an eternalist view, and the desire generated by the power of becoming is called *bhava-taṇhā*; and the lust connected to an annihilationist view is called *vibhava-taṇhā*.’

The commentary to the Saṅgīti Sutta contains the same explanation.<sup>170</sup>

The second explanation describes the three kinds of craving thus:

*Kāma-taṇhā* is lust for sensuality (*kāme taṇhā*). The term *kāma-taṇhā* here refers to lust (*rāga*) associated with the five strands of sensuality. *Bhava-taṇhā* is lust for existence (*bhave taṇhā*). The term *bhava-taṇhā* refers to lust connected to an eternalist view, which is generated by the force of desire for existence; it refers to lust for fine-material and immaterial states of existence, and to attachment to *jhāna*. *Vibhava-taṇhā* is lust for non-existence (*vibhave taṇhā*). The term *vibhava-taṇhā* refers to lust connected to an annihilationist view.

PsA. I. 158.

<sup>167</sup>PsA. I. 116.

<sup>168</sup>Dhs. 227; Vbh. 358.

<sup>169</sup>Vbh. 365.

<sup>170</sup>DA. III. 988.

This explanation is also found in the commentary to the Vibhaṅga.<sup>171</sup>

The Visuddhimagga usually explains important subjects in keeping with the other commentaries, but on the subject of the three kinds of craving, it says very little. It explains these three cravings only in the section on the one hundred and eight kinds of craving, which offers a different perspective:

Each of these six kinds of craving (for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects and mind objects) is reckoned threefold according to its manner of occurrence, as sense craving, craving for becoming, or craving for non-becoming. Indeed, when the craving for visual forms enjoys in the manner of sense-desire enjoyment a visual object that has come into the focus of the eye, it is called sense craving. When the craving for visual forms is accompanied by the view that the visual object is lasting and constant, it is called craving for becoming, because the lust associated with an eternalist view is called craving for becoming. But when the craving for visual forms is accompanied by the annihilationist view that this visual object breaks up and is destroyed, it is called craving for non-becoming, because the lust associated with an annihilationist view is called craving for non-becoming.<sup>172</sup>

*Vism.* 567-8; same as *VbhA.* 179.

The explanation in the Saddhammapakāsinī (the commentary to the Paṭisambhidāmagga) integrates the definitions for the three kinds of craving in a clear and satisfactory way, by incorporating the definitions from the various texts, both the Pali Canon and the commentaries. Here is a simple presentation of these definitions:

<sup>171</sup>VbhA. 111. In contemporary Thai editions some parts of this passage have gone missing; the passage is not complete like in the commentary to the Paṭisambhidāmagga.

<sup>172</sup>Cf.: *VismT.*: Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Saccavittthārakathāvaṇṇanā; *VismT.*: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Vedanāpaccayātanhāpadavittthārakathāvaṇṇanā. See also MA. I. 219 and SA. II. 15, which give a similar explanation but use different terminology.

1. *Kāma-taṇhā*: craving for sensuality; lust associated with the five strands of sensuality.
2. *Bhava-taṇhā*: craving for existence; lust for the fine-material and immaterial spheres of existence; attachment to *jhāna*; desire associated with an eternalist view, which is expressed in the desire for existence.
3. *Vibhava-taṇhā*: craving for non-existence; desire associated with an annihilationist view, which is expressed in the desire for an absence of existence or for extinction.

Note that *vibhava* (the absence of existence; the end of existence; extinction) is different from *bhava-nirodha* (the cessation of existence; the non-arising of further becoming), which is a desirable state. If this is still unclear, review the *Diṭṭhi Sutta* referred to above.

#### 4.19 APPENDIX 9: DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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A detailed doctrinal description of consciousness: the thirty-two mundane kinds of consciousness (the five kinds of consciousness of wholesome fruition – *kusala-vipāka*, the five kinds of consciousness of unwholesome fruition – *akusala-vipāka*, and the twenty-two kinds of mind-consciousness). Alternatively: the thirteen kinds of consciousness (the five kinds of consciousness of wholesome fruition, the five kinds of consciousness of unwholesome fruition, the two ‘mind elements’ – *mano-dhātu*, and the mind-consciousness element unaccompanied by a root cause and accompanied by joy – *manoviññāṇadhātu-ahetuka-somanassasahagata*) arising in the course of an individual existence (*pavatti-kāla*: between conception and death), plus the remaining nineteen kinds of consciousness arising in both the course of an individual existence and at the moment of conception.



#### 4.20 APPENDIX 10: METAPHYSICAL DILEMMAS

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There are many reasons why the Buddha refused to answer these metaphysical questions (formerly they were referred to as ‘knowledge concerning the self’ – *adhyātma-vidyā*). Most importantly, these questions originate from a wrong view, for example from the belief in a ‘self’, and they therefore do not correspond with the truth. As the Buddha mentioned above, they are ‘invalid’ questions. Secondly, the answers to these questions are not accessible through reasoning. Such an attempt is made in vain, like trying to get people to visualize an image with their ears. Since these questions cannot be answered by logic, intellectual debate about them does not generate any practical value.

The Buddha emphasized those things that have practical relevance to our everyday lives and therefore he dismissed these metaphysical speculations. He encouraged the questioner to turn to practical issues and to not waste time. For questions that can truly be answered, the Buddha urged people to apply practical means to reach the truth rather than get lost in debate and blind speculation.

The Buddha lived at a time when there was a fervent interest in these questions and when leaders of many religious sects were engaged in such debate. It is fair to say that these were signature questions and ideas of people at that time. People were so preoccupied by these questions, however, that they became alienated from the reality of their own existence. There being no benefit to engaging with these people at this level of debate, the Buddha’s strategy was to remain silent, thus not fuelling the debates and instead spurring people to turn to those subjects he was teaching. See chapter 19 of *Buddhadhamma* on the Four Noble Truths.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>173</sup> And see the following scriptural passages on this subject, e.g.: M. I. 426-32, 484-6; S. II. 222; A. IV. 67-8; A. V. 193-8.



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# CHAPTER 5

## THE LAW OF KAMMA

### *The Law of Kamma*

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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All of the Buddhist teachings, regardless of their name or title, are inter-related and part of a whole. They all point to the same truth and they all lead to the same goal. They are given different names in order to point out specific aspects of truth, or else they refer to the same thing but look at it from different angles, depending on the particular aim of the teaching. For this reason, certain Dhamma teachings or principles are subsidiary to a larger teaching, whereas others are equally important and cover the same subject material, but have unique formats and objectives.

The teaching of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) describes the entire process of human existence, and it encompasses all the other Dhamma teachings in a comprehensive way. It is a complete teaching. If one comprehends Dependent Origination, one understands the essence of existence or the entirety of Buddhism, as confirmed by the Buddha:

One who sees Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma.

*M. I. 190-91.*

In any case, it is generally acknowledged that Dependent Origination is profound and extremely difficult to understand. Even explaining it is very difficult. For this reason there are almost no texts dedicated solely to

explaining Dependent Origination. It is much more common to find texts that explain other divisions or principles of the Dhamma, which are part of the teaching on Dependent Origination.

Of these subsidiary teachings, perhaps the most frequently explained is that on kamma.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is twofold: first, this is a subject that is of vital interest to people, and second, an understanding of kamma acts as a bridge to understanding Dependent Origination. Indeed, a thorough explanation of kamma is one method for making the task of explaining Dependent Origination somewhat easier.

Kamma is only one part of the process outlined in Dependent Origination, which can be divided into three distinct cycles (*vaṭṭa*): defilement (*kilesa*), kamma, and the fruits of kamma (*vipāka*). Dependent Origination describes the entire sequence of performing volitional actions (*kamma*) and receiving the consequences of those actions, beginning with mental defilement, which is the source of kamma, and culminating in the fruits of kamma (*vipāka*).

Having described the law of Dependent Origination, along with its component factors, it may seem unnecessary to present a separate explanation on kamma. One may claim that by understanding Dependent Origination one also gains a clear understanding of kamma. {235}

The exposition of Dependent Origination focuses on phenomena in a pure, absolute sense, and it provides a broad, comprehensive perspective of a natural process. It does not emphasize one specific aspect of this process. From a practical, everyday point of view, however, the part of Dependent Origination that is most pronounced, directly pertains to human behaviour, and is connected to human responsibility, is kamma. From this perspective, one can say that kamma is the chief factor or theme

<sup>1</sup>Trans.: I hesitate to use the terms ‘karma’ or ‘karmic’ in this text, as there are many misunderstandings of the Buddhist concept of karma/kamma. As a case in point, note the first two definitions of karma in ‘Collins Concise Dictionary, Fourth Edition 1999’: 1. Hinduism, Buddhism. the principle of retributive justice determining a person’s state of life and state of his reincarnations as the effect of his past deeds; 2. destiny or fate. Hopefully, this text will demonstrate and explain just how remote these definitions are from the original Buddhist connotations.

in Dependent Origination, and that the other factors simply support investigation.

If one chooses this approach of analysis, Dependent Origination appears in the form known as the ‘law of kamma’.<sup>2</sup> And because there are many other crucial factors related to this subject, in later texts the law of kamma became the focus of study more than Dependent Origination. The discussion of kamma deals with human behaviour, which is relatively coarse, easily apparent, pertains to each immediate moment, and is suitable as the starting point of study.

Moreover, the explanation of kamma can be done at many different levels. One can explain it on a superficial level, describing cause and effect to an ordinary lay audience; one can describe unique human circumstances or activities in relation to kamma; or one can delve deeper into various mental processes and explain kamma in the context of Dependent Origination in its complete format.

It is for these reasons that a separate chapter has been dedicated to the subject of kamma.

## 5.2 BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF KAMMA

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### A. KAMMA AS A LAW OF NATURE

Buddhism teaches the truth that all things, both animate and inanimate, both material and immaterial, both physical and mental, both internal and external – that is, all conditioned things (*saṅkhata-dhamma*) – exist according to causes and conditions; they are subject to mutual conditionality. This is a law of nature. The Pali term for such a law of nature is *niyāma*, which literally translates as ‘fixed with certainty’, ‘mode of certainty’, ‘rule of certainty’, or ‘possessed of a certain orderliness’. When

<sup>2</sup>The Buddha described the close link between Dependent Origination and the law of kamma: ‘The wise, those who discern Dependent Origination and are skilled in action and its results, recognize volitional action according to the truth, thus...’ (M. II. 196; Sn. 123).

specific causes and conditions are present, things must proceed in a certain fashion.

Although this law of nature possesses the uniform characteristic of mutual conditionality, it can be divided according to distinct attributes, which express various patterns or aspects of interrelationship and facilitate understanding. Based on a Buddhist line of thinking, the commentaries describe five distinct laws of nature (*niyāma*):<sup>3</sup> {236}

1. *Utu-niyāma*: law of energy; law of physical phenomena; physical inorganic order; physical laws. This refers in particular to the external environment and to alterations in physical matter. E.g.: the weather and seasons; the fact that water, soil, and fertilizer assist the growth of plants; the fact that lotus blossoms open during the day and close up at night; the process of sneezing and coughing; and the fact that all things are subject to corrosion and decay. The focus by the commentaries here is on alterations induced by heat and temperature.
2. *Bīja-niyāma*: genetic laws; law of heredity; laws of reproduction; physical organic order; biological laws. For example: the fact that a specific plant will produce a specific fruit; a mango tree, for instance, will always bear mangos.
3. *Citta-niyāma*: psychic law; psychological laws; the laws of nature pertaining to the functioning of the mind. For example: when a sense stimulus contacts a sense base, cognition arises – the passive state of mind (*bhavaṅga-citta*) is shaken and interrupted, there is adverting of the mind (*āvajjana*), seeing, hearing, etc., acceptance (*sampaṭicchanna*), judgement (*santīraṇa*), etc.; specific mind states may be accompanied by certain mental concomitants (*cetasika*), whereas they may not be accompanied by others.
4. *Kamma-niyāma*: law of kamma; order of act and result; kammic laws; moral laws. Natural laws pertaining to human behaviour.

<sup>3</sup>E.g.: DA. II. 439; DhsA. 272. *Niyāma* in English has been translated in various ways by scholars, including ‘orderliness of nature’ and ‘five aspects of natural law’. See also the footnote at the beginning of chapter 3 on the Three Characteristics.

More specifically, this refers to the process of intention and the process of conceptualization, along with corresponding results of these mental activities. For example: if one performs good actions, one reaps good results; if one performs bad actions, one reaps bad results.

5. *Dhamma-niyāma*: general law of cause and effect; order of the norm. The law of nature pertaining to the interrelationship and mutual conditionality of all things. For example: all things arise, are sustained, and come to an end; it is the norm that human beings are born, age, fall ill, and die; the normal lifespan of human beings at this time era is roughly one hundred years; regardless of whether a Buddha appears or not, it is part of the natural order that all things are impermanent, *dukkha* ('subject to pressure'), and nonself (*anattā*).

The first four kinds of laws are in fact included in the fifth law, of *dhamma-niyāma*, or one can say that they are divisions stemming from this law. The definition of *dhamma-niyāma* encompasses all five kinds of laws.

It is accurate to say that *dhamma-niyāma* is the chief, over-arching law. In this case, some people may argue that if one is going to list subsidiary laws in detail, then this list should be exhaustive. Why does *dhamma-niyāma* remain along with these four subsidiary laws?

This can be answered with a simple analogy. When the entire human population of a country is described, it may be divided say into 'government leaders, civil servants, merchants, and the general populace', or 'soldiers, police, civil servants, students, and the general public'. Indeed, the terms 'general populace' and 'general public' can refer to all individuals in society. Civil servants, businessmen, soldiers, and students are all part of the general population. The reason why these individuals may be distinguished from the rest is because they have unique attributes, which the person making the division wishes to emphasize, depending on his or her objective. {237} On each occasion, the term 'general populace', or a similar term, is used to incorporate all the remaining individuals. The description of the five natural laws can be viewed in the same way.

It is not our task here to examine whether other subsidiary laws should be added to this list. The commentators selected these five in accord with their own personal objectives. Moreover, the four subsidiary laws are all incorporated in the factor of *dhamma-niyāma*, as just explained. The point of interest here is to examine the true significance and purpose of describing these five laws. Here are a few points to consider:

First, this presentation provides a cogent view of the Buddhist way of thought, describing the causal nature of everything in the world. Although these five natural laws are distinguished from one another, the primary emphasis is on mutual conditionality. This provides Dhamma practitioners with a clearly defined principle for study, practice, and understanding. They need not get caught up in the debate whether a Creator God alters the natural flow of conditions, deviating from the norm (unless one considers that God simply participates like other conditions in the natural process).

Some people may object here and voice the opinion: without a Creator of these laws, surely they could not have come into existence? One need not get caught up in such questions, which only mislead and beguile people. If one accepts that things exist according to their own nature, then they must proceed in a certain way. Things have always proceeded in conformity with their naturally dictated course. It is impossible for them to proceed other than by mutual conditionality. Human beings observe and understand these patterns and proceedings and refer to them as natural laws. But whether they are distinguished and labelled as laws or not, they exist all the same.

If one insists that someone must have created the laws of nature, then one is faced with all sorts of troubling questions, like: ‘What laws dictate the actions of the Creator?’ and ‘Who supervises the Creator?’ If in reply one claims that the Creator acts entirely by his own will, then surely he is able to change the laws according to his whim. Some day, he may alter the laws and create chaos for human beings. (Indeed, if such a Creator of natural laws were to exit, and he is endowed with compassion, he would change some laws in order to assist people. For example, he would prevent the birth of handicapped, crippled, or mentally impaired people.)



Second, when one divides the law of causality into subsidiary laws, it is important not to attribute resultant phenomena as belonging exclusively and categorically to one particular law. In fact, a single result may arise from various causes or pertain to several laws in combination. The fact that a lotus blooms only during the day, for example, is not solely due to physical laws, but it is also due to biological laws. The reason why a person is crying may be due to psychological laws, say of being sad or elated, or it may occur due to physical laws, say of getting smoke in the eyes. Someone may be sweating due to physical laws, say because it is hot, or due to psychological and kammic laws, say because he is afraid or recalls doing something wrong. One may have a headache due to physical laws, say from muggy weather, a stuffy room, or a lack of oxygen, or due to biological laws, say from some defect in one's body, or due to a combination of kammic laws and psychic laws, say from anxiety and distress.

Third, and most important, the commentaries reveal how the law of kamma is incorporated among these natural laws. {238}

In relation to human beings, *kamma-niyāma* is the most important of these subsidiary laws, because it is a matter that affects everyone directly. Human beings create kamma, which in turn determines their destiny.

Modern people tend to divide the various forces in the world, by setting nature in contrast with human beings. Following this division, kammic laws belong to the scope of activities belonging to human beings. All of the other subsidiary laws pertain to the sphere of nature.

Human beings are children of nature and are part of nature. But human beings possess a unique capacity, of operating under moral or kammic laws (*kamma-niyāma*). They form communities and invent things by way of their volitional actions, almost creating a separate or parallel world to that of the natural world.

Within the sphere of *kamma-niyāma*, the essence or core of kamma is intention or volition. The law of kamma embraces the entire world of intention or the world of creativity (and destruction) arising from human beings' ingenuity and innovation. *Kamma-niyāma* is the prevailing law for human beings, regardless of whether they engage with other laws or

not. Indeed the very engagement with other laws depends on the law of kamma.

The domain of volitional activity enables human beings to influence, alter, and create things. More accurately, the participation by people as one cause and condition within natural processes, to the extent that they claim to be able to control or defeat nature, is dependent on the law of kamma. People intentionally engage with other laws existing within the sphere of nature, studying them and acting accordingly, or deriving benefit from them. For this reason it is said that intention determines and shapes the natural world. Furthermore, human intention determines social interactions.

Besides shaping social interactions and behaviour in relation to external things, the environment, and nature in general, human beings, or more accurately, human intentions, have an effect on people themselves, shaping their personalities and determining their fate.

The law of kamma encompasses the world of intention and all forms of human creativity. It is the key factor in moulding each individual's life. It determines the course of human society and all human creative and destructive activities. It is the basis on which people engage with other laws, in order to control the natural world. For this reason, great emphasis is given in Buddhism to the principle of kamma. The Buddha said: 'The world exists according to kamma' (*kammunā vattatī loko*).<sup>4</sup> Kamma is thus a vital teaching in Buddhism.

The inclusion of *kamma-niyāma* in the group of five laws also indicates that the law of kamma is simply one of several laws of nature. Therefore, when a phenomenon occurs, or when someone experiences some form of affliction, do not wrongly presume that it is solely due to kamma.<sup>5</sup> {239}

<sup>4</sup>M. II. 196; Sn. 123. Alternatively: 'The world exists because of kamma'. [Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation: 'Action makes the world go round'.]

<sup>5</sup>Abhidhamma scholars would state that, although human beings who are comprised of the five aggregates are subject to all of the natural laws, only some parts of the five aggregates arise as a consequence of and are directly governed by kamma. The Abhidhamma makes the distinction, for example, that the material form (*rūpa-dhamma*) of our bodies may arise as a consequence of kamma, of mind (*citta*), of physical laws (*utu*), or of food (*āhāra*).

The Buddha's quote (above), 'The world exists according to kamma,' refers to the world of living beings, or to the world of human beings. In other words, kamma governs and determines human society.

In sum, *kamma-niyāma* is a subsidiary law of nature, but it is the most important law for human beings.

Apart from the five aforementioned laws, there exists another law pertaining exclusively to human beings. It is not inherent in nature nor is it directly connected to nature. This refers to those laws and conventions set down by human beings themselves, in order to regulate social behaviour and to promote social wellbeing. These social prescriptions include policies, rules, pacts, legislation, traditions, customs, disciplinary codes, etc. One may affix this sixth law as an appendix to the five laws of nature mentioned above.

For the sake of convenience, one may designate a similar heading for this group of social prescriptions to those laws of nature. Yet one needs to be aware that this so-called 'sixth law' lies outside and apart from the group of five natural laws. There are many such headings to choose from, including: *saṅgama-niyāma* ('social law'), *saṅgama-niyamana* ('social practice'), *sammati-niyāma* ('conventional law'), and *paññatti-niyāma* ('prescribed law').<sup>6</sup>

All four of these example headings make it clear that they are referring to human laws rather than to natural laws. The first two terms refer to social prescriptions. The third term refers to human conventions, to those mutual agreements established in society. The fourth term refers to human prescriptions and stipulations.

Here, in this text, the term 'conventional law' (*sammati-niyāma*) is used to refer to these human-made laws.

These social criteria and guidelines are fashioned by human beings. They thus result from intentional actions and are related to the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). Yet they are supplementary to the law of kamma – they do not constitute *kamma-niyāma* per se. They are not characterized

<sup>6</sup>Trans.: note that the term *niyamana* is linked etymologically to *niyāma*.

by mutual conditionality, nor are they aspects of natural truth in the way that *kamma-niyāma* is. Because they overlap with the law of kamma, the difference between the two tends to cause confusion, which in turn leads to numerous debates and misunderstandings among people.

Because these two kinds of laws – the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) and conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*) – have the greatest bearing on human beings, it is important to point out their distinctive attributes.

First, *kamma-niyāma* is a law of nature dealing with human actions. Conventional or social laws are established by people themselves. They are related to the laws of nature only to the extent of being a result of human intentional activity. Second, by way of the law of kamma, human beings are accountable to their actions according to the dynamics of nature. In the context of social laws, however, people must take responsibility for their actions according to the decrees formulated by people themselves.

These aspects of kamma will be discussed at more length in later sections of this chapter, on questions of good and evil, and on matters concerning the reaping of results stemming from intentional actions.

## B. DEFINITION OF KAMMA

The term ‘kamma’ literally means ‘action’ or ‘work’. In the context of Dhamma teachings, however, the definition is restricted to mean ‘actions accompanied by intention’ or ‘volitional actions’.<sup>7</sup> Actions that occur without intention are not classified as kamma in this context.

This definition of kamma, however, is very broad. To truly understand the meaning of this term, its definition should be examined from different angles or presented as different layers of meaning:

- A. A direct or precise examination of kamma reveals that its essence or source is *cetanā*: intention, volition, deliberation; a determination

<sup>7</sup>A. III. 413-14.

to act; the force or agent behind action. Intention is chief, defining a person's aims and purposes, and determining the direction of all human actions. It initiates action and all forms of conceptual and creative activity. It thus lies at the heart of kamma. This is confirmed by the Buddha's words: 'It is intention, bhikkhus, that I call kamma' (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*). With intention, people then act by way of body, speech, and mind.<sup>8</sup>

- B. A broader perspective, taking into account other factors within the dynamics of human activity, reveals that volitional action ('kamma') acts as the leading agent in creating the structure and pathway of people's lives. Kamma in this sense is equivalent to, or is referred to as, 'volitional formations' (*saṅkhāra*), which can also be translated as 'fashioners of the mind'. This interpretation is found for instance as one of the twelve links in Dependent Origination. The term *saṅkhāra* refers to those mental factors or properties, with intention (*cetanā*) as leader, that shape the mind as wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral. They determine people's thoughts, speech, and physical actions, resulting in various kinds of intentional action. In brief, *saṅkhāra* may be described as 'mental conceptualization', yet even here intention is considered the principal factor. Indeed, the Buddha occasionally defined *saṅkhāra* simply as intention (*cetanā*).<sup>9</sup>
- C. An even wider perspective examines human beings as a whole, conventionally referred to as individual persons, who engage with the external world and have responsibility for their own actions. Kamma in this context refers to thoughts, speech, and physical actions – behaviour for which people must reap results, regardless of whether these results occur in the immediate present or further removed in the past and future.

This aspect of kamma is the most frequently mentioned in the texts, appearing in teachings addressed to specific individuals. Such

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>S. III, 63-4; cf.: Vism. 526-7, 530-31.

teachings encourage people to take responsibility for their personal actions and to perform wholesome deeds, as is confirmed by these words of the Buddha: {241}

Monks, there are these two things that cause distress. Which two? There is the case of the person who has not done what is good, has not done what is wholesome, and has not performed meritorious deeds, which counteract fear. Instead he has done what is evil, savage and cruel. Thinking, ‘I have not done what is wholesome; I have done what is evil’, he is distressed.

*It. 25-6.*

It is noteworthy that in the modern time this is the most common interpretation of kamma, especially in reference to past actions.

- D. The broadest perspective is to examine general human activities evident in human society. Here, kamma refers to earning a livelihood, conducting one’s life, and engaging in various activities, which result from intention and conceptualization. This interpretation is described by the Buddha in the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*:

You should know, *Vāseṭṭha*, that whoever makes his living among men by cattle herding is called a farmer; he is not a brahmin ... whoever makes his living by varied crafts is called a craftsman ... whoever makes his living by trade is called a merchant ... he who makes his living by serving others is called a servant ... whoever makes his living by stealing is called a robber ... whoever makes his living by arrows and swords is called a soldier ... whoever makes his living by priestly craft is called a chaplain ... whoever governs among men the town and realm is called a king; he is not a brahmin.... One who has no mental impurities lingering in the mind, who clings no more, he is the one I call a brahmin....

One is not a brahmin by birth, nor by birth a non-brahmin. By action (kamma) is one a brahmin, by action is one a non-brahmin.

By their acts (*kamma*: work, occupation, behaviour, lifestyle) are men farmers, craftsmen, merchants, servants, robbers, soldiers, chaplains, and even kings. This is how the wise see action as it really is, seers of Dependent Origination, skilled in action and its results. Action makes the world go round; action makes this generation of beings wander on.

*M. II. 196; Sn. 117-23.*

Similarly, in the *Aggañña Sutta*:

Then those beings who were elders met together and confided their troubles with one another: ‘Sirs, various evils have arisen among us, giving rise to theft, accusations, lying, and the taking up of clubs and batons. Let this not be so. Suppose we were to appoint (*sammati*: ‘consent to’) a certain being who would admonish where admonishment was due, censure those who deserved it, and banish those who deserved banishment. And in return we would grant him a share of the grain.’

So they went to the one among them who was the most dignified, the most attractive, the most charismatic and awe-inspiring, and asked him to do this for them in return for a share of the grain, and he agreed.... {242} Because he was chosen by the people, the first regular title of *Mahā Sammata* (‘Great Authority’) came to be.<sup>10</sup>

*D. III. 92-3.*

Similarly, in the *Cakkavatti Sutta*:

Monks, when the king did not furnish property to the needy, poverty became rife; from the growth of poverty, stealing increased; from the increase of theft, the use of weapons increased; from the increased use of weapons, the taking of life increased – and from the increase of killing, lying increased ... divisive speech ... adultery ...

<sup>10</sup>The Pali term *satta* (‘being’) usually refers to human beings. The Buddha before his awakening is referred to as the *bodhisatta* or the *mahāsatta*. Even after his awakening he was sometimes referred to as the ‘being beyond all delusion’ (see, e.g.: *M. I. 21, 83*).

offensive speech and trivial talk ... covetousness and ill-will ... wrong view increased.<sup>11</sup>

D. III. 70-71.

Although one may define kamma into these four distinct categories, one should remember that in each case intention (*cetanā*) lies at the heart of such actions. Intention leads people to engage with things and determines the manner of such engagement. It determines how people respond to things and how they alter or improve things. It determines whether one makes oneself a channel for expressing unwholesome qualities of greed, hatred, and delusion, or instead for expressing wholesome qualities in order to foster true wellbeing. All this is under the power of intention.

Actions free from intention do not effect results within the domain of the law of kamma – they are not classified as kamma. Rather, they are matters pertaining to other laws of nature, in particular to physical laws (*utu-niyāma*). They are seen as equivalent to landslides or to a branch falling from a tree.

### C. KINDS OF KAMMA

From the perspective of its quality or source, kamma is divided into two factors:<sup>12</sup>

1. Unwholesome actions (*akusala-kamma*): unskilful actions; bad actions. This refers to those actions stemming from unwholesome roots, i.e. greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

<sup>11</sup>The term ‘furnish’ is a translation from *anupadāna*, which can also be translated as ‘administer’, ‘share’, ‘distribute’, or ‘give’.

<sup>12</sup>See: A. I. 104, 263; It. 25-6, 54-5. On the subject of unwholesome and wholesome roots, see: D. III. 275; A. I. 201-202; Dhs. 180. In regard to the three wholesome roots, non-greed refers to those qualities, including generosity (*cāga*; ‘relinquishment’), that are adversaries to greed (*lobha*); non-hatred (*adosa*; ‘non ill-will’) refers to those qualities, in particular lovingkindness (*mettā*), that are adversaries to hatred; and non-delusion refers to those qualities, in particular wisdom (*pañña*), that are adversaries to delusion (see: Dhs. 188-9; Majjhimanikāya Ṭīkā [Burmese edition 1/56]).



2. Wholesome actions (*kusala-kamma*): skilful actions; good actions. This refers to those actions stemming from wholesome roots, i.e. non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). {243}

If one divides kamma according to the ‘doorway’ (*dvāra*) by which actions are performed – the pathways of expression – the classification is threefold:<sup>13</sup>

1. Physical actions (*kāya-kamma*): actions by way of the body.
2. Verbal actions (*vacī-kamma*): actions by way of speech.
3. Mental actions (*mano-kamma*): actions by way of the mind.

Combining the two aforementioned classifications results in six kinds of kamma: unwholesome physical, verbal, and mental actions, and wholesome physical, verbal, and mental actions.<sup>14</sup>

Another classification divides kamma into four factors according to the relationship actions have to their results (*vipāka*):<sup>15</sup>

1. Dark actions with dark results: this refers to physical, verbal, and mental volitional formations (*kāya-saṅkhāra*, *vacī-saṅkhāra*, and *mano-saṅkhāra*) that are harmful and oppressive. Basic examples include: injuring other creatures (*pāṇātīpāta*), stealing (*adinnādāna*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācāra*), lying (*musāvādā*), and heedlessly indulging in alcoholic beverages.
2. Bright actions with bright results: this refers to physical, verbal, and mental volitional formations that are neither harmful nor oppressive. An example is upholding the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammapathā*).

<sup>13</sup>M. I. 373; A. I. 104; Dhs. 180.

<sup>14</sup>A. I. 104, 292.

<sup>15</sup>These four are figurative definitions of kamma, with many nuances of meaning. See: D. III. 230; M. I. 389-90; A. II. 230-37.

3. Bright and dark actions with bright and dark results: this refers to physical, verbal, and mental volitional formations that are partly harmful and partly non-harmful. Most human behaviour falls under this category.
4. Neither bright-nor-dark actions with neither bright-nor-dark results: this refers to those actions performed in order to bring an end to kamma, i.e. intention aimed at abandoning the three aforementioned kinds of kamma. In terms of spiritual qualities, this refers to the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) or to the Noble Eightfold Path.

The commentaries contain another classification of kamma, into twelve factors, i.e. into three groups of four factors. This classification was favoured by later generations of Buddhist scholars, as is seen by the description in the *Visuddhimagga*. To prevent confusion, however, it will not be presented here.<sup>16</sup>

Of the three kinds of kamma mentioned above, i.e. physical, verbal, and mental kamma, mental kamma is of the greatest importance and has the most widespread and major consequences, as confirmed by the Buddha:

Of these three kinds of action, Tapassī, thus analyzed and distinguished, I describe mental action as the most harmful in the performance of evil action, in the perpetration of evil action, and not bodily action or verbal action.

*M. I. 373.*

Mental kamma is the most important because it is the point of origin. People think before they speak or act; they think before they express themselves by way of speech or physical actions. Verbal kamma and physical kamma are thus extensions of mental kamma. Moreover, mental kamma encompasses beliefs, opinions, doctrines, ways of thinking, and values, which are collectively referred to as ‘view’ (*diṭṭhi*).

<sup>16</sup>For more detail on this twelvefold division, see the appendix.

View (*diṭṭhi*) determines people's general conduct and lifestyle, as well as the direction of society. People's thoughts, speech, teachings, instructions, actions, etc. all spring from their beliefs, viewpoints, and values. {244} If people harbour wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), their thoughts, speech, and actions will also be incorrect (*micchā*); if they harbour right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), their thoughts, speech, and actions will be correct (*sammā*).<sup>17</sup> For example, if a society believes that material affluence is of utmost value and truly desirable, people will pursue material wealth, and they will use wealth as the yardstick for measuring progress, prestige, and dignity. People's lifestyles and the direction of society will follow a particular mode or format. Another society, which considers spiritual peace and happiness to be the highest goal will follow another mode of behaviour.

There are many teachings by the Buddha expressing the significance of wrong view and right view, for example:

Monks, I do not see even a single thing on account of which unarisen unwholesome states arise and arisen unwholesome states increase and expand so much as wrong view....

Monks, I do not see even a single thing on account of which unarisen wholesome states arise and arisen wholesome states increase and expand so much as right view.

A. I. 30.

Monks, for a person of wrong view, whatever bodily kamma, verbal kamma, and mental kamma he maintains and undertakes in accord with that view, and whatever his intention, yearning, inclination, and volitional activities, they all lead to what is unwished for, undesired, and disagreeable, to harm and suffering. For what reason? Because the view is bad. Suppose a seed of neem, snake gourd, or bitter gourd were planted in moist soil. Whatever nutrients it takes up from the soil and from the water would all lead to its

<sup>17</sup>On wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) as forms of mental kamma (*mano-kamma*), see: A. V. 296-8.

bitter, pungent, and distasteful flavour. For what reason? Because the seed is bad....

Monks, for a person of right view, whatever bodily kamma, verbal kamma, and mental kamma he maintains and undertakes in accord with that view, and whatever his intention, yearning, inclination, and volitional activities, they all lead to what is wished for, desired, and agreeable, to wellbeing and happiness. For what reason? Because the view is good. Suppose a seed of sugarcane, hulled wheat, or gold apple were planted in moist soil. Whatever nutrients it takes up from the soil and from the water would all lead to its sweet, agreeable, and delectable flavour. For what reason? Because the seed is good.

*A. I. 32; cf.: A. V. 212.*

Monks, there is one person who arises in the world for the harm of many people, for the unhappiness of many people, for the ruin, harm, and suffering of many people, of devas and human beings. Who is that one person? It is one who holds wrong view and has a perverted perspective. He draws many people away from the true Dhamma and establishes them in an untrue Dhamma.... {245}

Monks, there is one person who arises in the world for the welfare of many people, for the happiness of many people, for the good, welfare, and happiness of many people, of devas and human beings. Who is that one person? It is one who holds right view and has a correct perspective. He draws many people away from an untrue Dhamma and establishes them in the true Dhamma....

Monks, I do not see even a single thing so harmful as wrong view. Wrong view is the worst of things that are harmful.<sup>18</sup>

*A. I. 33.*

<sup>18</sup>On the importance of right and wrong view in relation to one's ability to be awakened, see: S. V. 10-11, 48-9.

Mind is chief and master of all states; they are all accomplished by way of mind. If one speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering will follow, even as the wheel of the cart follows the draught-ox.... If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness will follow, even as one's radiance that never leaves.<sup>19</sup>

*Dh. verses 1 and 2.*

### 5.3 CRITERIA FOR GOOD AND EVIL

#### A. GOOD AND EVIL

The subject of kamma is directly related to the subject of good and evil. To understand kamma more clearly it is thus important to touch upon the subject of good and evil.

The concept of good and evil (or good and bad) poses a difficulty on account of the meanings of these words in English and the criteria for evaluation.<sup>20</sup> What determines something to be 'good' or 'evil'?

This dilemma, however, is primarily confined to English. The Pali terms dealing with these concepts are clearly defined, as will be discussed below.

The English word 'good', in particular, has a very broad range of meaning. Someone who behaves virtuously is called a 'good person'; when people eat delicious, agreeable food, they call the food or the restaurant where it is served 'good'; an engine that runs efficiently or smoothly is called 'good'; a wooden mallet that serves its purpose is called 'good'; a movie that is fun and enjoyable is called 'good'; a painting beautiful from an artistic point of view is called 'good', or if it fetches a high price it is called 'good'; likewise, a successful, well-managed school with clever students is called 'good'. The same table may be called 'good' by three

<sup>19</sup>[Trans.: the standard translation for *chāyā* here is 'shadow', but this term can also mean 'radiance', 'reflection', 'beauty', 'light'.]

<sup>20</sup>Trans.: the author here is of course speaking about the equivalent words in Thai – 'dee' (ดี) and 'chua' (ชั่ว) – but the same analysis applies to English.

different people, but for various reasons. One person says it is good because he considers it beautifully crafted; the second says it is good because it serves his purpose for writing; and the third says it is good because he can sell it for a high profit.

Similarly, the same object called good by one person may be called bad by others. Some things seen from one perspective are good, while seen from another perspective are bad. Some behaviour in one country or society may be considered good, while in other countries or societies it is considered bad. There are no conclusive answers or completely clear guidelines. One may have to distinguish between ‘morally good’, ‘aesthetically good’, and ‘economically good’. {246}

The reason for this confusion is that these are matters having to do with a sense of value. The terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’ can be used across the entire spectrum when referring to a sense of value. Therefore, these terms’ definitions are so broad and diverse.

To avoid this confusion, we need not use these English terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in this context. This way we need not discuss the relative merits or value of things as they appear to different people.

There are a few points to bear in mind regarding this subject of good and evil in relation to kamma:

- In this context of good and evil, the specific Pali terms *kusala* (‘wholesome’) and *akusala* (‘unwholesome’) are used, respectively. These two terms have clearly prescribed definitions and principles for evaluation.
- The analysis of good and evil here is directly related to the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). In the study of Buddhist ethics, the concepts of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness are thus viewed as natural phenomena (*sabhāva*). They are not viewed in light of a relative sense of value.<sup>21</sup> The study of relative value pertains to the level of conventional truth (*sammati-niyāma*) or of social

<sup>21</sup>If one wishes to use the term ‘value’ in this context, then it is a value connected to natural truth, not to value assigned by human beings.

prescriptions (*saṅgama-paññatti*), whose perimeters are clearly distinguished from the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*).

- The law of kamma is connected to other laws. The connections of particular importance include: internally, i.e. within an individual person, the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) is based on psychological laws (*citta-niyāma*); and externally, the law of nature is connected to conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*). In regard to this latter relationship, it is important to clearly separate the boundaries between the law of kamma and conventional laws, although there is a link between them.

## B. THE WHOLESOME AND THE UNWHOLESOME

Although the Pali terms *kusala* and *akusala* are frequently translated as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ respectively, this is not a truly accurate definition. Some things may be wholesome (*kusala*) yet in English they may not be called ‘good’; likewise, some things may be unwholesome (*akusala*) but in English they may not be referred to as ‘bad’.

Wholesomeness and unwholesomeness arise in the mind, and they begin by producing effects on the mind and by influencing a person’s personality; these effects are then expressed outwardly. The meaning of these two terms – *kusala* and *akusala* – thus focuses on the essential basis for wholesome and unwholesome action: the principal emphasis is on the internal workings of the mind.

The term *kusala* literally means ‘skilful’, ‘skilled’, ‘proficient’, ‘dextrous’, ‘easeful’, ‘favourable’, ‘supportive’, ‘appropriate’, ‘virtuous’, ‘meritorious’, ‘the elimination of base, repellent qualities’, or ‘the dispelling of illness’.

The term *akusala* refers to those conditions that are foes of *kusala* or stand in opposition to *kusala*, for example a lack of skill or a lack of ease.

In the scriptures, there are four principal definitions for the term *kusala*:

1. *Ārogya*: freedom from illness: the state of mind free from illness; a state of mental health. This refers to those conditions and factors that are conducive to mental health and help to ward off mental illness. When these factors are present, the mind is not distressed, agitated, impaired, or weak; rather, it is robust, nimble, pliable, and at ease.
2. *Anavajja*: harmless; blameless. This refers to a mind that is non-defective, non-corrupted, unblemished, and undisturbed. The mind is complete, pure, clear, and bright. {247}
3. *Kosalla-sambhūta*: springing from wisdom; stemming from intelligence. The mind is endowed with wisdom or with those attributes resulting from understanding. The mind is luminous, seeing into the truth. This is consistent with the principle stating that wholesome qualities have wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) as proximate cause (*padatṭhāna*).
4. *Sukha-vipāka*: possessing happiness as fruition; leading to happiness. When wholesome qualities are present in the mind, happiness and contentment arise immediately; one need not wait for a reward or compensation from outside. Similarly, when the body is strong and healthy (*aroga*), when one is free of all harmful, impure, or toxic elements (*anavajja*), and one has the knowledge that one is in a safe and suitable place (*kosalla-sambhūta*), although one may not experience any exceptional states of mind, one is inherently happy and at ease.

Some texts mention three more definitions for *kusala*: ‘intelligent’ (*cheka*; ‘clever’); ‘safe’ (*khema*; ‘secure’); and ‘free from anxiety’ (*nid-daratha*). These three definitions, however, are already included in the four definitions mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> Note also that the third definition above – *kosalla-sambhūta* – is the primary definition for *kusala*.

<sup>22</sup>See: DhsA. 38, 62; PsA. I. 129, 206; VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Viññāṇakkhandhakathāvaṇṇanā; Saṅganī-anuṭṭikā 201; DA. II. 645; DA. III. 883; AA. III. 161. Some texts, besides presenting these aforementioned definitions, also present literal definitions for the term *kusala*. See the references for more detail. Note that the above definitions include expanded explanations by the author; they are not copied word by word from the scriptures.



The meaning of *akusala* can be interpreted as opposite to those definitions of *kusala* above. This term refers to an unsound state of mind, to a lack of mental health. Unwholesome qualities are detrimental, reproachable, and faulty; they stem from ignorance (*avijjā*) and bear fruit as suffering. In sum, they weaken and impair the mind. This stands in contrast to wholesome qualities, which support and strengthen the mind.

To clarify this matter, one can describe the various attributes of a mind that is wholesome, healthy, pure, etc. Wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*) engender these attributes or these states of mind. Conversely, unwholesome qualities (*akusala-dhamma*) impair or corrupt the mind.

The following wholesome attributes are drawn from various passages in the Pali Canon. They range from attributes present in the minds of ordinary human beings, up to those attributes present in the minds of fully awakened beings – the arahants.

**Group #1:** *passaddha*: relaxed, tranquil, calm; *lahu*: lightness of mind; *mudu*: gentle, tender, mild; *kamañña*: wieldy, ready for work; *paguṇa*: adroit; *uju*: upright, not crooked, not distorted.<sup>23</sup>

**Group #2:** *mudu*: gentle, mild; *kammanīya*: wieldy, suitable for work; *pabhas-sara*: brilliant, clear; *apabhaṅgu*: robust, not frail; *samāhita*: steadfast; *anāvaraṇa*: unimpeded, unconfined; *anivaraṇa*: unhindered, unobstructed, unconstrained; *anupakkiliṭṭha*: untarnished, unmuddied; *anañjhārūlha*: unconstricted, unoppressed; *avighāta*: untroubled, unafflicted.<sup>24</sup> {248}

**Group #3:** *samāhita*: steadfast, balanced, even; *parisuddha*: pure, impeccable; *pariyodāta*: pristine, bright; *anaṅgaṇa*: unblemished, clear; *vigatūpakkilesa*: unstained; *mudubhūta*: gentle, tender; *kammanīya*: wieldy; *ṭhita* and *āneñjappatta*: steady, grounded, composed, stable, unshakeable, non-wavering.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup>See: Dhs. 66-7. These factors are extracted from the list of beautiful mental factors (*sobhaṇa-cetasika*) in the Abhidhamma.

<sup>24</sup>These factors are presented in reference to the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*); they are compiled from: S. V. 92-8.

<sup>25</sup>These are the attributes of a well-concentrated mind; see, e.g.: M. II. 93.

The next two groups are primarily comprised of attributes belonging to arahants:

**Group #4:** *akiñcana*: nothing lingering in the mind, free from latent anxiety; *santa*: peaceful, satisfied; *asoka*: sorrowless; *viraja*: free from dust; *khema*: safe, secure, free from danger; *nicchāta*: sated, free from hankering; *sītabhūta*: cooled, deeply at peace; *nibbuta*: cooled, calmed; *serī*: released, able to wander freely; *sayarivasī*: self-mastery, self-reliant; *sukhī*: happy.<sup>26</sup>

**Group #5:** *anallīna*: unentangled, unobsessed; *anajjhosita*: unintimidated; *anūpalitta*: unsoiled, unpolluted; *anissita*: independent, not dependent on anything; *visaññuta*: unfettered; *vippamutta*: liberated; *vimariyādikata-citta*: with an unbounded, limitless mind.<sup>27</sup>

For ease of memory, these attributes may be divided into various main headings:

1. Stability: e.g.: steadfast, steady, even, unshakeable, unwavering, non-agitated, non-vacillating.
2. Purity: e.g.: untainted, unmuddied, unstained, unblemished, clear, bright, brilliant.
3. Freedom: e.g.: unentangled, unconfined, unrestricted, unbound, unafflicted, expansive.
4. Suitability for work: e.g.: gentle, soft, light, at ease, adroit, supple, robust, upright, not frail, unbiased, not crooked, non-deviating, not distorted.
5. Peace: relaxed, calm, content, not stressed, not lacking, not hankering, not agitated, untroubled, undisturbed.

<sup>26</sup>These attributes are mentioned in different passages of the Tipiṭaka; see the section in chapter 7 on the attributes of awakened beings.

<sup>27</sup>This group emphasizes the freedom of arahants. It can be found in many places in the Tipiṭaka, with slight variation. See: M. III. 25, 30; S. III. 30-31; S. IV. 11-12; A. I. 260; A. V. 152; and it is found not less than fifteen times in the Mahāniddeśa, e.g.: Nd. I. 55-6, 71, 90, 133.

## NOTE 5.1: WHOLESOME AND UNWHOLESOME DESIRE

The difference between *kusala-chanda* and *kāma-chanda* (or *lobha*) is discussed at length in chapter 10 on desire and motivation. In brief, greed (*lobha*) is an attachment to sense objects that offer instant gratification, but do not lead anywhere beyond this. Greed focuses on indulging in sense objects and it reinforces a sense of self, which acquires or consumes these objects. Wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*), on the other hand, takes hold of things that are in a beginning stage of development. The mind embraces and harmonizes with things, assisting them to reach completion. It does not involve a wish for personal gratification, nor does it lead to a sense of an isolated self that acquires or consumes things.

When one is familiar with the attributes of a healthy, unblemished mind, one can examine those qualities that are defined as either wholesome or unwholesome. How do wholesome qualities support and strengthen the mind, and how do unwholesome qualities plague and spoil, weaken and afflict the mind? {249}

Here are examples of wholesome qualities: *sati*: mindfulness, the ability to sustain attention; *mettā*: lovingkindness, goodwill, the wish for others to be happy; *alobha*: non-greed, absence of craving, the inclination to be generous; *paññā*: wisdom, penetrative insight; *passaddhi*: tranquillity, physical repose and mental calm, an absence of stress and restlessness; *kusala-chanda*: wholesome enthusiasm, love of goodness, aspiration for truth, a wish to harmonize with causes and conditions; *muditā*: delight and rejoicing when others succeed or are happy.

Here are examples of unwholesome qualities: *kāma-chanda*: greed, covetousness, hankering (see Note 5.1); *byāpāda*: ill-will, indignation, resentment; *thīna-middha*: despondency, discouragement, apathy, listlessness, lethargy; *uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness, mental agitation, mental disturbance, moodiness, worry, anxiety; *vicikicchā*: doubt, indecisiveness; *kodha*: anger; *issā*: envy; *macchariya*: stinginess, jealousy, a wish to obstruct others.

When one is endowed with lovingkindness (*mettā*), the mind is happy, peaceful, and expansive. Kindness supports and strengthens the mind. And mindfulness helps to sustain attention on those things with which

one is engaged. It is aware of appropriate action in specific circumstances, wards against unwholesome qualities, and prepares the mind for work. These two qualities are thus classified as wholesome.

Jealousy constricts, agitates, and oppresses the mind; it clearly weakens and impairs the mind. Anger burns from within, causing mental distress, and it can quickly damage one's physical health. Craving, or just ordinary greed, entangles, distorts, and beclouds the mind, making it fretful and anxious. These qualities are thus unwholesome.

Although despondency, apathy, listlessness, and restlessness, etc., are unwholesome, in English it is not fully accurate to say that these qualities are 'bad'. Similarly, some wholesome qualities like tranquillity are not necessarily referred to as 'good'. This demonstrates how the terms 'wholesome' and 'unwholesome' are not identical to the terms 'good' and 'bad'.

By understanding the meanings of *kusala* and *akusala*, one also gains an understanding of good kamma and bad kamma, that is, of wholesome kamma (*kusala-kamma*) and unwholesome kamma (*akusala-kamma*).

As mentioned earlier, intention (*cetanā*) is the essential factor for volitional action (*kamma*). Therefore, wholesome intentions (*kusala-cetanā*) are defined as wholesome kamma, and unwholesome intentions (*akusala-cetanā*) are defined as unwholesome kamma.

When wholesome and unwholesome intentions are expressed by way of body, speech, or mind, they are referred to as wholesome and unwholesome physical actions (*kāya-kamma*), verbal actions (*vacī-kamma*), and mental actions (*mano-kamma*), respectively. {250}

### C. SPECIAL POINTS ON WHOLESOMENESS AND UNWHOLESOMENESS

#### 1. *The Wholesome and the Unwholesome Can Be Interconnected*

Some people are endowed with faith, practise generosity, keep moral precepts, or possess aspects of wisdom, all of which are wholesome qualities or activities, yet they become conceited or arrogant as a consequence of this virtuous behaviour. Conceit and arrogance are unwholesome

qualities. This is an example of the wholesome acting as a condition for the unwholesome.

Some people develop concentration and attain the jhānas, yet become captivated by these refined states. Some people develop lovingkindness and goodwill, yet when they encounter an attractive sense object, their love facilitates the arising of lust, which may then be followed by other unwholesome qualities like prejudice. These are more examples of the wholesome acting as a condition for the unwholesome.

Faith is a wholesome quality, uplifting and focusing the mind. But if one relates to faith unskillfully, it may lead to wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*). One is convinced that one's own views are correct, while others' views are false, which may be a cause for quarrelling, disputing, and abuse. This too is an example of the wholesome acting as a condition for the unwholesome.

Some people long to be born in heaven and thus determine to act virtuously. Some yearn for peace and thus practise concentration until they reach the concentrative attainments. Some children wish to be admired by adults and thus try to behave in a well-disciplined way. Some students desire good grades and thus strive to study and seek knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Some people feel the burning influence of anger, which then leads them to clearly understand the harmful effects of anger. Some people become offended by an adversary, yet this experience leads them to feel compassion for others. Others may feel anxious or depressed and as a result they gain faith in the Dhamma. These are examples of the unwholesome acting as a condition for the wholesome.

A teenager is warned by his parents to take great care over whom he associates with, but he does not listen. Later, he is duped by a bad character into drug addiction. When he is aware of what has happened, he is both angry at himself and depressed. He understands his parents' warning and is deeply moved by their care for him (the unwholesome

<sup>28</sup>The terms 'longing', 'yearning', 'wish', and 'desire' here are translations of the Pali term *rāga*, which is synonymous with the term *lobha*. The translation of *rāga* is sometimes limited to the definition of 'lust', but it has a wider range of meaning. See: Paṭ: 154-5, 168-9.

conditioning the wholesome), which in turn makes him even more angry at himself (the wholesome conditioning the unwholesome).

During this exchange between the wholesome and the unwholesome, when wholesome qualities are present the mind is in a state of wellbeing, while when unwholesome qualities are present the mind is impaired. The wholesome and the unwholesome may alternate rapidly, and for this reason it is important to distinguish between different mind moments.

## **2. Good and Evil, and the Wholesome and the Unwholesome**

In some cases these two pairs of terms – *puñña* and *pāpa* and *kusala* and *akusala* – can be used interchangeably, while in other cases they cannot. The distinction between these terms can thus cause confusion. Here, only a brief explanation of this distinction is given. {251}

In a literal sense, the term *puñña* ('merit', 'goodness') is defined in two ways: factors for purifying the underlying disposition of mind, and factors leading to the fruition of a meritorious state of existence. Other definitions include: factors leading to holiness, and factors bringing one's wishes to fulfilment.

The term *pāpa* is literally defined as factors leading to the round of suffering (*vaṭṭa-dukkha*), or factors leading to a bad destination (*duggati*). Common definitions for *pāpa* include 'filthy', 'indecent', 'wicked', 'evil', and 'base'. Occasionally, *pāpa* is used as a qualifying adjective for the fruit of volitional action (*vipāka*); in this context it means 'miserable' (*dukkha*) or 'undesirable' (*aniṭṭha*).<sup>29</sup>

Note that these definitions have been established by linguists and only reveal certain aspects of the meanings of these terms. It is essential to also understand their true meanings within the context of Dhamma teachings.

<sup>29</sup>In regard to these definitions, see: ItA. I. 78, 152-3; AA. II. 42, 91; UdA. 220; VinA. II. 404; VbhA. 142; VinT. [2/142]; VinT.: Tatiyapārājikam, Paṭhamapaññātinidānaṇṇanā; VismT.: Khandhaniddesaṇṇanā, Viññāṇakkhandhakathāṇṇanā; VismT.: Paññābhūminiddesaṇṇanā, Avijjāpaccayāsaṅkhārāpadakathāṇṇanā.

In the broadest sense, *puñña* is equivalent to *kusala*, and *pāpa* is equivalent to *akusala*. Yet in the actual application of these terms, *puñña* and *pāpa* are normally used in a more restricted sense than *kusala* and *akusala*.

Generally speaking, *pāpa* is used as an equivalent for *akusala* more often than *puñña* is used as an equivalent for *kusala*. The reverse scenario, however, of *kusala* being used as an equivalent for *puñña*, is common.

An important instance of *pāpa* being used as an equivalent for *akusala* is in the first and second factors in the teaching of the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*), in which these two terms are used in conjunction: one strives to protect against unarisen ‘evil unwholesome’ (*pāpa-akusala*) qualities, and one strives to abandon those evil unwholesome qualities already arisen. In the third and fourth factors, however, *puñña* is not used together with *kusala*. Here only *kusala* is mentioned: one strives to cultivate those wholesome qualities not yet arisen, and one strives to preserve those arisen wholesome factors and bring them to perfection.<sup>30</sup>

In brief, the definitions of *puñña* and *kusala* are not identical. If one divides *kusala* into two levels, as mundane wholesomeness (*lokiya-kusala*) and transcendent wholesomeness (*lokuttara-kusala*), the term *puñña* applies to the former. In the case that *puñña* refers to transcendent wholesomeness, a modifier is added, for example: *lokuttara-puñña* (‘transcendent goodness’). This term, however, is uncommon (it is only found in one passage of the commentaries, along with the corresponding passage in the sub-commentaries.)<sup>31</sup>

In the Pali Canon, the Buddha frequently mentions the term *opadhika-puñña*: ‘merit yielding fruit as the five aggregates’, which is a form of mundane goodness. This implies that the term *anopadhika-puñña* (or *nirūpadhi-puñña*) – ‘transcendent goodness’ – should appear as a pair, but these two terms do not appear anywhere in the scriptures.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>E.g.: S. V. 244; A. II. 15; SA. I. 266; SnA. [1/109, 226].

<sup>31</sup>DA. III. 858.

<sup>32</sup>See: S. I. 233; A. IV. 293; It. 19-20, 77-8.

Instead, in one sutta of the Pali Canon one finds the term *nirūpadhi-kusala* ('transcendent wholesomeness') paired with *opadhika-puñña* ('mundane goodness'):

By way of body, speech, and mind, cultivate transcendent, boundless wholesomeness. Having cultivated mundane goodness through generosity, [develop the gift of the Dhamma], encouraging others to be established in the true Dhamma, in the sublime life.  
{252}

*It. 77-8.*

Generally speaking, the Buddha used the term *puñña* in the sense of mundane goodness (*opadhika-puñña*). Although the term *opadhika* is not added, it is implied. The meaning is thus equivalent to mundane wholesomeness (*lokiya-kusala*). *Puñña* is thus only one part of *kusala*, which also encompasses the transcendent. Only very few commentarial passages fully equate *puñña* and *kusala*.<sup>33</sup>

The commentaries explain the various nuances of the term *puñña*. The *Paramatthadīpanī* (the commentary to the *Itivuttaka*) for instance, provides five definitions for this term:<sup>34</sup>

1. The fruit derived from wholesome actions, for example in the passage: 'Due to undertaking various wholesome things, merit increases.'<sup>35</sup>
2. Virtuous behaviour in the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara*) and the fine-material sphere (*rūpāvacara*), e.g.: 'One is subject to ignorance if one proliferates over meritorious activities (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*).'<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>See: ItA. I. 78.

<sup>34</sup>ItA. I. 73.

<sup>35</sup>D. III. 78-9. Note that the commentarial explanation of this passage uses the term *lokuttara-puñña* (DA. III. 858).

<sup>36</sup>E.g.: S. II. 82.



3. Distinctively happy destinations of birth, e.g.: ‘Consciousness arriving at a state of goodness (*puñña*).’<sup>37</sup>
4. Wholesome intention, for example in the term *puññakiriyā-vatthu* (‘bases of meritorious action’; this is equivalent to wholesome action – *kusala-kamma*).<sup>38</sup>
5. Wholesome actions in the three planes of existence, e.g.: ‘Bhikkhus, do not fear goodness (*puñña*).’<sup>39</sup> (This is equivalent to mundane wholesomeness.)

The fifth definition is the principal one, corresponding to the explanation in the Mahāniddesa:

Whatever wholesome formation (*kusalābhisankhāra*) in the three states of being (*dhātu*: *kāma-dhātu*, *rūpa-dhātu*, and *arūpa-dhātu*) is called ‘goodness’ (*puñña*). All unwholesomeness is called ‘non-goodness’ (*apuñña* = *pāpa* – ‘evil’).

*Nd. I. 90; explaining: Sn. 155; expanded upon at NdA. I. 219; cf.: Dh. verses 39, 267, 412.*

In sum, ‘goodness’ (*puñña*) refers to mundane wholesomeness (*kusala*); ‘evil’ (*pāpa*) refers to all unwholesomeness (*akusala*). *Kusala* is divided into mundane and transcendent wholesomeness, while *akusala* is exclusively mundane. Both goodness (*puñña*) and evil (*pāpa*) refer to mundane phenomena.<sup>40</sup>

These definitions help to understand such phrases as ‘free from good and evil’, ‘abandoning good and evil’, and ‘rising above good and evil’, which refer to attributes of an arahant’s mind.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>It. 51-52.

<sup>39</sup>It. 15. As mentioned earlier, if *puñña* is meant to refer to the transcendent, then a modifier is added (e.g.: *lokuttara-puñña*).

<sup>40</sup>See fn. 46.

<sup>41</sup>See fn. 47.

Note that such freedom from good and evil implies a freedom from or an abandonment of mundane wholesomeness; it does not mean that arahants have abandoned transcendent wholesomeness. {253}

When the terms *puñña* and *kusala* appear in tandem, *kusala* takes on the definition of *puñña*; its meaning is thus narrowed, referring to mundane wholesomeness.<sup>42</sup> An important attribute of mundane goodness, or mundane wholesomeness, is that a person is still concerned with material or sensual results. The focus here is not deliverance of mind or on the complete removal of mental defilement.

Here are two examples in the Pali Canon of how these terms are applied: when a bhikkhu is thinking of giving up the training, he often says that he will disrobe in order to spend wealth and make merit;<sup>43</sup> and a virtuous householder's life is marked by spending wealth and making merit.<sup>44</sup> The term 'merit' here refers to various virtuous actions, like being charitable, offering gifts, upholding moral standards, etc., corresponding to the term 'wholesome action' (*kusala-kamma*).<sup>45</sup> The same meaning applies in the passage: 'Merit is favourable for devas, for human beings, and for renunciants.'<sup>46</sup> In the Buddha's statement that 'merit is a name for happiness', *puñña* here refers to the desirable fruits of wholesome actions.<sup>47</sup> The expression 'death due to the end of merit' (*puññakhaya-maraṇa*) refers to having used up the fruits of meritorious actions which conditioned that particular birth.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Kusala* appears in tandem with *puñña*, and has the same meaning as *puñña*, in the following passages: *puññābhisanda kusalābhisanda* (A. III. 51-2; A. IV. 245-6; cf.: S. V. 391); 'Though he thinks: "Let me do merit," he does demerit. Though he thinks: "Let me do what is wholesome," he does what is unwholesome' (A. IV. 42-3). Note also the pairing referred to above of *nirūpadhi-kusala* with *opadhika-puñña* at It. 77-8.

<sup>43</sup> E.g.: Vin. I. 182; M. I. 461; A. II. 125; A. III. 374-5.

<sup>44</sup> M. II. 57; A. IV. 209-210.

<sup>45</sup> See the meaning of *puñña* at, e.g.: VinA. I. 205; MA. III. 292.

<sup>46</sup> A. III. 34.

<sup>47</sup> It. 15; ItA. I. 75.

<sup>48</sup> E.g.: Vism. 229.

In a similar vein, the definition of the term *dhamma*, whereby it corresponds to the term *puñña*, is related to going to heaven, just like the term *adhamma*, corresponding to *pāpa*, is related to going to hell.<sup>49</sup>

Although *puñña* and *kusala* are synonyms, in the general application of these terms, the meaning of *kusala* is broader than the meaning of *puñña*. These terms can be used interchangeably in some contexts, but not in others. The definitions of *pāpa* and *akusala* are closer to one another, and thus these two terms are more frequently used interchangeably. They are most often used to portray attributes in opposition to *puñña*. Here are a few more points pertaining to these terms:

- The term *kusala* may be used in reference to intentional actions (*kamma*) or in reference to natural phenomena. *Puñña*, on the other hand, is usually used only in reference to intentional actions. The terms ‘wholesome action’ (*kusala-kamma*) and ‘wholesome state’ (*kusala-dhamma*) are common. The term ‘meritorious action’ (*puñña-kamma*) is also found, but the term ‘meritorious state’ (*puñña-dhamma*) sounds unusual and does not appear to be used in Dhamma teachings. The terms ‘unwholesome action’ (*akusala-kamma*), ‘unwholesome state’ (*akusala-dhamma*), ‘evil action’ (*pāpa-kamma*), and ‘evil state’ (*pāpa-dhamma*) are all found in the scriptures.
- In special circumstances, *puñña* refers to the fruit of wholesome actions. Even in those cases where it does not refer to the fruit of goodness directly, *puñña* is used in relation to the effects of actions, or it seems to focus on external or sensual rewards, in particular to happiness and to being born in good destinations.
- For these reasons, *puñña* is usually only used in reference to mundane goodness and wholesomeness. It is very rare that this term is used to encompass the meaning of transcendent wholesomeness. {254}

<sup>49</sup>E.g.: PsA. I. 18.

Here are two more points that may be of interest to scholars:

- The terms *puñña* and *pāpa* were commonly used before the Buddha's time, and their meanings were tied up with the concepts of fate and the sacred. The Buddha used these terms to the extent that they fit with Buddhist principles. The terms *kusala* and *akusala* were also used before the Buddha's time, but in the sense of 'skilled', 'clever', 'proficient', 'easeful', or 'healthy' (and the opposite meanings). The Buddha used these terms, but defined them to correspond with desired nuances of meaning.
- For this reason, the terms *kusala* and *akusala* have truly Buddhist connotations, and are used in a technical sense. In contrast, the Buddha tended to use the terms *puñña* and *pāpa* when teaching householders and when referring to everyday life.<sup>50</sup>

#### D. CRITERIA FOR GOOD AND BAD ACTION

As mentioned earlier the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) is most closely linked to psychological laws (*citta-niyāma*) and to conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*). This close relationship between the three can cause confusion for people. Therefore, in order to clearly understand the subject of kamma, and of good and evil, it is important to distinguish the boundaries between these three laws.

The law of kamma overlaps psychological laws, yet there is also a clear point of separation. Intention (*cetanā*), which is the essence and primary agent within the law of kamma, makes this law independent from other laws, or it provides people with a role independent of other laws. Intention enables a personal sphere of deliberation and design, to the

<sup>50</sup>Note that the Abhidhamma generally does not use the terms *puñña* and *pāpa*. Exceptions are when *pāpa* is used as a modifier for the term *akusala*, and when *puñña* appears in the term *puññābhisaṅkhāra*, which has a specially designated meaning. The Abhidhamma commentaries refer to the ten bases of meritorious action (*puñṇākiriya-vatthu*) to explain the wholesome mind of the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara-kusalacitta*); see: DhsA. 157.

extent that people claim to be equal to or to compete with nature, and distinguish their own world of creations from the domain of nature.

Intention relies on the mechanisms of psychological laws<sup>51</sup> in order to function, and when a person performs intentional actions, the fruition of these actions rely on psychological laws in order to be maintained. This is similar to someone driving a motorboat. The driver is like intention, which pertains to the law of kamma. The boat's engine is like the mechanisms and various factors of the mind, which pertain to psychological laws. The driver must rely on the engine, but the direction which the boat (i.e. a person's life along with his or her body) goes, is determined by the driver. The driver relies on and derives benefit from the engine, yet he is ultimately responsible for where the boat goes. This is similar to how the law of kamma relies on and derives benefit from psychological laws. Intentional action, however, is responsible for the direction life goes, including the consequences one's decisions have for the mind and body.

The relationship between the law of kamma and psychological laws generally causes no problems, because people tend not to give it much attention. Regardless of the level of interest people have in it, or even whether people are aware of it or not, this relationship functions automatically, generally out of sight from people.

On the contrary, the relationship between the law of kamma and conventional laws causes much confusion for people. Many people have doubts about good and evil; they question what is good and evil, what is the true validity behind marking an action as good or evil, and what are the criteria for determining good and evil. {255}

Many people claim that good and evil are concepts exclusively determined and assigned by people and by society. The same action may be labelled good in one society or by one generation, but labelled bad in another society or at another point in history. The same action may be endorsed by one society and forbidden by another. For example, some tribal cultures may decree that killing members of another tribe is good, while more developed cultures will recognize that the killing of all human beings is wrong. Some religions teach that killing animals for food is

<sup>51</sup>Trans.: see p. 312.

blameless, while other religions teach that injuring any living creature is unskilful. Some cultures say that it is good for a woman to have several husbands, while others say that a woman should have only one – they may even prescribe that a woman should jump into her husband's funeral pyre. Some societies declare that children should honour and obey their elders, without dispute, while others declare that mutual respect and honour is independent of age and that everyone should engage in reasoned debate.

The claim that concepts of good and evil are conventional designations created by people and by society is largely true. Having said this, such conventional designations have no bearing on the law of kamma, and one should be careful not to confuse the two.

Conventional designations of good and evil pertain to conventional laws (*sammatti-niyāma*). They are distinct from matters of good and evil (matters of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness) pertaining to the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). Although these two laws are related, they have a clear point of separation. Confusion arises because people are often unable to distinguish between the two.

The factor that acts as a bridge between these two laws, and also acts to separate them, is the same as the distinguishing factor between the law of kamma and psychological laws, i.e. intention (*cetanā*). This will be examined in more detail, below.

In relation to the law of kamma, there are several important aspects to social prescriptions:

Social prescriptions are not directly connected to the wholesome and unwholesome as dictated by the law of kamma. They are established by society for a particular objective, say for social harmony and peace. They manifest as a form of mutual agreement or commitment. These prescriptions may lead to social peace and wellbeing or they may not; they may be beneficial or even harmful. This depends on how comprehensive the knowledge is of those who enact these prescriptions, or on these people's level of sincerity. These prescriptions come in many forms, from various customs and traditions, up to a body of laws.

Here, good and evil is determined by these conventional laws (*sammatti-niyāma*). The concepts of good and evil in this case are varied and variable. Their variation and changeability, however, do not pertain to the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). The two sets of laws should not be confused. When someone transgresses these prescriptions, this is a matter pertaining to conventional laws, not to the law of kamma. {256}

Now we can examine how these social conventions enter into the domain of the law of kamma. When someone accepts these prescriptions, regardless of whether these prescriptions are virtuous and beneficial or not, yet he or she decides to disobey them, at that moment there is an intention to disobey or to transgress them.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the person will be aware of these intentions, without being able to ignore or deny them.

Intention here is connected directly to the law of kamma. Some societies may try to include the factor of intention when passing judgement on people, in order to determine whether the infringement of a law was performed intentionally or not. But this is still a matter pertaining to social conventions; it simply indicates that this society is intelligent and knows how to benefit from the law of kamma.

In terms of the law of kamma, regardless of whether a society examines whether a person acted intentionally or not, or whether it determines if a law has been transgressed or not, the kammic process has begun the moment a person has an intention to infringe on a socially accepted prescription and acts upon this intention. The process of bearing kammic fruit (*vipāka*) has been set in motion, and the person begins to experience the results of his or her volitional actions.

The goodness or badness of an action in such a case must be considered from the perspective of conventional laws. It is not directly related to the law of kamma (it is linked to the law of kamma when one takes into account the intention and level of wisdom of those people who have

<sup>52</sup>Here, the examination is only at one level. In some circumstances things may be more complex, with other factors coming into play. One may have to consider, for example, the quality of wisdom behind accepting these prescriptions in the first place, which will have a bearing on the person's intentions. In any case, at the moment of thinking and acting, intention plays a role and immediately has an effect on the person's mind and life in general.

enacted these prescriptions.) In regard to observing and upholding these prescriptions, the law of kamma is only related in the area of acknowledging and accepting these socially prescribed terms, and then acting intentionally, in some way or another, in response to them.

Technically speaking, the dynamics discussed so far are part of virtuous conduct (*sīla*). They reveal the connection between human laws and the laws of nature, which must be clearly distinguished.

There are situations where conventional designations of good and bad are indirectly related to the law of kamma. For example, a society may prescribe a particular action as good and correct, to be observed by everyone. Later, someone endowed with wisdom recognizes that in fact this action is neither good nor beneficial, and may even be harmful to society. That person may try to explain this to other members of society, try to revise their ways of conduct, and perhaps even refuse to observe this custom.

In such a circumstance, the person's actions do not spring from defiled intention, as is the case for someone who breaks a law for unwholesome reasons. Instead, it springs from intention accompanied by wisdom, aiming to improve the wellbeing of others. The gist of the kammic process in these individual cases is not the same, as it depends on the quality of intention.

In any case, whatever the quality of intention, the perpetrator of such an act is aware of the specific intention and must receive the fruit of it according to the law of kamma. He may be able to hide from or deceive society, but he cannot hide from his own mind, nor can he deceive the laws of nature. In a nutshell, the determining factor in regard to the law of kamma is whether intention is wholesome or unwholesome. {257}

Generally speaking, there is no transgression, or intent to transgress, when society agrees unanimously to repeal or amend a law or prescription. In such a case, the transgressor has not compromised his integrity or betrayed a social contract.

This can be illustrated by some simple examples. Imagine two people live together. In order for both people to live at ease, they lay down



certain regulations. Say they work at different locations and return home at different times, but they agree to eat supper together. They cannot wait for the other person forever, so they each agree not to eat supper alone before seven in the evening. One of them likes cats and dislikes dogs; the other likes dogs and dislikes cats. They therefore agree not to have any pets in the house.

If either of them decides not to honour one of these agreements, the intention to breach it arises and things proceed according to the law of kamma. This is so even though, in truth, eating before seven in the evening or bringing a pet into the house is neither inherently good nor bad. Another two people may lay down an opposite set of regulations. If one of the two persons recognizes that the regulations in fact are uncondusive to their communal wellbeing, they must discuss whether to revoke or to change them. Neglecting to follow these regulations then does not entail an intention to transgress them.

The Vinaya – the monastic set of training rules – is linked to intention as part of a person's conduct, culminating in his or her moral integrity (*sīla*). Here one can see both the relationship and the distinction between uncertain, indefinite matters of good and evil, of right and wrong, prescribed by a society, and certain, definite matters of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness pertaining to the law of kamma.

There exists a relationship between social prescriptions and the law of kamma. Having said this, regardless of whether a society defines good and evil with an understanding of what is truly wholesome and unwholesome – of what is favourable and what is harmful to people – or whether it lacks this understanding, the dynamics of the law of kamma proceed naturally, unaltered by the social prescriptions.

A society may endorse the taking of intoxicants, believing that they make people happy; it may advocate violent emotions; it may believe that one should incite and stimulate people, increasing their desires and competitiveness, in order for them to be more productive; it may claim that killing other groups of people is good or that killing animals is blameless. In such cases, the so-called goodness of social prescriptions conflicts with wholesomeness within the law of kamma.

From a social perspective, these prescriptions or beliefs may have both positive and negative consequences. The endorsement of intoxicants, for example, may greatly increase the state's income by way of excise tax. But at the same time many members of society may end up dull and idle, or debilitated, and crime may be rampant. The belief that people should be frenetically productive may lead to rapid advancements in the material wellbeing of society, but it may also lead to an increase in heart disease, mental illness, suicide, and an abnormal number of other problems. {258} Similarly, in a society that condones the killing of other human beings, its members will be viewed by outsiders as cruel and untrustworthy.

Many of these consequences manifesting in society may also spring from dynamics within the law of kamma. At beginning stages, however, to avoid confusion, one should distinguish between results occurring from social prescriptions and results occurring from the law of kamma. Later, one can examine how these two dynamics are linked.

In regard to the law of kamma, there are two levels of intention: first, there is intention accompanied by an adherence to a social prescription, which manifests for example as beliefs or values; second, there is the intention to either observe or to disobey a prescription at a particular moment in time. In any case, the reaping of kammic fruit begins immediately once one has established an intention.

Take for example a person who revels in drinking alcohol; while drinking, his intention will be accompanied by a dimwitted form of delight. If he drinks regularly he will develop this state of mind as an habitual disposition.

When someone who is frantically vying to obtain things is engaged in work, his intention will be accompanied by stress and desperation, which will become habitual features of his mind.

Although someone who is determined to kill others may be praised and rewarded by his society, at the time of killing his intention is accompanied by malice and cruelty, or by wild ambition. If he frequently indulges in such killing, these states of mind may develop to form his entire personality. The quality of his mind will become coarser and will lose its refinement, subtlety, and tenderness.

Here, the term *cetanā* ('intention') should be inspected more closely. In the Pali Canon, the meaning of the term *cetanā* is more subtle and refined than the meaning of 'intention' in English. Generally speaking, the term 'intention' in English is used when one wishes to link internal deliberations with external actions. For example, people may say: 'He had a slip of the tongue; he didn't intend to say that,' or 'she acted intentionally.' In Dhamma teachings – i.e. according to the principle of kamma – however, deliberate speech, physical actions, and thoughts, memories and recollections, and emotional responses to things received by way of the five senses, no matter how minor or temporary, are all accompanied by intention.

*Cetanā* thus refers to volition, purpose, and deliberation, to selecting the objects for attention. Intention is the principal factor for steering and activating the mind, which then inclines towards or turns away from things, or pursues a specific direction. It is the leader, director, and governor of the mind, determining how one relates to various things. It shapes the course of the mind and in the end it conditions one's particular state of mind.

When intention arises, kamma manifests. When kamma manifests, it produces immediate effects, because with the arising of intention the mind becomes active – there is mental activity. Even in the case of minor, fleeting thoughts, which do not bear any significant fruit, they still have an effect. At the very least they constitute a form of fine kammic 'dust' that accumulates in the mind and affects its properties. When it increases, for instance when the mind resorts to these thoughts frequently, or when they intensify and are expressed as outward actions, their effects become more pronounced, developing into a person's habits and personality. {259}

Take the example of harmful deeds. One need not examine an action as dire as killing another person; even damaging something of very little value, if performed with malicious intent or a mind of anger, say tearing up a piece of useless paper out of irritation, has an effect on the quality of the mind. It is not the same as someone tearing up unneeded paper with an ordinary state of mind.

When one performs a volitional action repeatedly, the effects of this kammic accumulation become more obvious and may gradually magnify in scope. This is similar to dust settling in a room, in a way unnoticed by the person living there. All volitional actions bears some kind of fruit. Apart from the amount and the potency of the kammic effects accumulated, the level of their importance is also related to the specific quality and function of the mind.

There needs to be plenty of dust on a road before it is considered to be filthy. A lesser amount of dust on the floor of a living room is considered to be dirty. An amount less than that on the surface of a desk is considered unclean and may disturb the person working there. A small amount of dust on a mirror soils it and diminishes its usefulness. And a minuscule amount of dust on a pair of glasses is noticeable and blurs one's vision. A similar analogy is that of using a knife to scrape a road surface, a floor in a house, or a pair of glasses, respectively. Reverse similes also apply: compare using a small velvet cloth or wad of cotton wool to wipe a floor, in contrast to using it to clean a pair of glasses.

No intentional action is fruitless, which is summed up by these Buddhist sayings:

All accumulated deeds, both good and bad, bear fruit. Actions marked as kamma, even trifling ones, are not void of result.<sup>53</sup>

*J. IV. 394.*

Neither good nor bad deeds are performed in vain.

*J. VI. 239.*

People tend to overlook the importance of the subtle effects of volitional action at the level of the mind. Here are two more similes to help clarify this matter:

- There are many different degrees of clean and dirty water, e.g.: marsh water, river water, tap water, and distilled water. Marsh

<sup>53</sup>This should not be confused with volitional actions that do not produce results in a person's external life.

water may be used as a habitat for various creatures, but it is not suitable for bathing, drinking, or other more refined purposes. River water is suitable for bathing and for washing cloths, but perhaps not suitable for drinking. Tap water may be used for drinking, but not for intravenous injections. For ordinary purposes, tap water is adequate for people's overall needs, but if one is faced with special circumstances it is insufficient.

This is similar to differences in the quality of mind, in terms of varying degrees of coarseness and subtlety, turbidity and brightness, due to actions performed and accumulated. During much of one's life, one may not feel there is a problem with mediocre or relatively coarse states of mind, but later on one may be faced with a situation calling for more refined states of mind. One's accumulated actions in the past may cause problems and one's habitual state of mind may be inadequate for the circumstances; indeed, it may even be completely dysfunctional.

- Water may exist in various degrees of undulation or stillness, e.g.: surging ocean swells, small waves on a river due to the passing of a motorboat, a trickling stream, a tranquil pond, and utterly still water in a vessel. In some cases, one may be able to make use of undulating water, but in other cases one may need the water to be so still that one is able to float a needle on the surface. {260}

This is similar to the quality of the mind, either coarse or refined, which is relevant to one's specific mental application and to arriving at exceptional states attainable by human beings.

Conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*) and the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) are distinct from one another. The kammic process follows its own nature, independent of any social prescriptions which may run counter to it. But because there is a relationship between these two sets of laws, a person who acts appropriately vis-à-vis the law of kamma (i.e. adheres to wholesome principles) may face problems from conflicting social prescriptions. For example, those people who live in a society that endorses the taking of intoxicants, but wish not to partake of these themselves, receive some effects from their actions. Although their clear and

bright states of mind are not sullied by intoxicants, they may be ridiculed by others for being weak or looked down on in other ways. Even within the domain of kamma, they may experience difficulties from resisting these social customs and norms, leading to some degree of conflict in the mind, depending on their level of wisdom, which dispels any sense of dis-ease.

In a developed and wise society, people draw upon the experiences from past generations to determine what is truly beneficial to human beings and what is not. They then establish conventional laws and regulations dealing with good and evil that are in harmony with principles of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness conforming to the law of kamma.

This ability to synchronize social prescriptions with kammic principles is one way of measuring how developed or civilized a particular society is.

In this sense, when one evaluates the merits of social prescriptions having to do with good and evil, one may look at them from two angles: first, from the perspective of conventional laws, do these prescriptions lead to the welfare of society; and second, from the perspective of the law of kamma, are they wholesome and conducive to people's overall wellbeing?

Some social prescriptions may have been followed and upheld for centuries, but are not in fact beneficial, neither from the perspective of conventional laws nor from the perspective of the law of kamma. Members of such a society should agree to abolish these prescriptions. Alternatively, they may need to rely on a wise, pure-hearted, and compassionate person for encouragement, as was the case when the Buddha persuaded people to abandon animal sacrifices and do away with the caste system in India.

When one notices that particular prescriptions are advantageous on a social level, e.g. they are conducive to material prosperity, yet that they are incompatible with the principles of wholesomeness according to the law of kamma, one should remember the following fact: sometimes people mistake what is essentially unfavourable for society as something beneficial, that is, they are pleased by a false form of progress, which is satisfying in the short term but harmful in the long term. Those

things that are truly beneficial should be compatible with the wholesome principles outlined in the law of kamma.

Those things that are spiritually beneficial to an individual are generally beneficial to all people. Here, one can make a comparison to material progress. Most people wish for material prosperity, believing that an abundance of material things and a surplus of comfort will lead to the highest good for society. They therefore strive to maximize the degree of material development. Meanwhile, they often destroy those modes of existence that are seen as outdated and obstacles to progress. Eventually, however, they may realize that many of their actions have been faulty. Although their society may appear to be advanced, many hazards to physical health and to people's very existence have been created, to the extent that if people persist in these new ways of acting, they may be heading for calamity or annihilation. {261}

Just as one should promote material progress that is not harmful to people's physical wellbeing, so too, one should nurture the kind of social development that is not harmful to people's spiritual life.

As part of a practical analysis of good and evil, the Buddha first encouraged people to reflect on the wholesome and the unwholesome as the essential factor for evaluation. He developed the teaching to include an awareness of good and evil as it manifests in the mind (i.e. to apply one's conscience), and a consideration of the opinions by wise individuals as a frame of reference. These two factors act as the basis for moral shame (*hiri*) and fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*). Moreover, he encouraged people to consider the fruits of their actions as they affect themselves and others, that is, on an individual and a social level.

Because some people lack a necessary depth of wisdom and may not recognize for themselves what is wholesome and unwholesome, the Buddha encouraged them to consider the opinions of the wise. If they still have doubt, then they should examine the effects of their own actions, even as they relate to social conventions. This threefold examination (an awareness of the wholesome and unwholesome, a consideration of the opinions by the wise, and an examination of the effects of one's actions) leads to a comprehensive analysis.

To sum up, when evaluating what is good and bad kamma, one first takes intention (*cetanā*) into consideration to decide if an action constitutes kamma, and then one may apply the following criteria:

*A. Principal criteria:*

1. Measuring the wholesome and the unwholesome:

- To consider whether intention springs from a wholesome root (*kusala-mūla*), i.e. non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, or whether it springs from an unwholesome root (*akusala-mūla*), i.e. greed, hatred, and delusion.
- To consider whether an action is truly conducive to spiritual wellbeing or not; is it conducive to mental ease, health, peace, and clarity? Does it strengthen or impair the mind? Does it help to increase wholesome qualities and decrease unwholesome qualities, or vice versa? Moreover, what sort of effect does it have on one's personality?

*B. Associated criteria:*

2. Applying one's conscience, one's inner sense of right and wrong. One asks whether by acting in a such a way is one worthy of self-criticism and does one lose one's self-respect?
3. Considering the declarations by wise and knowledgeable individuals. One asks whether a particular action would be approved by the wise; would they praise it or condemn it?
4. Considering the attributes and fruits of actions, both in relation to oneself and others:
  - A. Does an action harm or cause distress for oneself or others?
  - B. Does an action lead to the welfare or to the suffering of oneself or others? {262}



Note that the two sub-factors of criteria 1 above are essentially the same. They both focus on whether an action is beneficial or harmful to people's spiritual life.

Generally speaking, the approval and disapproval, and the praise and criticism, of wise individuals is institutionalized or systematized as religious, cultural, and legal teachings and prescriptions. Although some laws and customs do not accord with the opinions of the wise, and some actions conflicting with established laws and customs may not be censured by the wise, one may say that these cases are exceptional. It is the responsibility of wise individuals in society to regularly investigate these matters. In reference to this process, the Buddha used the term 'investigated by the wise' (*anuvicca viññū*); the wise first investigate a specific matter and then express their approval or disapproval.<sup>54</sup> Having investigated these matters, they amend those things wrongly practised or prescribed, or those things that have deviated from their original and correct purpose. The Buddha, for example, rejected the caste system and the tradition of animal sacrifices.

There is another set of criteria for determining good and evil (or good and bad kamma) which takes into account the law of kamma on its own, as well as the law of kamma in relation to conventional laws. It examines actions from the perspective of natural laws (the real, inherent value of actions), as well as from the perspective of values attributed to actions by human beings. It contains the same principles as the outline described above, but arranges them in a different way:

1. A reference to advantages and disadvantages on the level of the mind: one considers whether an action is supportive or unsupportive to a person's spiritual life, whether it enhances a person's quality of life, whether it strengthens or impairs the mind, whether it leads to the increase or decrease of wholesome and unwholesome qualities, and whether it leads to a positive development of a person's personality.

<sup>54</sup>See: M. I. 361-4; M. II. 114; A. I. 57-8, 89 = A. II. 3, 84; A. III. 255, 267-8; A. V. 39; Dh. verse: 229.

2. A reference to advantages and disadvantages on the level of the individual: one considers whether an action causes distress or harm to oneself, and whether it damages or promotes true inner wellbeing.<sup>55</sup>
3. A reference to advantages and disadvantages on the level of society: one considers whether an action causes distress or harm to others, whether it damages or promotes the true wellbeing of others or of society.
4. A reference to one's natural sense of conscience: one considers actions by applying one's own sense of right and wrong, by asking after a deed is completed whether one is open to self-criticism and self-blame.
5. A reference to social standards: one considers actions according to religious, cultural, and other social prescriptions (e.g. laws and edicts). These prescriptions rely on the examination and scrutiny by wise individuals in a particular society, who help to ensure that people do not uphold them naively or inadvisedly. These wise individuals also determine whether to accept or reject these prescriptions. {263}

#### **E. FORMAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION**

Before moving on to the subject of the fruits of good and bad actions, here are some quotes from the Pali Canon in reference to the aforementioned material:

And what are wholesome phenomena? The three wholesome roots, i.e. non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion; the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the volitional formation aggregate,

<sup>55</sup>The second criterion differs from the first in that it focuses on those visible effects which people experience in their everyday lives, in particular an encounter with happiness and suffering and manifestations of progress and decline, prosperity and loss. Many people are not aware of or do not understand the inner dynamics of their minds.

and the consciousness aggregate, which are accompanied by these wholesome roots; physical actions, verbal actions, and mental actions, which originate from these wholesome roots: these are wholesome phenomena.

And what are unwholesome phenomena? The three unwholesome roots, i.e. greed, hatred, and delusion, and all mental defilements based on the same foundation as these unwholesome roots; the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the volitional formation aggregate, and the consciousness aggregate, which are accompanied by these unwholesome roots; physical actions, verbal actions, and mental actions, which originate from these unwholesome roots: these are unwholesome phenomena.<sup>56</sup>

*Dhs. 180.*

There are two kinds of dangers: revealed dangers and concealed dangers.

And what are revealed dangers? Lions, tigers, leopards, bears, wolves ... bandits ... eye ailments, ear ailments, nose ailments ... cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination, contact with wind, sun, biting flies, and creeping things. These are called revealed dangers.

And what are concealed dangers? Immoral bodily action, verbal action, and mental action; the hindrance of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt; greed, hatred, and delusion; anger, resentment, disparagement (i.e. invalidating and concealing the goodness of others), arrogance, conceit, jealousy, miserliness, deceit, boastfulness, obstinacy, competitiveness, disdain, infatuation, and heedlessness; all mental defilement, all dishonesty, all agitation, all craving, all distress, and all unwholesome thinking. These are called concealed dangers.

<sup>56</sup>This sutta passage goes on to describe ‘neither-good-nor-bad phenomena’ – *abyākata-dhamma*.

On account of what are things called a danger? On account of domination ... on account of leading to decline ... on account of being a dwelling place....

On account of what are things called a danger due to domination? Those dangers impair, overwhelm, intimidate, tyrannize, oppress, and ravage that person....

On account of what are things called a danger due to leading to decline? Those dangers lead to the decline of wholesome qualities....

On account of what are things called a danger due to being a dwelling place? Those evil unwholesome states arise internally, dependent on one's individuality (*atta-bhāva*),<sup>57</sup> in the same way as a creature dependent on a hole lives in a hole, a creature dependent on water lives in water, a creature dependent on the forest lives in the forest, a creature dependent on a tree lives in a tree.... {264}

This accords with what the Blessed One said: 'Monks, a monk who has both students and a teacher dwells in suffering, not in comfort.'<sup>58</sup>

And how does a monk who has both students and a teacher dwell in suffering, not in comfort? When the eye sees a form ... the ear hears a sound ... the nose smells an odour ... the tongue tastes a flavour ... the body contacts a tangible ... the mind cognizes a mental object, there arise in him evil unwholesome states, covetous thoughts leading to binding defilements. Evil unwholesome states dwell within him. For this reason he is called 'one who has students.' Those evil unwholesome states provoke him. For this reason he is called 'one who has a teacher.'

It accords with what the Blessed One said: 'Monks, these three things are inward stains, inward enemies, inward foes, inward executioners, inward nemeses. What three? Greed, hatred, and delusion....'

Greed causes harm and agitates the mind. If someone fails to discern that it is a danger arising internally, greed enters and he recognizes neither its essence nor its practical significance. When greed dominates the mind, there is only darkness. Hatred causes harm.... Delusion causes harm ... there is only darkness.

It accords with what the Blessed One said: ‘There are, great king, three things which, when they arise within a person, arise for his harm, suffering, and discomfort. What three? Greed, hatred, and delusion....

Just as bamboo seeds destroy the bamboo tree, so too greed, hatred, and delusion arising within destroy an evil-minded person.<sup>59</sup>

*Nd. I. 12-15, 360-64, 467-70; Nd. II. 59.*

There are, great king, three things in the world which, when they arise, arise for one’s harm, suffering, and discomfort. What are the three? Greed, hatred, and delusion.

*S. I. 98.*

Monks, there are these three unwholesome roots. What three? The unwholesome root, greed; the unwholesome root, hatred; and the unwholesome root, delusion.

Greed in itself is unwholesome. Whatever deed a greedy person performs by body, speech, and mind is also unwholesome. When a greedy person overcome by greed, whose mind is impaired by greed, inflicts suffering upon another – by killing, imprisoning,

<sup>57</sup>Trans.: the author here uses this Pali term *atta-bhāva* untranslated. In his ‘Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology’, he provides three definitions for this term: ‘individuality’, ‘life’, and the ‘five aggregates’.

<sup>58</sup>This passage is a play on words (see below).

<sup>59</sup>The reference to having students and a teacher is a quote from S. IV. 136; the reference to inner stains is a quote from It. 83-4; the reference to three things arising within a person is a quote from S. I. 70; the final passage (in verse form) is also found at It. 45.

dispossessing, censuring, or banishing – thinking: ‘I am powerful, I am mighty’, that too is unwholesome. Thus numerous evil unwholesome qualities originate in him born of greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, conditioned by greed. {265}

Hatred in itself is unwholesome. Whatever deed a hateful person performs by body, speech, and mind is also unwholesome. When a hateful person, overcome by hate ... inflicts suffering upon another ... that too is unwholesome. Thus numerous evil unwholesome qualities originate in him born of hate, caused by hate, arisen from hate, conditioned by hate.

Delusion itself is unwholesome. Whatever deed a deluded person performs by body, speech, and mind is also unwholesome. When a deluded person, overcome by delusion ... inflicts suffering upon another ... that too is unwholesome. Thus numerous evil unwholesome qualities originate in him born of delusion, caused by delusion, arisen from delusion, conditioned by delusion....

Such a person, overcome by evil unwholesome qualities born of greed ... born of hate ... born of delusion, with his mind impaired by them, dwells in suffering in this very life, with distress, anguish, and fever, and with the breakup of the body, after death, a bad destination can be expected for him.

Suppose a sal, myrtle, or kusum tree was choked and enveloped by three māluvā creepers. It would meet with decline, decay, destruction and disaster. So too, such a person overcome by bad unwholesome qualities born of greed ... born of hatred ... born of delusion ... dwells in suffering in this very life ... and with the breakup of the body, after death, a bad destination can be expected for him....

There are, monks, these three wholesome roots. What three? The wholesome root, non-greed; the wholesome root, non-hatred, the wholesome root, non-delusion....<sup>60</sup>

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Greed, hatred, and delusion.

Any volitional action performed by way of greed, born of greed, caused by and originating from greed, is unwholesome and harmful and results in suffering. That kamma leads to the origination of further kamma (kamma-samudaya), not to the cessation of kamma (kamma-nirodha).

Any volitional action performed by way of hatred ... performed by way of delusion ... results in suffering. That kamma leads to the origination of further kamma, not to the cessation of kamma.

There are, monks, these three [other] causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion.

Any volitional action performed by way of non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by and originating from non-greed, is wholesome and harmless and results in happiness. That kamma leads to the cessation of kamma, not to the origination of kamma.

Any volitional action performed by way of non-hatred ... performed by way of non-delusion ... results in happiness. That kamma leads to the cessation of kamma, not to the origination of kamma.

*A. I. 263.*

‘When, Kālāmas, you know for yourselves: “These things are unwholesome; these things are harmful; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to harm and suffering”, then you should abandon them.

‘What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed arises in a person, is it for his welfare or for his harm?’

‘For his harm, venerable sir.’ {266}

<sup>60</sup>The following passages of this sutta describe the wholesome roots, in a way opposite to the unwholesome roots.

‘A greedy person, overcome by greed, with mind impaired by it, destroys life, takes what is not given, transgresses with another’s wife, and speaks falsehood; and he encourages others to do likewise, which will lead to his harm and suffering for a long time.’

‘That is true, venerable sir.’

‘When hatred arises in a person.... When delusion arises in a person.... A deluded person ... destroys life ... which will lead to his harm and suffering for a long time.’

‘That is true, venerable sir.’

‘What do you think, Kālāmas? Are these things wholesome or unwholesome?’ – ‘Unwholesome, venerable sir.’ – ‘Harmful or harmless?’ – ‘Harmful, venerable sir.’ – ‘Censured or praised by the wise?’ – ‘Censured, venerable sir.’ Accepted and undertaken, do they lead to harm and suffering or not, or how do you take it?’ – ‘Accepted and undertaken these things lead to harm and suffering. So we take it.’

‘Thus, Kālāmas, when we said: “Come, Kālāmas, do not go by oral tradition ... do not go out of respect, thinking: ‘This ascetic is our guru’.” When you know for yourselves: “These things are unwholesome; these things are harmful; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to harm and suffering”, then you should abandon them. It was because of this that this was said.”<sup>61</sup>

*A. I. 189.*

The following sutta passage contains a question and answer session between King Pasenadi of Kosala and Ven. Ānanda on the meaning of good and evil. Here, Ānanda links the various criteria mentioned above:

<sup>61</sup>In this sutta the Buddha goes on to describe the wholesome, in a way opposite to the description of the unwholesome. Similar suttas are found at: A. I. 193-4 and A. II. 190-191.



‘Venerable sir, we do not recognize anything of value in the praise and blame of others spoken by foolish ignorant persons, who speak without having investigated and evaluated; but we recognize as valuable the praise and blame of others spoken by wise, intelligent, and sagacious persons, who speak after having investigated and evaluated.

‘Now, venerable Ānanda, what kind of bodily behaviour ... verbal behaviour ... mental behaviour is censured by wise recluses and brahmins?’

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that is unwholesome, great king.’

‘Now what kind of bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour is unwholesome?’

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that is harmful.’ {267}

‘Now what kind of bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour is harmful?’

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that is oppressive.’<sup>62</sup>

‘Now what kind of bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour is oppressive?’

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that leads to suffering.’

‘Now what kind of bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour leads to suffering?’

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that leads to one’s own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both, and on account of which unwholesome states increase and wholesome states diminish. Precisely such bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour is censured by wise recluses and brahmins, great king....’

Ven. Ānanda then replies to questions pertaining to the wholesome, ending with this passage:

‘Any bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour that does not lead to one’s own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction

of both, and on account of which unwholesome states diminish and wholesome states increase. Precisely such bodily ... verbal ... mental behaviour, great king, is uncensured by wise recluses and brahmins.’

M. II. 114-16.

One inflamed by lust, overcome by lust, with mind enthralled by it, intends for his own affliction, for the affliction of others, and for the affliction of both, and he experiences mental anguish and suffering. But when lust is abandoned, he does not intend for his own affliction, for the affliction of others, or for the affliction of both, and he does not experience mental anguish and suffering.

One inflamed by lust, overcome by lust, with mind enthralled by it, engages in misconduct by body, speech, and mind. But when lust is abandoned, one does not engage in misconduct by body, speech, or mind. One inflamed by lust, overcome by lust, with mind enthralled by it, does not understand as it really is his own good, the good of others, or the good of both. But when lust is abandoned one understands as it really is one’s own good, the good of others, and the good of both.

One full of hate, overcome by hate.... One deluded, overcome by delusion ... experiences mental anguish and suffering.... But when delusion is abandoned one understands as it really is one’s own good, the good of others, and the good of both.<sup>63</sup>

A. I. 216-17.

<sup>62</sup>The term *sabyāpajjha* is often translated as ‘oppressive’ or ‘accompanied by oppression’. The commentaries, however, almost always define this term as ‘causing suffering’ or ‘accompanied by suffering’. ‘Causing affliction’ or ‘accompanied by affliction’ are apt translations. Similar translations (‘non-oppressive’, etc.) apply to the opposite term *abyāpajjha*. See, e.g.: MA. III. 104, 347, 360, [508].

<sup>63</sup>The beginning passages are also found at A. I. 156-8.

A deed is not well done when, after having done it, one is distressed, and when weeping, with tearful face, one reaps its fruit.

A deed is well done when, after having done it, one is not distressed, and when, pleased and delighted, one reaps its fruit. {268}

*Dh. verses 67-8.*

Whatever action is performed is visible within oneself.

*J. II. 202.*

Verily, an evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit, just as fresh milk curdles not at once; smouldering, it follows the fool like fire covered with ashes.

*Dh. verse 71.*

Whoever acted wrongly before, but is restrained and turns to the good; such a one illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds.

*Dh. verse 172.*

The meritorious deeds one has done – that is one's friend in the future.

*S. I. 37.*

Ānanda, I have declared definitively that deeds of bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct are not to be done because in acting thus these dangers are to be expected: one blames oneself;<sup>64</sup> the wise, having investigated, censure one; a bad report circulates about one; one dies confused; and with the breakup of the body, after death, one is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell....

Ānanda, I have declared definitively that deeds of bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, and mental good conduct are to be done because in acting thus these blessings are to be expected: one does not blame oneself; the wise, having investigated, praise one; a good reputation circulates about one; one dies unconfused; and with the

breakup of the body, after death, one is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

A. I. 57-8.

Monks, abandon the unwholesome! It is possible to abandon the unwholesome. If it were not possible to abandon the unwholesome, I would not say: ‘Monks, abandon the unwholesome!’ But because it is possible to abandon the unwholesome, I say: ‘Monks, abandon the unwholesome!’ If abandoning the unwholesome led to harm and suffering, I would not tell you to abandon it. But because the abandoning of the unwholesome leads to welfare and happiness, I say: ‘Monks, abandon the unwholesome!’

Monks, develop the wholesome! It is possible to develop the wholesome. If it were not possible to develop the wholesome, I would not say: ‘Monks, develop the wholesome!’ But because it is possible to develop the wholesome, I say: ‘Monks, develop the wholesome!’ If developing the wholesome led to harm and suffering, I would not tell you to develop it. But because the developing of the wholesome leads to welfare and happiness, I say: ‘Monks, develop the wholesome!’

A. I. 58.

Monks, there are things to be abandoned by body, not by speech. There are things to be abandoned by speech, not by body. There are things to be abandoned neither by body nor by speech, but by having clearly seen with wisdom.

And what are the things to be abandoned by body, not by speech? Here, a monk has committed a particular unwholesome transgression with the body. His wise fellow monks investigate him and say thus: ‘You have committed a particular unwholesome transgression with the body. {269} It would really be good if you would abandon bodily misconduct and develop bodily good conduct.’ When his

<sup>644</sup> ‘One blames oneself’ is a translation of the term *upavadati*; it can also be translated as ‘self-criticism’ or ‘self-inquiry’.

wise fellow monks investigate him and admonish him, he abandons bodily misconduct and develops bodily good conduct. These are called things to be abandoned by body, not by speech.

And what are the things to be abandoned by speech, not by body? Here, a monk has committed a particular unwholesome transgression by speech. His wise fellow monks investigate him and say thus: ‘You have committed a particular unwholesome transgression by speech. It would really be good if you would abandon verbal misconduct and develop verbal good conduct.’ When his wise fellow monks investigate him and admonish him, he abandons verbal misconduct and develops verbal good conduct. These are called things to be abandoned by speech, not by body.

And what are things to be abandoned neither by body nor by speech but by having clearly seen with wisdom? Greed ... hatred ... delusion ... anger ... hostility ... contempt ... arrogance ... miserliness is to be abandoned neither by body nor by speech but by having clearly seen with wisdom.

A. V. 39.

## 5.4 FRUITION OF KAMMA

### A. LEVELS OF FRUITION

The most frequently debated subject in regard to kamma pertains to the fruits of kamma. In particular, many people doubt the validity of the principle stating: ‘Do good, reap good; do evil, reap evil.’ They gather evidence demonstrating how in real life many people who perform bad actions acquire good things, and many people who perform good actions receive bad things.

These doubts arise due to a confusion between the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) and conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*), whereby these two laws become mixed up. People often fail to distinguish between the boundaries or various stages of these two laws. Even the terms contained in this aforementioned principle are not clearly understood.

Instead of understanding the phrase ‘do good, reap good’ as equivalent to ‘practising goodness one obtains goodness’, ‘practising goodness one is endowed with goodness’, ‘practising goodness gives rise to goodness’, or ‘practising goodness leads to wholesome fruits according to the law of kamma’, people interpret it as ‘by practising goodness one acquires favourable objects, personal advantages, or gratifying material things’.

To help clarify this matter, consider the following four levels at which kamma bears fruit:

1. The level of the mind: here one considers how actions affect the mind, by the accumulation of wholesome and unwholesome attributes, and the accumulation of strengths and capabilities; one considers how actions shape a person’s thoughts and feelings, tendencies, preferences, joys and sorrows, etc.
2. The level of personality: here one considers how actions establish a person’s habitual disposition, and how they determine behaviour, attitudes, ability to adapt to various circumstances, reactions, and general interactions with other people and the surrounding environment. This level is connected to the level of the mind, but is distinguished to highlight specific aspects of fruition. {270}
3. The level of a person’s general state of life: here one considers how actions influence a person’s life, i.e. how they lead to satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences, to various rewards and compensations from outside, to progress and decline, to success and failure, to various forms of gain like material possessions, prestige, praise, and pleasure, and to corresponding forms of loss.<sup>65</sup> These results can be subdivided into two kinds:
  - Results from non-human factors in one’s environment.
  - Results stemming from other people and society.
4. The level of society: here one considers how people’s actions affect society, for example how they lead to social progress or decline,

<sup>65</sup>Gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, and pleasure and displeasure are known as the eight ‘worldly phenomena’ (*loka-dhamma*; ‘worldly winds’).

and to collective wellbeing or distress. Moreover, one considers the effects people's actions have on the natural environment.

The first two levels pertain primarily to the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). Level three involves a relationship between the law of kamma and conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*), which often causes confusion for people. The fourth level, despite being important, lies outside of the domain of the present subject matter at hand.

Generally speaking, when people look at the fruits of their own actions, or when they examine the validity of whether other people truly do good and receive good, do bad and receive bad, they limit their inspection to the third level, that is, they focus on external rewards. By doing this, they overlook the results connected to the first and second levels, although these are of vital importance. They are important in and of themselves, e.g. the factors of happiness and unhappiness, mental strengths and weaknesses, mental capabilities, and the proficiency or deficiency of spiritual faculties, and they are also important as a key source for the results pertaining to the third level, influencing one's general state of life.

Results at levels one and two (the mind and the personality) mutually reinforce one another, and they go on to influence how one lives one's life (level three). Aspects of the third level belonging to the sphere of the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) are linked to the results of the first and second levels – to one's overall state of mind – including one's interests, preferences, and proclivities. The way one pursues happiness or vents frustration, for instance, which is connected to the level of the mind, influences how one perceives and responds to things, how one experiences things, and how one acts and lives one's life.

In this context, one should examine in what manner people perform particular deeds. Do they follow through with and complete the action? How many obstructions are they willing to face? Are they meticulous or careless, disciplined or slack? Furthermore, how do their actions affect other people's thoughts and feelings, which may rebound and affect them in turn, say by receiving cooperation or by facing opposition. One's personality influences how other people play a part in one's obtaining either satisfactory or unsatisfactory results.

This is not to deny other factors in the process, in particular those conditions in one's social environment that are linked to the law of kamma and determine one's state of wellbeing. Here in this chapter, however, the focus is on kamma as it pertains to a person's inner life. A wider perspective is outlined in the following chapters on external influences and virtuous friendship.<sup>66</sup> {271}

The preceding teachings on the law of kamma aim to help people improve themselves within the domain of personal actions. Moreover, besides improving oneself, one can guide other people to aspire towards goodness, by providing a wholesome environment according to the principles of a favourable environment (*paṭirūpadesavāsa*), virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*), and association with good people (*sappurisūpassaya*).

For the most part, the fruits of kamma manifesting on the third level (one's way of life) are connected to the mind and personality. Those people who love their work, are honest and diligent, and manage their work well, will generally receive positive fruits of their labour, at least more than those who are lazy or dishonest. Honest and virtuous civil servants, who are capable and eager to fulfil the terms of their office, will generally advance in their profession, better than those who are incapable or half-hearted. Yet sometimes this is not the case, because results at this third level are not exclusively generated by the law of kamma. Factors from other laws and standards, in particular conventional laws, are involved.

An inability to recognize the involvement by these other factors and to distinguish between the relative boundaries of these various laws leads to confusion. Related to this discussion is the phrase: 'Do good, receive bad; do bad, receive good.' If the law of kamma operates solely on its own, there is no problem; the results accord directly with the actions. If one earnestly reads a book, one will receive knowledge. But sometimes the body may be fatigued, one has a headache, or the temperature is too hot, and one cannot finish the reading assignment or one does not assimilate what one reads. Or perhaps there may arise some kind of mishap and one is interrupted.

<sup>66</sup>See chapter 13 on virtuous friendship.



In any case, one should remember that for human beings the law of kamma is the essential guiding factor in determining positive and negative results in their lives.

Even before clearly examining the various related causes and conditions, someone who is disappointed may reflect that had one not done these good deeds, things may have turned out much worse. Similarly, if others do good yet do not immediately receive positive results, one can reflect that had they not acted well they may have fallen into hard times. By reflecting in this way, one gains an understanding that no volitional actions are fruitless, and many of them produce profound effects on one's state of mind and personality.

The common expression, 'Do good, receive good; do bad, receive bad', is derived from the following Buddhist proverb:<sup>67</sup>

Whatever sort of seed is sown,  
That is the sort of fruit one reaps:  
The doer of good reaps good;  
The doer of evil reaps evil.

*Yādisaṃ vapate bijaṃ*  
*Tādisaṃ labhate phalaṃ*  
*Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ*  
*Pāpakārī pāpakaṃ. {272}*

S. I. 227; J. II. 202; J. III. 158;

Here, the Buddha quotes verses by previous rishis and bodhisattas, and assimilates them into the Tipiṭaka. These verses may be considered a clear and concise description of the Buddhist principle of kamma.

Note how the first pair of verses applies biological laws (*bīja-niyāma*) for comparison. This observation helps one to distinguish between the

<sup>67</sup>Related passages at: JA. II. 202; JA. III. 158. Each of these sources contains expanded material. The related stories in the Jātaka texts seem to emphasize results manifesting as clearly visible incidents and circumstances. The second verse in the Jātaka texts is occasionally *tādisaṃ ruhate phalaṃ* or *tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ*, which translate as 'that is the sort of fruit that grows' and 'that is the sort of fruit borne', respectively.

law of kamma and conventional laws. According to the laws of botany, the fruit is directly related to the seed. If one plants tamarind, one gets tamarind; if one plants grapes, one gets grapes; if one plants cabbage, one gets cabbage. There is no reference here to conventional laws. There is no mentioning of planting tamarinds and getting money, or planting cabbages and making a healthy profit. These conditions apply to another stage of the process.

There is a relationship between biological laws and conventional laws. If one has planted grapes and it happens that the market that year demands grapes, one can sell them at a good price and get rich. On another occasion, however, one may grow watermelons, but many other people do so as well, until the fruit floods the market and the price drops. In that year one loses money. Apart from ordinary market forces, there may be other factors involved, like middlemen who force the price down. The important issue here, however, is to recognize the stability and certainty of biological laws, and to discern both the distinction and relationship between biological laws and conventional laws.

This comparison applies also to the law of kamma, which people often confuse with conventional laws, by saying, ‘Do good, receive good’, in the sense that by doing good one will become rich or get a promotion. Although these results are likely, they do not always occur. It is like saying, ‘Planting mangos is profitable’, ‘Planting coconuts makes you rich’, or ‘Planting custard apples makes you poor’, which may or not be true, but this sort of statement skips some stages in the process; it is not a thorough description of the truth. It may be acceptable for colloquial speech, but if one wishes to accurately portray the truth, one needs to distinguish the various causes and conditions in an ordered sequence.

## **B. FACTORS PROMOTING AND OBSTRUCTING THE FRUITION OF KAMMA**

The way in which the law of kamma manifests in people’s lives, determines various circumstances, and triggers responses from outside, is outlined in the Pali Canon as relying on four pairs of factors: the four accomplishments (*sampatti*) and the four defects (*vipatti*).<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Vbh. 338-9; commentarial explanations are found at: AA. II. 218-21; VbhA. 439-54.

*Sampatti* may be translated as ‘accomplishment’ or ‘advantage’. It refers to the fulfilment of those factors affording an opportunity for good kamma to come to fruition, and preventing the effects of bad kamma to surface. In brief, they are favourable to the ripening of good kamma. They include:

1. *Gati-sampatti*: accomplishment of birth; fulfilment of birth; favourable environment. One is born in a favourable state or realm of existence, region, or country. In the present lifetime, one’s way of life is conducive to wellbeing or one lives in a supportive environment.
2. *Upadhi-sampatti*: accomplishment of the body; fulfilment of body; favourable or fortunate body. For instance: one has an attractive body and graceful appearance; one is endearing to others; one is healthy and strong.
3. *Kāla-sampatti*: accomplishment of time; fulfilment of time; favourable time. One is born in a time when one’s country is in a state of peace, with good leaders and virtuous citizens, when people praise righteousness and condemn evil. On an everyday level, one acts in a timely and opportune fashion. {273}
4. *Payoga-sampatti*: accomplishment of undertaking; fulfilment of undertaking; favourable activity. For example: one acts appropriately, in line with what is required; one’s actions correspond with one’s abilities and strengths; one acts thoroughly, decisively, and to one’s fullest capability. One is skilled at carrying out work.

*Vipatti* may be translated as ‘defect’, ‘weakness’, or ‘disadvantage’. It refers to the shortcomings and flaws of various factors, which are unconducive to the fruition of good kamma and instead provide an opportunity for the effects of bad kamma to manifest. In brief, they are unfavourable factors triggering the ripening of bad kamma. They include:

1. *Gati-vipatti*: defect or failure as regards place of birth. One is born in an uncultivated, unfavourable state of existence, region, or country.

One's way of life is not conducive to wellbeing; one lives in an unsupportive environment.

2. *Upadhi-vipatti*: defect or failure as regards the body. For example: one's body is deformed, feeble, or unattractive; one's appearance is repulsive; one is unhealthy, afflicted by various illnesses.
3. *Kāla-vipatti*: defect or failure as regards time. One is born in a time when one's country is in a state of peril, calamity, or turbulence; the country's leaders are immoral; the society is degenerate and full of oppression, praising the wicked and persecuting the virtuous. One acts in unseemly, inopportune ways.
4. *Payoga-vipatti*: defect or failure as regards undertaking. For example: one is engaged in wrongful activities; one's actions do not correspond with one's abilities and strengths; one makes effort in inappropriate ways; one's efforts are half-baked.

### **Pair #1**

1. Accomplishment of birth: one is born in a developed region and receives a good education. Although one's inherent intelligence or degree of effort is low, one still gets more education and gains a higher position in society than someone with more intelligence and diligence who is born in the countryside. Or one may be born as a deva<sup>69</sup>; however bad one's character may be, one lives untroubled and in comfort.
2. Defect as regards birth: e.g.: a Buddha appears and teaches the Dhamma, but one is born in the outback or in hell, and one thus has no opportunity to listen to the Dhamma; one is intelligent but one is born in the wilderness of the so-called 'dark region' (*kāḷa-dīpa*) and thus has no opportunity to become a learned member of academic circles; one lives in a land or community where other people do not appreciate one's knowledge and skills, one does not fit in, and one

<sup>69</sup>Trans.: *deva*: celestial being.

is looked down on or persecuted; a virtuous and skilled person is in a position of work that does not complement his skills – he is thus a burden for others and is unhappy (this final example may also be accompanied by a defect as regards undertaking).<sup>70</sup>

## **Pair #2**

1. Accomplishment of the body: one has a beautiful and attractive physical appearance. Although one may have been born in a poor family or in a remote area, one's physical appearance helps one to attain a state of honour, prestige, and happiness.
2. Defect as regards the body: one is born in a fortunate location or in an affluent family, but one is deformed or physically handicapped. One thus does not obtain the prestige or pleasure otherwise afforded by these circumstances.

When two people are matched in other attributes, in the case that physical appearance is a factor for consideration, an attractive or handsome person will often benefit over an unattractive or sickly person. Even in the case when physical appearance is not ostensibly a factor, it is normal for most people to incline towards someone with an attractive appearance. Those people with defects as regards the body must accept this truth of the world. They can reflect that only those who are endowed with exceptional qualities, surpassing ordinary human beings, are truly impartial and unbiased as regards physical attributes. {274}

Knowing this, those people with defective bodies need not be distraught. They should strive to cultivate other qualities that are exceptional and outstanding. They may need to make two or three times the effort to achieve this than the effort required by an attractive person to reach certain forms of success. The important thing is to not get discouraged. One is aware of what is lacking, and one hastens to strengthen

<sup>70</sup>The commentaries explain *gati-sampatti* and *gati-vipatti* only in the context of the realm of existence where one is born.

those factors that can be improved. An understanding of one's kammic situation is thus of benefit.

### **Pair #3**

1. Accomplishment of time: one is an honest and virtuous person born at a time when one's political leaders are morally upright and one's society extols virtue. As a consequence, one is honoured and prospers, and one's country is at peace. Wise people in such a society are able to share their knowledge and benefit others. Similarly, there may be a time when people cherish poetry; those who are skilled poets will flourish.
2. Defect as regards time: here, the opposite is true: at a time when society has grown corrupt and its leaders are devoid of righteousness, good people are not praised and they may even be abused. Even if one is intelligent and capable, it will be difficult to engage in constructive work. When one's country is in turmoil because of war, few people are interested in those who advocate peaceful means. Similarly, at a time when people prefer crude, frenetic music, those people skilled at more subtle, tranquil forms of music will find little favour.

### **Pair #4**

1. Accomplishment of undertaking: although one may not be endowed with much virtue or ability, one knows with whom to associate, one knows how to avoid those things that should be avoided, and one is able to forfeit that which should be forfeited. In this way one is able to prosper and one's defects do not surface. Similarly, one may be skilled at counterfeiting documents, but one uses this skill in a positive way, for instance in examining legal evidence.
2. Defect as regards undertaking: e.g.: one possesses sufficient knowledge and one's other personal attributes are favourable, but one

is addicted to gambling and thus one is not hired for a specific job; one is superb at running and one has the potential to be a prized sprinter, but one uses this talent to snatch people's belongings; one is an expert artisan but one performs some kind of office work for which one lacks skill.

For the most part, results at the level of one's way of life (level 3, mentioned earlier) pertain to 'worldly things' (*loka-dhamma*), which are subject to fluctuation and uncertainty; they are relatively superficial and do not touch upon the core of one's life. Their degree of impact on one's life depends on one's level of attachment. If one is able to come to terms with these things, one's happiness will remain steady, or one's suffering will be minimized. For this reason, the Buddha encouraged people to develop wisdom accompanied by mindfulness, and to be diligent and heedful. In times of happiness one does not get carried away. In times of difficulty one does not become despondent or overly distraught and slip into immoral or destructive ways of conduct; rather, one alleviates the situation by way of wisdom and awareness.

When one still desires delightful and agreeable worldly things (*iṭṭhārammaṇa*), one acknowledges one's own advantages (*sampatti*) and disadvantages (*vipatti*) – one's strengths and weaknesses – and embraces the former while avoiding the latter. One then tries to reach desired goals and one benefits through wholesome actions, which bring about a profound stability to all areas of one's life. One refrains from unwholesome conduct, because personal advantages and disadvantages are uncertain; when favourable times pass, any bad actions one may have committed bear fruit.

To sum up, when one is faced with various factors belonging to different laws (*niyāma*; both laws of nature and conventional laws), one should focus on cultivating goodness and integrity in relation to the law of kamma; acting in this way provides a degree of stability and security. Factors connected to other laws can then be applied with wisdom in a supplementary way, in so far as they are not harmful. If one is able to practise in this way, one is able to benefit from these four pairs of

accomplishments and defects, and one is able to apply both the laws of nature and conventional laws to one's advantage. {275}

Some people need to be reminded not to get caught up in such thoughts as: 'Why did he succeed, even though he didn't do anything good?' 'Why does nothing happen to her, even though she acted badly?' 'Why doesn't anything good happen to me, even though I have acted virtuously?' One may fail to make a thorough inspection of factors linked with various laws (*niyāma*), and thus conclude: 'I don't possess the intelligence to draw benefit from other sources, and even my inherited kammic factors are unfavourable.' If one remains caught up in these kinds of thoughts, matters will most likely get worse.

According to the essential message of the Buddha's teachings, people performing good deeds do not get stuck at the stage of expecting mundane personal rewards (*loka-dhamma*, i.e. material gain, honour, pleasure, and praise), because true wholesome actions spring from the wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. Such people act with relinquishment (*cāga*), abandoning unwholesome qualities in their hearts. By kindness and compassion they help others to be freed from suffering, and they promote a peaceful coexistence among people. They act with wisdom, in order to deepen an understanding of the truth, to realize awakening, and to establish the Dhamma as the guiding force for themselves and for society. This can be classified as the highest form of kamma; it is kamma performed in order to bring about the end of kamma, as referred to earlier.<sup>71</sup>

### C. LONGTERM EFFECTS OF KAMMA

The following material, on how kamma bears fruit in the longterm, for instance over many lifetimes, is one part of the description on how the fruits of kamma affect people's lives; to a large extent it was covered in the previous section. The reason for distinguishing this material here is because many people show a special interest in this specific matter.

<sup>71</sup>See also the teachings on bringing an end to kamma, or eliminating kamma, through 'deliverance of mind by way of lovingkindness' (*mettā-cetovimutti*), described below.



Although this matter won't be discussed here at length, it seems useful to offer some observations for the sake of study and contemplation.

When either wholesome or unwholesome intention arises in the mind, mental activity begins. The mind operates and is active. We can adopt terms from the material world and refer to this activity as the force of intention. Most people do not understand and are not even interested in how this force of intention operates and what other conditions are involved. They are only interested in the end results of the process.

The fruits of intention manifesting in the material world and in human society are clearly visible. There are many examples of how the force of intention manifests in the material world, especially in terms of various inventions and devices, from shoes to spaceships, axes to nuclear bombs, abaci to computers. Other examples include social systems and institutions, including government systems, economic systems, administrative systems, organization of work, etc.

These systems have a great deal of complexity. Indeed, the entire process of intention, along with the mechanics of the mind through which intention expresses itself or operates, is highly refined and complex. It is no less complex than the most subtle and refined inventions or systems created by it. {276}

Human beings possess ample knowledge about the history and development of various inventions and social systems created by the mind and originating with intention. Yet in respect to the nature of the mind and the way in which the mind is conditioned by intention, we possess a distinct lack of understanding. One can say that the workings of the mind remain a great mystery for human beings, even though they affect us directly and exert the greatest influence on our lives.

Due to this ignorance, when people encounter phenomena or situations that are the end results of volitional activities, they often have a disjointed understanding of cause and effect. They do not recognize the associated factors involved, or at least not comprehensively, and end up attributing or blaming various other things. Ignorant people do not acknowledge the law of kamma, i.e. they do not believe in the law of cause and effect, or in a natural causal process. The refusal to acknowledge

the law of kamma, or the misplaced blaming of other factors, is then another level of volitional action (*kamma*), which has its own adverse effects, namely, one squanders the opportunity to improve oneself and to adapt those methods leading to desired results. More gravely, one may falsely accuse others of collusion or involvement, or perform other actions having more severe consequences.

In any case, the Buddha acknowledged that the intricacies of how volitional actions bear fruit is an extremely complex matter, beyond the power of thinking. People are unable to fathom the truth of this matter by way of thought. In the Pali Canon, this matter is classified as *acinteyya* ('imponderable'): a matter which shouldn't be thought about.<sup>72</sup> If one does not heed this warning and tries to unravel this complexity by thinking, there is a chance of going crazy. This does not mean that the Buddha forbids us to think about the fruits of kamma. It simply explains that this complexity is 'inconceivable'; it cannot be fully understood by way of reasoning. This matter can be understood, however, by way of realization. Furthermore, the madness ensuing from excessive pondering over this matter is not a punishment laid down by the Buddha; it is simply a natural result of unresolved and confused fretting.

Although this subject is classified as 'imponderable', this does not mean we should not take an interest in it. We can engage with this subject according to our limited understanding, and gain confidence from such understanding. We are able to contemplate those things that lie within the field of our discernment, i.e., those things existing in the present moment, beginning with minor matters and extending to more significant, far-reaching ones. We can observe the effects of our thoughts and intentions. How do wholesome thoughts lead to positive results in our lives, and vice versa, how do unwholesome thoughts generate negative results and cause damage? How do these effects have wider consequences for other people, the society, and the world? And how do they rebound on our own lives? One begins to understand the complexity and subtlety of

<sup>72</sup>There are four such imponderables: the scope of a Buddha (*buddha-visaya*), the scope of jhāna, the fruits of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*), and speculation about the origin or creation of the world (*loka-cintā*). See: A. II. 80.

this multifaceted causal process, going beyond one's initial assumptions, and one then gains a confidence in the causality inherent in nature.

An understanding of minor, short-term effects leads to an understanding of how things unfold in the longterm. Indeed, the longterm effects descend from and consist of the short-term effects. The longterm effects could not exist were it not for the short-term effects. Here, an understanding arises in line with the truth. A confidence in the natural causal process involving intention is precisely a confidence and trust in the law of kamma.

When one possesses trust in the law of kamma, whenever one desires particular results, one expects these to occur by way of intentional actions. One then proceeds to act in conformity with causes and conditions, with a thorough understanding of the factors involved. If one wishes for positive effects, both in respect to the law of kamma and in respect to worldly things (*loka-dhamma*), one makes a complete analysis of the various factors involved and then carefully generates the necessary conditions for these things to arise. {277}

This analysis is not restricted to a person's internal conceptual activity; it applies also to external creative activity. People skilled at inventing or creating things do not only focus on the content of their own conceptualizations and intentions. They also take into account relevant factors from other laws (*niyāma*), for example: an architect uses artistic creative refinement to design a beautiful wooden house. When she uses this design to build a real house she needs to consider what kinds of hardwoods and softwoods are required for different parts of the house. No matter how beautiful the design, if she uses conifer wood where hardwood is required, the house may collapse and her project may fail. Another architect may have a beautiful design but use unattractive building materials and thus fail in his pursuit. Similarly, if a fashion designer gets caught up in his own exquisite mental designs without taking into consideration the climate of the country in question, say by producing beautiful clothes suitable for a cold climate but selling them in a hot climate, he too will fail in his endeavours.

Similarly, those people who are ‘engineers’ or ‘artisans’ designing a wholesome way of life should be prudent in relating to causes and conditions.

In the context of benefiting from the law of kamma, and ensuring that one progresses in a wholesome direction, it is necessary to establish a love of goodness (*kusala-chanda*) or a love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*). In spiritual training, people should be encouraged to cultivate such an aspiration and love for truth and goodness, say by wishing for one’s life to be pure and virtuous, desiring a virtuous society, wishing for all of those things one engages with to exist in a state of excellence and integrity, or for them to reach an optimal state, and wishing for the truth to pervade in all directions.<sup>73</sup>

As long as people fail to have a love of truth and goodness, and are simply infatuated by the delightful things in the world, they will try to fool about with the law of kamma or to deceive the laws of nature. (In fact, they are unable to deceive the laws of nature; rather, they end up deceiving themselves.) As a consequence, they create an endless amount of harm to themselves, to society, and to the human race.

#### **D. REBIRTH**

Many scholars claim that for ordinary people to believe in the law of kamma and to be established in moral conduct, they must accept the fruition of kamma over the longest span of time, i.e. from one birth to the next. They go on to say that for this reason one must prove the truth of rebirth, or at least show some substantiating evidence for rebirth.

With this objective, or simply to seek knowledge, scholars and other interested individuals have tried to explain the teaching of kamma and rebirth, by citing scientific principles like the law of conservation of energy, connecting them to the mental activity of volition, or they have cited various psychological doctrines.<sup>74</sup> Alternatively, they have sought

<sup>73</sup> See chapter 10 on desire.

<sup>74</sup> E.g.: Egerton C. Baptist, *A Glimpse into the Supreme Science of the Buddha* (Colombo: the Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd., 1958), pp. 44ff.

evidence to prove the validity of recollection of past lives, or even engaged in ceremonies invoking the spirits of the deceased.<sup>75</sup> {278}

It is beyond the scope of this book to describe these explanations in detail. Those readers interested in these matters can look into the references cited above. Here, only some relevant observations and ideas will be presented on this subject.

It is a very reasonable premise that by proving to people the legitimacy of rebirth and of the next life, of the way in which kamma bears fruit in the longterm, many practical benefits will ensue. If people believe in rebirth and the longterm fruits of intentional actions, they are likely to be receptive to teachings on morality, to fear wrongdoing, and to undertake good deeds.

Those people who put forth this premise are generally well-intentioned and there need not be any problems for them to continue their research. Others can applaud their efforts in so far as their research is connected to reasoned arguments and facts. One only need beware that such research does not deviate into a path of gullibility, superstition, or misunderstanding. Examples of misguided research include: rather than clarifying mysterious matters, one enshrouds clearly verifiable matters in mystery and secrecy; or rather than empowering people by drawing upon the mysteries of the universe, one makes people more impotent by having them become dependent on external things.

Sound research can benefit academic studies in these matters. Having said this, this sort of research should be left to those scholars who have a particular interest in it. Most people need not get caught up in this activity. They can be kept informed of the proven research or of particular developments in this field from a distance, as an interested party. To wit, one should refrain from leading people into an obsession with this subject.

K.N. Jayatilleke, *Survival and Karma in Buddhist Perspective* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1969) pp. 35-93.

<sup>75</sup>E.g.: Ian Stevenson, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (New York, 1966), passim.

A.R. Martin, *Researches in Reincarnation and Beyond* (Pennsylvania, 1942), passim.

C.J. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death* (Springfield, Illinois, 1961), passim.

Likewise, scholars and researchers should not become overly preoccupied with past and future lives, to the extent of being biased and trying simply to prove the authenticity of other lifetimes, which takes importance away from the present moment and becomes a form of extreme view. One needs to recognize both the advantages and disadvantages of giving significance to this matter. If one overemphasizes it so that people excessively fear being born in an unhappy existence and crave to be born in a pleasant realm, this is tantamount to driving them to expect and desire future results. They will then only take an interest in those activities that are linked to reaping personal benefits in future lifetimes, and they will neglect those benefits and blessings that human beings should reach in this life.

If one is not circumspect and careful, the original aim of teaching people to fear the adverse effects of bad kamma, to reassure them that their good deeds now will bear good fruit even into future lifetimes, and to trust in the law of kamma, leads to an unrestrained pursuit for personal advantages in the next life. This generates greed and causes people to perform meritorious deeds as a form of profiteering.

An overemphasis on the positive and negative fruits of kamma experienced in future lifetimes also has the adverse effect of creating a disregard for the training in a love of truth (*dhmma-chanda*) or a love of goodness (*kusala-chanda*). This is a form of rejection or condemnation of human beings' abilities, by claiming that people cannot abstain from evil or do good as a consequence of aspiring towards the pure and sublime. {279} Instead, they only abstain from evil and do good out of greed and a desire for personal rewards, and they neglect to cultivate a love of truth and goodness in a genuine way.

Although there is a lot of logic in the claim that if one provides clear evidence to people for the truth of rebirth, they will believe in it and be well-established in moral conduct, yet to actually wait for people to develop such moral conduct only after they see the evidence is unreasonable. This is because the *if* in the above sentence indicates that one cannot be sure when one will be able to fully succeed at proving this truth to others. Strictly speaking, one cannot validly use the expression 'provide clear evidence' in regard to this matter, because no one is able to reveal

the rebirth of one person to another. Rebirth is something that one must know and realize for oneself.

The expression ‘provide clear evidence’ here simply refers to finding testimonials about rebirth and analyzing the facts. The heart of this matter corresponds to the imponderables (*acinteyya*), i.e. one is unable to comprehend this matter by way of logic and reasoning; it is beyond the scope of ordinary understanding. No matter how much evidence one provides on this subject to ordinary people, it remains on the level of faith or belief. The only difference between people is that some may disbelieve while others believe, or some may believe more than others. This being the case, there will remain those people who disbelieve, and even those believers may harbour doubt or skepticism. And those people who disbelieve also remain on the level of belief, that is, they believe that rebirth does not exist; they have not yet gained a clear understanding of this matter. Doubt and suspicion remains until one has done away with all doubt, by realizing stream-entry.

In sum, the attempt to present reasoned explanations and testimonials about rebirth to people can be beneficial (if such attempts do not conflict with other key Buddhist principles, for instance they do not make people dependent on external powers or lead them to seek help from mysterious forces). But the claim that practising the Dhamma or living a life in harmony with Buddhist principles requires proof regarding the matter of rebirth is unsuitable and incorrect.

#### **E. PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEXT LIFE**

Many people are fascinated and preoccupied with the questions whether past and future lives exist, or whether heaven and hell exist; this is because these matters remain mysteries obscured by people’s ignorance. It seems appropriate to say a bit more about these subjects, especially in regard to whether one is able to prove their authenticity.

First, according to a literal translation of the Buddhist scriptures, these things do indeed exist.

Second, there is no end in trying to prove the truth of these matters. No one is able to definitively convince someone else of the existence or

non-existence of these things. Generally speaking, these matters remain on the level of belief. On the whole, neither those people who accept the truth of these things nor those people who deny them have a clear understanding of life's course, both in regard to themselves and to others. They are both in the dark about the past, and they lack an understanding even of the circumstances surrounding being born in this lifetime. Similarly, they are unable to discern the future, even about what is going to occur tomorrow. {280}

Third, in terms of seeking proof of something, there exists the guideline that that which is visible needs to be seen by the eye, that which is audible needs to be heard by the ear, that which is gustable needs to be tasted by the tongue, etc. A dozen ears and tongues cannot verify a visible form, nor can a score of eyes and noses verify an audible sound. Moreover, if one is incapable of receiving certain wavelengths or frequencies, visible or audible perception will not occur. Certain things seen by a cat are invisible even to ten times the capability of a human eye; likewise, certain things heard by a bat are inaudible to ten times the capability of a human ear.

From one perspective, rebirth manifests as a direct experience; it is a phenomenon occurring in the mind. Therefore, it can only be verified by the mind itself. Attempts to prove the truth of rebirth may thus follow this sequence:

1. Verification by way of the mind: in this context the scriptures recommend using a mind that is well-concentrated. If one is disinclined to use this method, or if one fears that a mentally created image (*nimitta*) arising in concentration will be deceptive, one may use one of the following methods:
2. Verification by sacrificing one's life: by definition, no one who is alive has experienced death in this lifetime. If one really wishes to prove the truth of rebirth, one must thus choose to die, but naturally, no one wishes to undergo such a test.
3. Verification by way of case histories and reasoned arguments: for example, one seeks out stories of those people who remember past lives and investigates these accounts; or one compares this matter



with the verification of other aspects of truth, for instance in the example above of examining wavelengths of light or frequencies of sound. These rational presentations help to validate this matter, although, granted, the understanding remains on the level of belief, not direct knowledge.

Fourth, no matter how strong a person's beliefs (or denials), or how much evidence is presented about rebirth, that which is undeniable and inescapable, and which acts as the link to the next life (whether one believes in it or not), is namely this present lifetime, which everyone must relate to and engage with.

Therefore, it is the present life that requires the majority of our care and attention. Buddhism is a religion of practice and application. The main focus is on how we behave in relation to this lifetime: how we conduct ourselves in the present and make the most of this life, in order to live well and, in the case that a future life does exist, to be confident that one's goodness and virtue carries over into the future.

In this context, there are several observations and recommendations for one's spiritual practice:

In the original Pali Canon, i.e. in the suttas, there are very few descriptions of past and future lives, and of heaven and hell, and in most cases these subjects are mentioned or referred to in brief.<sup>76</sup> If one compares these to the teachings pertaining to the present life, say to the development of morality, concentration, and wisdom, one sees that the percentage is very small.

In the canonical descriptions of the adverse effects of bad kamma and the blessings of good kamma, if there is a mention of being born in heaven or hell, these statements are generally added after mentioning several

<sup>76</sup>There are two adjoining suttas (*Bālappaṇḍita Sutta* and *Devadūta Sutta*) which are important sources of later literary works on heaven and hell (M. III. 163-78 and M. III. 178-87); three hells are named at: M. I. 337; on being born in a heavenly world (*deva-loka*) and on the lifespans of devas, see, e.g.: A. I. 209-210, 212-13; A. II. 126-7; A. IV. 62, 65, 239-43, 252-61; Vbh. 421-6; and see the seven 'abodes of consciousness' (*viññāṇaṭṭhiti*) and the nine 'abodes of beings' (*sattāvāsa*) at, e.g.: D. III. 253, 263, 282, 289; A. IV. 39-40, 401.

(sometimes up to ten) results that one is likely to experience in this lifetime. These present lifetime results may be followed by the phrase: ‘With the breakup of the body, after death, one is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell’, or by the phrase: ‘One is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.’<sup>77</sup> {281}

Note how the results in this life are given prime significance and are clearly distinguished; the results after death are merely tagged on to the end to complete the account. Moreover, the presentation of positive and negative effects is outlined as a description of facts according with a causal process. One need not beseech or wish for these effects to take place; they occur automatically. An awareness of this leads to confidence and assurance.

For those people who deny rebirth, as long as they have not truly penetrated the truth of this matter and remain on the level of belief (i.e. they believe rebirth to be untrue), they are unable to fully dispel deep-seated doubts in their own minds. When the strength and excitement of youth wanes and old-age begins to take hold, these people often begin to fear the possibility of a next life. If they have not prepared themselves in regard to virtue, they experience affliction. For the sake of assurance and ease, regardless of whether the next life is true or not, such people should spend their lives performing good deeds.

Those people who believe in rebirth should contemplate in the following manner:

They should base their belief solidly on the principle of causality, that is, they should view the results in a future life as a continuation of one’s state of mind established in this lifetime. Moreover, they should emphasize doing good in the present moment, in order to cultivate a wholesome life and state of mind, so that any possible future lives are also endowed with goodness and virtue.

With such an emphasis, one’s involvement with and expectation around future lives will be based securely in the present, and one will place greater importance on this lifetime. No matter how fascinated one

<sup>77</sup>E.g.: A. III. 38-9, 252-6; A. V. 342.

may be with future lives, one still gives more significance to this life, and one does not perform good actions as a form of investment or pursuit of personal profit.

A sound belief in future lives helps to abandon or reduce a reliance on divine intervention or on external powers. This is because a genuine belief in future lives implies a belief in one's own good actions. It leads to a confidence in one's own wholesome actions acting as the cause for advancing and prospering in the round of rebirth (*sarīsāra-vatṭa*). A dependence on external powers, on the other hand, makes one more feeble, and it causes one to regress or fall behind in the round of rebirth. If someone has lapsed into such a dependence, he or she should hasten to step back and generate a sense of individual strength and authority.

Regardless of whether one believes or disbelieves in rebirth, one needs to reach the stage at which one abstains from evil and performs the good irrespective of one's beliefs. If one is a believer, one acts without any expectations in regard to future lives, and if one disbelieves one simply abstains from doing bad. This stage can be reached by practising in the following ways:

1. One develops a genuine love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*) or a love of goodness (*kusala-chanda*). One cultivates an aspiration for truth, a love of virtue, a wish for refinement and purity, and a desire for things to reach their optimal state.<sup>78</sup>
2. One develops an interest in profound internal bliss. An experience of such bliss in itself protects against evil, unskillful actions and supports wholesome actions. This is because one prerequisite for experiencing such bliss is an absence of immoral behaviour (*duccarita*) and an engagement with virtuous behaviour (*sucarita*). Moreover, the realization of such bliss curbs a level of infatuation with sense pleasure by which one is prone to performing wicked or unskillful acts. Having said this, in regard to profound mundane bliss, one still needs to exercise caution so that one does not indulge

<sup>78</sup>See chapter 10 on desire and motivation.

in it to the extent of undermining one's efforts or of impeding one's spiritual progress.<sup>79</sup> {282}

3. One develops wisdom and lives one's life in accord with wisdom. One develops a comprehensive understanding of the world and of conditioned phenomena, to the extent of reaching an adequate level of freedom and independence. One is not captivated by material things or by sense objects to the extent that one would act immorally for their sake. One recognizes the happiness and unhappiness of other people and other creatures, giving rise to compassionate assistance; one is not inclined to oppress or harm others.

This level of wisdom is reached by those individuals who have realized the transcendent (*lokuttara-dhamma*) and who have cultivated transcendent right-view (*lokuttara-sammādiṭṭhi*). At least, it is reached by those people who practise and conduct their lives in order to realize the transcendent.

If one is unable to reach this level of wisdom, then one should develop faith, which is the preliminary stage for wisdom to arise. This faith is accompanied by understanding and is conducive to wisdom. Here, one believes in the path of wisdom and trusts in a life of freedom based on wisdom. Through one's own efforts one gradually incorporates these principles of wisdom and compassion.<sup>80</sup>

These three factors are interconnected and mutually supportive. In particular, the first factor, of developing a love of truth and goodness, is required for all wholesome activities, which act as the basis for factors two and three.

<sup>79</sup>See chapter 11 on happiness.

<sup>80</sup>This conducive and fruitful form of faith is based on a firm confidence in: the Buddha, the pioneer for living a life of freedom based on wisdom; the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha; and the Sangha, the community of individuals who practise in accord with these teachings and who have consequently realized the same kind of freedom of the heart. In sum, this is called steadfast faith in the Triple Gem. See chapter 7 on awakened beings.

If one develops these three factors, the belief in actions bearing fruit in future lives reinforces one's determination to do good and abstain from the bad. This belief, however, is not the decisive factor determining one's wholesome actions.

If people's spiritual practice is still unsteady and they are unable to develop these three factors, it is still better to maintain a belief in the fruits of kamma in future lives as an incentive for doing good and refraining from bad, than to indulge in sensual pleasures and seek out material things for personal gratification. Such an indulgence simply leads to mutual oppression, widespread wrongdoing, and personal and social misfortune. In any case, the belief in the fruits of kamma extending to future lives is designated as an aspect of 'mundane right-view' (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*), which acts as a link facilitating progress on the path of virtue.

#### F. FRUITS OF KAMMA ACCORDING TO THE CŪḶAKAMMAVIBHAṄGA SUTTA

At this point, let us examine an important teaching by the Buddha contained in the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, on the fruits of kamma resulting from the present and manifesting in future lives. The gist of this teaching is as follows:

Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are related to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.

1. **(a)** Some man or woman kills living beings and is brutal, murderous, merciless to living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is short-lived. {283}
- (b)** Some man or woman abstains from killing living beings; gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after

death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is long-lived.

2. **(a)** Some man or woman is given to injuring beings with a fist, with a rod, with a weapon. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is sickly.

**(b)** Some man or woman is not given to injuring beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is healthy.

3. **(a)** Some man or woman is easily angered and annoyed; due to the slightest criticism, he is offended, becomes angry and hostile, and displays wrath and fury. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is ugly.

**(b)** Some man or woman is not easily angered. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is attractive.

4. **(a)** Some man or woman is envious; he resents and begrudges when others receive honour or veneration. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is uninfluential.

**(b)** Some man or woman is not envious. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears

in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is influential.

5. **(a)** Some man or woman does not practise generosity; he does not give food, drink, clothing, etc. to others. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is poor.

**(b)** Some man or woman practises generosity, giving away food, drink, clothing, etc. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is wealthy.

6. **(a)** Some man or woman is obstinate and arrogant, looking down on others; he does not pay homage, honour, or show deference to those who are worthy of such treatment. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is lowborn. {284}

**(b)** Some man or woman is not obstinate and arrogant; he pays homage, honours, and shows deference to those who are worthy of such treatment. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is high-born.

7. **(a)** Some man or woman does not approach recluses or brahmins and ask about what is wholesome and unwholesome, harmful and beneficial, worthy and unworthy of cultivation, or about which actions lead to long-lasting suffering and which actions lead to long-lasting happiness. Because of

performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is stupid.

**(b)** Some man or woman approaches recluses and brahmins and asks about what is wholesome and unwholesome, etc. Because of performing and undertaking such action, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is intelligent.

*Subha Sutta: M. III. 202-206. (This is an abbreviated translation.)*

Although this sutta describes the results one may experience in future lives, it emphasizes actions performed in this present life. In particular, it emphasizes those actions performed regularly or consistently in one's daily life, which help to shape one's state of mind, character traits, and personality, and which function as direct causes for specific results. It does not focus on extravagant or exaggerated results, in the sense of performing a single action, say of making a donation, and then receiving some boundless rewards or being able to wish for whatever one desires. Such a selfish focus leads people to perform good deeds similar to investing money in a bank and idly awaiting the interest, or playing the lottery once and expecting an enormous prize. People then neglect those general or everyday wholesome actions outlined in this sutta. (See Note 5.2)

In sum, the teachings in this sutta maintain the key principle that a consideration of fruits of kamma ripening in a future life should be based on a confidence and understanding that these results rely on a quality of mind and a quality of behaviour established in this present life. These longterm future results are directly connected to the present in line with cause and effect.

One way of analyzing this matter is to say that any valid belief connected to future lives must help to reinforce and stabilize one's love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*). If, on the other hand, one's beliefs merely promote greed and craving, one can confidently state that they are false beliefs and in need of revision. {285}



## NOTE 5.2: THE CREATOR AND RITUALS IN THE SUBHA SUTTA

This sutta contains a conversation between the Buddha and the young brahmin student Subha. The Buddha's teachings in this sutta can be viewed in light of Brahmanism.

First, they are a way of disputing the brahmanistic teaching that the God Brahma is the creator of human beings and all things in the world. The Buddha offers an alternative teaching, stating that human volitional actions themselves are the determining factors shaping human life.

Second, according to brahmanistic rituals, e.g. animal sacrifices, those people who perform these rituals and make offerings to the brahmin priests are told they can expect copious rewards, without there being any obvious causal relationship between the action and its results. The Buddha's explanations in this sutta on the fruits of kamma provides a new perspective on this subject.

## 5.5 ADDITIONAL MATTERS PERTAINING TO KAMMA

There are several more important points pertaining to kamma. Some of these points help to prevent serious misunderstandings from arising, while others help to complete one's understanding of this subject.

### A. WHAT IS THE CAUSE FOR HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING?

Several teachings by the Buddha emphasize how volitional actions (*kamma*) and their results proceed in line with cause and effect. For example: 'Conditioned by ignorance, a person produces volitional acts of the body (*kāya-saṅkhāra*) ... volitional acts of speech (*vacī-saṅkhāra*) ... volitional acts of mind (*mano-saṅkhāra*), either self-generated ... or owing to other agents ... either knowingly ... or unknowingly.'<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the Buddha refuted the doctrine of karmic autogenesisism (*attakāra-vāda*), which states that happiness and suffering are entirely self-determined, and the doctrine of karmic heterogenesisism (*parakāra-vāda*), which states that happiness and suffering are entirely caused by external factors.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup>S. II. 40-41.

<sup>82</sup>For more on this subject, see chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

One must investigate each distinctive process in order to determine the degree of involvement by oneself and/or by external factors. One should not make a definitive judgement based on a simple glance or analysis.

These teachings help to prevent the extreme misunderstanding of kamma that all things arise exclusively due to one's own actions, without taking into account external or environmental factors that play a participatory role.

Here it is important to distinguish between the principle of kamma as a natural law and kamma from the perspective of ethical conduct. So far the discussion has focused on kamma as a natural law, which pertains to natural dynamics of volitional action, and which incorporate all of the myriad causes and conditions involved.

The teachings on kamma related to ethics, however, are practical and to be applied. They are mainly focused on individual people, who should take full and entire responsibility for their intentional actions. For these teachings to fulfil their true objective, they begin by emphasizing personal responsibility. One example is the Buddha's teaching: 'One is one's own refuge.'

Besides emphasizing the need to help oneself and to initiate actions, these teachings also point to a relationship to other people's actions. That is, for other people to successfully offer assistance to oneself, one must first establish self-reliance. One's self-reliance will influence the degree of assistance others are willing to give, and it also influences one's own response to such external assistance.

Through proper investigation one sees how the principle of kamma as a natural law and the principle of kamma in relation to ethics are not contradictory; rather they are mutually supportive. {286}

## B. MISINTERPRETATIONS OF KAMMA

There are three wrong views pertaining to happiness and suffering that need to be distinguished from the Buddhist teaching on kamma:

1. Past-action determinism (*pubbekatahetu-vāda*; *pubbekata-vāda*): the belief that all happiness and suffering is a result of past kamma.
2. Theistic determinism (*issaranimmāṇahetu-vāda*; *issaranimmita-vāda*): the belief that all happiness and suffering is created by a supreme God.
3. Indeterminism (or accidentalism; *ahetu-apaccaya-vāda*; *ahetu-vāda*): the belief that all happiness and suffering arises dependent on arbitrary acts of fate, without cause or condition.

These wrong views are described in this sutta passage:

Monks, there are these three sectarian tenets, which, when questioned, interrogated, and cross-examined by the wise, are attributed to passed-down traditions, and which are firmly established in the principle of non-doing (*akiriya*). What are the three?:

1. There are some ascetics and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever a person experiences – whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain – all that is caused by what was done in the past (*pubbekata-hetu*).’
2. There are other ascetics and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever a person experiences – whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain – all that is caused by God’s creative power (*issaranimmāṇa-hetu*).’
3. And there are still other ascetic and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever a person experiences – whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain – all that occurs without a cause or condition (*ahetu-apaccaya*).’

Monks, I approached that [first group of] ascetics and brahmins and I asked them: ‘Is it true that you venerable ones hold such a doctrine and view?’ When I ask them this and they affirm it, then I say to them: ‘In such a case, it is due to past deeds that you might destroy life, take what is not given, indulge in sexual activity, speak falsehood ... and hold wrong view.’

Those who fall back on past deeds as the essential truth have no desire or endeavour in this respect: ‘This should be done; this should be avoided.’ Since they do not truly apprehend that which should be done and that which should be avoided, these ascetics and brahmins are deluded and devoid of safeguards; they possess no legitimate personal doctrine of an ascetic. This was my first legitimate censure of those ascetics and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view.

Monks, I approached that [second group of] ascetics and brahmins and I asked them: ‘Is it true...?’ Then I say to them: ‘In such a case, it is due to God’s creative power that you might destroy life, take what is not given, indulge in sexual activity, speak falsehood ... and hold wrong view.’ {287}

Those who fall back on God’s creative activity as the essential truth have no desire or endeavour in this respect: ‘This should be done; this should be avoided....’

Monks, I approached that [third group of] ascetics and brahmins and I asked them: ‘Is it true...?’ Then I say to them: ‘In such a case, it is without a cause or condition that you might destroy life, take what is not given, indulge in sexual activity, speak falsehood ... and hold wrong view.’

Those who fall back on an absence of cause and conditions as the essential truth have no desire or endeavour in this respect: ‘This should be done; this should be avoided ...’

*A. I. 173-5; cf.: M. II. 214-23; Vbh. 367-8.*

The first doctrine (of past-action determinism) was held by the Nigaṇṭhā (Jains), as confirmed by this sutta passage:

Monks, there are some recluses and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever a person feels, whether pleasure, or pain, or whatever kind of feeling, all that is caused by what was done in the past. So by annihilating through asceticism past actions and by doing no fresh actions, there will be no binding authority in the future. With no binding authority in the future, there is the destruction of action. With the destruction of action, there is the destruction of suffering. With the destruction of suffering, there is the destruction of feeling. With the destruction of feeling, all suffering will be exhausted.’ So speak the Nigaṇṭhas, monks.

*M. II. 214.*

Here is a similar sutta passage:

Some feelings, Sīvaka, arise originating from bile disorders ... produced by a change of climate ... produced by irregular exercise ... caused by assault ... produced as the result of kamma.... Those ascetics and brahmins hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever feeling a person experiences, whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, all that is caused by what was done in the past....’ I say that this is wrong on the part of those ascetics and brahmins.

*S. IV. 230.*

These teachings by the Buddha prevent people from falling into extreme or unreasonable views, whereby they only understand kamma in the context of actions performed in the past. By holding to such views people simply sit around waiting for the results of past kamma to determine their destiny. They do not consider how to actively improve themselves in the present. These misunderstandings develop into pernicious forms of wrong view, as described in the passages above.

Moreover, one can clearly see from these words that the Buddha regarded determined effort to be at the heart of all his teachings on kamma; the value of these teachings is determined by their relationship to effort.

These teachings by the Buddha do not negate past kamma; it is acknowledged that past kamma is involved in the causal process and influences the present moment. The past and the present are both part of the dynamic of cause and effect. The key principle here is that past kamma is connected to causality; it is not related to some kind of presumed supernatural reality to which one must entrust one's destiny. A clear understanding of Dependent Origination, in particular, will help to dispel any doubts about this matter. {288}

This may be compared to someone who climbs up a three storey building. It is irrefutable that the arrival at the third floor is dependent on that person's action – the act of walking up the stairs. And once up on the third floor, it is impossible for this person to reach out his hand and touch the ground or to get in a car and drive around as if he was on the road. These similarly irrefutable facts are also dependent on his climbing up to the third floor. In the same way, were he to feel exhausted from climbing and unable to go up or down until he had a rest, that exhaustion too would be dependent on his actions.

It is beyond question that the arrival at the third floor, the range of activities available at this location, and the need to engage with whatever objects are found here, are all consequences of a previous action – of having walked up the stairs. But whatever that person then does, whether it entails interacting with those things found in this place, having a rest, or descending the stairs, are all based on new decisions. There is a range of possibilities, and each choice leads to specific results. Although the previous actions may still be exerting an effect, for example the man may be tired from walking, it is up to him whether to give in to this tiredness and have a rest or whether to respond to it in some other way. All of these factors, including past kamma, are part of a causal process.

Based on an understanding of Dependent Origination, one can benefit from past kamma, by drawing lessons from it, strengthening reasoned discernment, and increasing an understanding of various phenomena, including an understanding of one's current mental disposition, so that one can make plans for the present and act to bring about good results in the future.

### C. PURIFYING KAMMA

The Buddha taught:

Monks, if one were to say thus: ‘This person experiences kamma in precisely the same way that he created it’, in such a case there could be no living of the holy life (*brahmacariya*) and no opportunity would be seen for completely making an end of suffering.

But if one were to say thus: ‘This person creates kamma that is a basis for a particular kind of feeling (*vedanā*), he experiences its result precisely in that way’, in such a case the living of the holy life is possible and an opportunity is seen for completely making an end of suffering.

Here, monks, some person has created minor bad kamma yet it leads him to hell, while some other person here has created exactly the same minor kamma yet it produces results in this very life, with none of the insignificant aspects [of this kamma] manifest, only [its] significant aspects.

What kind of person creates minor bad kamma that leads him to hell? Here, some person is undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom; his mind is limited, he is of inferior character, and he is afflicted by petty concerns. When such a person creates minor bad kamma, it leads him to hell.<sup>83</sup> {289}

What kind of person creates exactly the same minor bad kamma and yet it produces results in this very life, with none of the insignificant aspects manifest, only [its] significant aspects? Here, some person is developed in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. He is high-minded and of lofty character, and he dwells without measure. When such a person creates exactly the same minor bad kamma, it produces results in this very life, with none of the insignificant aspects manifest, only [its] significant aspects.<sup>84</sup>

Here, headman, some teacher holds such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Anyone at all who destroys life ... takes what is not given ... engages in sexual misconduct ... speaks falsehood is bound for a state of

misery, is bound for hell.’ A disciple who has full confidence in that teacher considers: ‘My teacher holds such a doctrine and view as this: “Anyone at all who destroys life is bound for a state of misery, bound for hell”.’ He acquires the view: ‘Now I have destroyed life, so I too am bound for a state of misery, bound for hell.’ If he does not abandon that assertion and that idea, and if he does not relinquish that view, then he will be, as it were, dropped into hell....

But here a Tathāgata arises in the world.... In many ways he criticizes and censures the destruction of life ... the taking of what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... false speech, and he says: ‘Abstain from the destruction of life ... the taking of what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... false speech.’ A disciple who has full confidence in that teacher reflects thus: ‘In many ways the Blessed One criticizes and censures the destruction of life ... and he says: “Abstain from the destruction of life....” Now I have destroyed life to such and such an extent. That wasn’t proper; that wasn’t good. Certainly, I am distressed as a consequence of these actions, and I am not free from the label of one who has done evil.’ Having reflected thus, he abandons the destruction of life and he abstains from the destruction of life in the future. Thus there comes about the abandoning of that evil deed....

He abandons the destruction of life and abstains from the destruction of life. He abandons taking what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... false speech ... divisive speech ... harsh speech ... idle chatter ... covetousness ... ill-will ... wrong view; he is one of right view.

That noble disciple – who is thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill-will, undeluded, clearly comprehending, ever mindful – dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with lovingkindness, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with lovingkindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility, without ill-will.... When the liberation of mind by lovingkindness



is developed and cultivated in this way, any moderate kamma that was done does not remain there, does not persist there.

S. IV. 319-23.

These teachings by the Buddha are presented to help clarify some of the subtle details of the fruition of kamma. They act as a precaution against establishing an opinion on kamma too quickly or interpreting its meaning too simply. Having said this, these are only a few examples of the teachings on kamma. {290}

#### D. REDEEMING KAMMA

*Paṭikamma* is an important term in the teachings on kamma. Based on its original meaning, or as a play on its original meaning, it may be translated as ‘to redeem kamma’. In this sense it refers to restoration, rectification, rehabilitation, amendment, or the abandoning of bad kamma and doing good kamma instead.

*Paṭikamma* was originally a common, everyday term used in the sense of repairing something damaged, correcting something defective, righting something wrong, or even in relation to curing an illness.

In the context of Dhamma teachings, the term *paṭikamma* refers essentially to an acknowledgement of one’s own past mistakes, a relinquishment of unwholesome and harmful actions, a turning away from bad actions and a resulting performance of good actions, self-improvement through good deeds, and rectifying one’s faults in order to arrive at integrity and completeness.

<sup>83</sup> Similar to placing a lump of salt in a small bowl.

<sup>84</sup> Similar to placing a lump of salt into a river. A. I. 249. The translation ‘with none of the insignificant aspects [of this kamma] manifest, only [its] significant aspects’ is derived from the Pali: *nānupi khāyati bahudeva*. This passage may also be translated as ‘with none of the insignificant aspects manifesting in a major way’. And if one translates this passage according to the commentaries, it renders as ‘none of the minor kamma comes to later fruition, only the major kamma comes to later fruition’ (see: AA. II. 361).

In relation to the monastic community, the Buddha applied the principle of *paṭikamma* for laying down two kinds of disciplinary prescriptions: expiation of offences (*āpatti-paṭikamma*) and a formal invitation for admonishment (*pavāraṇā-kamma*). Moreover, in a wider context, encompassing both renunciants and laypeople, the Buddha emphasized performing redress accompanied by an awareness and confession of one's wrongdoing (referred to as confession of one's transgressions – *accaya-desanā*), which is considered a practice corresponding to the code of the noble ones (*ariya-vinaya*).

In the Dhammavinaya<sup>85</sup> there are thus three basic procedures for rectifying one's faults within a social context:

1. Expiation of offences (*āpatti-paṭikamma*): atonement; repentance. This is a disciplinary prescription for the monastic community. If a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni has committed an offence, he or she is aware of this transgression and discloses it to others. He or she openly renounces such misdeeds and determines not to repeat them. One informs others of this determination in order to be restrained in the future.

This standard is applied even when someone has doubts. For example, on the Uposatha Day ('observance day' – the full and new-moon days), if a bhikkhu suspects that he may have incurred an offence, he informs another bhikkhu in this way: 'Venerable sir, I have doubts in regard to an offence of such-and-such a name. When these doubts vanish, the offence will have been atoned for.'<sup>86</sup>

2. Formal invitation for admonishment (*pavāraṇā-kamma*). This too is a disciplinary prescription for the monastic community. Abbreviated to the term Pavāraṇā, it constitutes an annual ceremony – a formal act of the sangha (*saṅgha-kamma*) – performed at the end of the Rainy Season retreat (*vassa*). After having lived together for the Vassa, the resident bhikkhus or bhikkhunis convene and each

<sup>85</sup>Trans.: the Dhamma and the Discipline.

<sup>86</sup>Vin. I. 126. *Ahaṃ āvuso itthannāmāya āpattiyā vematiko yadā nibbematiko bhavissāmi tadā taṃ āpattiṃ paṭikarissāmi.* Note how the verb (past participle) form of *paṭikamma* is *paṭikara*.

individual makes a formal invitation to the gathering. Beginning with the most senior member of the community, each individual states: ‘Venerable friends, I make a formal invitation to the sangha. If you have seen, heard, or suspected (that I have made any mistakes or acted in any harmful ways), may you admonish me out of compassion. Having recognized (these mistakes), I will rectify them.’<sup>87</sup> {291}

3. Confession of one’s transgressions (*accaya-desanā*). This is a principle of conduct integral to the noble discipline (*ariya-vinaya*), applicable to both members of the monastic community and to laypeople. The gist of this principle is that when one commits an offence, makes a mistake, or behaves badly in relation to someone else, one makes amends by asking for forgiveness. Expressing one’s remorse to others for transgressions and offences, and requesting others to acknowledge the recognition of one’s mistakes in order for one to make amends and to show restraint in the future, is growth in the noble discipline.

There are many stories in the Tipiṭaka of laypeople, and even of monks, who act offensively towards the Buddha. When they recognize their mistakes, they confess and ask forgiveness from him. The Buddha would answer by saying that he accepts their apology if they recognize the harm in their transgressions committed by way of delusion or stupidity, and if they make amends. He would reiterate how acknowledging one’s mistakes, making amends, and being careful in the future is growth in the noble discipline.

Take for example the archer who was hired to assassinate the Buddha. He went to express his remorse to the Buddha, who stated: ‘Because you see the harm in that which is harmful, and make genuine amends, I accept and acknowledge your mistake. For anyone, to discern the harm in the harmful and to make righteous amends by afterwards showing caution, is growth in the noble discipline.’<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Vin. I. 159–60. *Saṅghaṃ āvuso pavāremi diṭṭhena vā sutena vā parisaiṅkāya vā vadantu maṃ āyasmanto anukampaṃ upādāya passanto paṭikarissāmi.*

<sup>88</sup> Vin. II. 192. *Yato ca kho tvaṃ āvuso accayaṃ accayato disvā yathā dhammaṃ paṭikarosi tante mayaṃ paṭiggaṇhāma vuddhiṃ hesā āvuso ariyassa vinaye yo accayaṃ accayato disvā yathā dhammaṃ paṭikaroti āyatiṃ saṃvaraṃ āpajjati.*

This principle of rectification (*paṭikamma*) is a way of applying the law of kamma for spiritual development. One develops one's intentional conduct at least to the extent of making amends for past misdeeds so that one's future actions are improved and bad actions are replaced by good actions. One does not sit by idly due to a fear of generating kamma, as is espoused by the doctrine of the Nigaṇṭhā. And very importantly, after making mistakes, one does not fret, bemoan, get depressed, or get caught up in the past, which only compounds unwholesome tendencies, leads to missed opportunities, and increases suffering.

Having made mistakes, one recognizes them for what they are. One does not get caught up in or immobilized by the emotions of distress or remorse. Rather, one seeks knowledge and relies on wisdom. Having recognized one's faults, one determines to rectify them or to make amends. This accords with the principles praised by the Buddha. It also accords with the principle of heedfulness (*appamāda*). Rectification (*paṭikamma*) supports heedfulness, which is a key spiritual factor leading to spiritual growth and perfection.

The following verses by the Buddha in the Dhammapada complement this subject of redemption and rectification. The same verses were uttered by Ven. Āṅgulimāla while enjoying the bliss of liberation after he was 'reborn' in the noble discipline by realizing the fruit of arahantship:

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

Whoever cancels out evil deeds by way of wholesome deeds; such a one illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds.<sup>89</sup> {292}

*Dh. verses: 172-3.*

<sup>89</sup>Spoken by Ven. Āṅgulimāla at: M. II. 104-105; Thag. verses 871-72.

### E. KAMMA LEADING TO THE END OF KAMMA

One of the earlier classifications of kamma (see above) divides kamma into four kinds, according to the relationship between actions and their results:<sup>90</sup>

1. Dark actions with dark results.
2. Bright actions with bright results.
3. Actions both dark and bright, with results both dark and bright.
4. Actions neither dark nor bright, with results neither dark nor bright, and conducive to the end of kamma.

So far, the descriptions of the fruits of kamma have been restricted to the first three kinds of kamma listed above, which can be simply defined as ‘good and bad kamma’. There remains thus the fourth kind of kamma.

Because the fruition of kamma in terms of this fourth factor is entirely different from the first three kinds, it needs to be distinguished.

Many people, including Buddhists themselves, express an interest only in the first three kinds of kamma and neglect the fourth kind, even though this final factor is an essential Buddhist principle that leads to the true goal of Buddha-Dhamma.

Bright and dark kamma, or good and bad kamma, manifests in myriad forms, which can be classified within the framework of the ten wholesome and unwholesome paths of action (*kusala-* and *akusala-kamma*patha), e.g.: destroying life, stealing, sexual misconduct, harmful or malicious speech, etc., along with the opposite wholesome forms of action. Such actions cause people to reap the various positive and negative fruits described earlier. They determine people’s way of life, prompting them to perform further wholesome and unwholesome deeds and to revolve in the wheel of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vatṭa*).

<sup>90</sup>See: D. III. 230; M. I. 389-90; A. II. 230-37.

Fruition associated with the fourth kind of kamma is diametrically opposed to that of the first three kinds. That is, it is volitional action that does not lead to an accumulation of kamma in the future. This kind of kamma leads to the end of kamma, to a freedom from kamma, to the cessation of kamma. It does not produce more kamma.

Kamma leading to the end of kamma refers to actions in harmony with those principles bringing about a realization of the highest goal of Buddha-Dhamma. From the perspective of the Four Noble Truths this refers to the fourth noble truth, i.e. the Eightfold Path, but one may equally describe it by other formats, say the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) or the threefold training of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Occasionally, this fourth kind of kamma is described in relation to the other three kinds, as the intention to abandon these three. This refers to those actions accompanied by an intention to bring about the non-arising of these three former kinds of kamma. In regard to ‘root cause’, this refers to those actions springing from non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*).

A discussion of kamma is often connected to the subject of pleasure (*sukha*; ‘happiness’) and pain (*dukkha*; ‘suffering’), because intentional actions bear fruit as pleasure or pain. As long as there is kamma, one must spin around in the vortex of pleasure and pain. {293} Any state intermingled by pleasure and pain is not free from suffering and is thus by definition not the supreme, flawless state. In sum, kamma is linked to suffering and is a cause for suffering.

In any case, this preceding paragraph refers specifically to the first three kinds of kamma. The fourth kind of kamma is an exception, because it is kamma leading to the end of kamma.

Good kamma bears fruit as happiness, but this happiness is mixed up with suffering and may be a cause for suffering. The fourth kind of kamma leads to a complete freedom from suffering. Moreover, while one performs this fourth kind of kamma, one does not experience suffering. On the contrary, one experiences a full and genuine form of happiness.

Other religious traditions at the time of the Buddha, in particular the doctrine of the Nigaṇṭhas, also contain teachings on the end of kamma.

The doctrine of the Nigaṇṭhas teaches the principles of past kamma (*pubbekata-vāda*), of the destruction of kamma (*karma-kshaya*), and of causing oneself hardship through extreme ascetic practices (*tapa; tapo-kamma*).

If one is unable to clearly distinguish these three principles from Buddhist teachings, there will arise confusion and misunderstanding. But if one is able to make this distinction, one will gain a clearer understanding of Buddha-Dhamma.

The doctrine of the Nigaṇṭhas is as follows:

Whatever a person feels, whether pleasure or pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, all that is caused by what was done in the past. So by annihilating with asceticism past actions and by doing no fresh actions, there will be no consequence in the future. With no consequence in the future, there is the destruction of action. With the destruction of action, there is the destruction of suffering. With the destruction of suffering, there is the destruction of feeling. With the destruction of feeling, all suffering will be exhausted. Such is the doctrine, such is the view, of the Nigaṇṭhas.

*M. I. 92-3; M. II. 214; A. I. 220-21.*

The Nigaṇṭhas believed that everything one experiences is a result of past kamma. In order to bring suffering to an end, one must destroy all kamma by burning away mental defilements through extreme ascetic practices. In this fashion, previous kamma is dispelled. Moreover, one must refrain from creating any new kamma.

Buddhism, on the contrary, teaches that previous kamma is one factor in a causal process. One must understand this process as it truly is in order for one's spiritual practice to proceed well. The end of suffering is possible by way of action, yet this action must be correct. It is kamma leading to the end of kamma.

In order to eliminate kamma, instead of remaining idle or passive, Buddhist practitioners must persevere and make determined and diligent effort. This effort is accompanied by wisdom, which leads to a freedom from the power of craving and ignorance.

Here are the main attributes of kamma leading to the end of kamma:  
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1. It is the path leading to the cessation of kamma (*kammanirodhagāmini-paṭipadā*). Although it leads to the end of kamma, it is itself one form of kamma.
2. It is referred to as neither dark nor bright (or neither white nor black); its results also are neither dark nor bright.
3. It originates from non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). By its very nature it prevents evil actions, because it is free from any causes or conditions leading to serious wrongdoing.
4. It is accompanied by wisdom and understanding, which discerns the true benefits and harm of things. It is a virtuous and reasoned form of action, which enhances one's life and is conducive to well-being.
5. It is a truly wholesome and favourable form of action, because effort, mindfulness, and wisdom act as supporting factors and directly conduct the activities. There is no opportunity for craving to spur people into selfishly harming others or to prevent people from acting due to an attachment to personal pleasure.
6. It is wholesome action referred to as 'transcendent wholesomeness' (*lokuttara-kusala*). The commentaries refer to it as 'Path intention' (*magga-cetanā*) or 'Path knowledge' (*magga-ñāṇa*). It is called kamma leading to the end of kamma because it brings about the non-production or non-generation of kamma.
7. In terms of formal principles of Dhamma practice, this kamma refers to the Eightfold Path – the fourth noble truth – which leads to



the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodhagāminī-paṭipadā*). According to the circumstances, however, it may also be referred to by other terms, e.g. the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) or the threefold training, or by such general terms as ‘intention for abandoning the three (former) kinds of kamma’.

In regard to item 5., note that many people harbour the misunderstanding that craving (*taṇhā*) is solely a motivating force for action: the greater a person’s craving, the the more he or she will act with a sense of urgency. If one has no craving, one will be devoid of a motivation to act. One will remain idle and perhaps fall into laziness.

This misunderstanding results from an incomplete view of human nature. It can create serious damage, for oneself, for society, and for one’s natural environment.

In fact, craving is a motivation for both action and inaction. It is a motivating force for action in the case that one seeks sense objects for selfish gratification. In such cases, there tends to be competition and conflict between people, causing harm and distress for society.

But in those circumstances in which one should act for the sake of goodness, or for the sake of personal or social welfare, but whereby one does not obtain things for personal gratification, craving is a motivation for inaction. This is because craving leads to an infatuation in sensual delight and enjoyment. Even an excessive delight in sleeping or other forms of self-indulgence hinder one from performing appropriate actions. Craving here is a cause for laziness. And the greater one’s ignorance – one’s failure to understand the value and benefits of specific actions – the more that craving will lead to idleness and apathy.

In sum, craving is either a motivation for harmful actions or a motivation for indolence and inertia, depending on the means by which one’s gratification and pleasure is rewarded and satisfied. {295}

Actions that enhance the quality of life or increase true wellbeing are distinct from the enjoyment or attachment to sense gratification, and indeed they often require a relinquishment of personal pleasure. Such actions do not stem from craving (unless one has established secondary

preconditions). Rather, they spring from wisdom, which discerns the true value of such actions, and which generates a delight for performing them.

The delight or desire for action here is referred to in Pali as *chanda* (in full, it is called ‘wholesome desire’ – *kusala-chanda*, or ‘desire for truth’ – *dhamma-chanda*). *Chanda* is the true motivation for those actions enhancing the quality of life or increasing wellbeing.

Actions impelled by wholesome desire, however, may be impeded or offset by craving (*taṇhā*), which indulges in inertia or becomes infatuated by objects of sensual gratification. Under such circumstances craving leads to suffering, because many of one’s actions are performed with a sense of resistance and coercion.

If, however, one has a clear discernment of an action’s true value, and the strength of wholesome desire is sufficient to escape from the obstructive force of craving, besides functioning as the motivation for action, wholesome desire will lead to happiness. This happiness is spacious and expansive, unlike the restricted pleasure derived from craving. It enables one to act with joy.

Moreover, fully supported and guided by effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), and wisdom (*paññā*), one will develop concentration (*samādhi*) in one’s activities. It is precisely this form of action that is referred to as *kamma* leading to the end of *kamma*.

The dynamic of this form of action may be outlined simply in this way: whenever one acts in line with the Eightfold Path or the seven factors of enlightenment (or some other group of spiritual factors, depending on the circumstances), whereby one is guided by wisdom, craving vanishes, because it has no opportunity to function. Similarly, greed, hatred, and delusion do not appear.

With the absence of craving, and divested of greed, hatred and delusion, there are no volitional actions that produce negative repercussions for one’s life. Without such negative repercussions one is free from suffering. Whereas formerly one was enslaved by the dictates of craving, now one’s life is guided by wisdom and one develops self-mastery and true independence.

For further clarity, here are some passages by the Buddha on the topic of kamma leading to the end of kamma:

Monks, kamma should be understood; the source and origin of kamma should be understood; the diversity of kamma should be understood; the result of kamma should be understood; the cessation of kamma should be understood; the way leading to the cessation of kamma should be understood....

It is volition, monks, that I call kamma. For having willed, one acts by body, speech, or mind.

And what is the source and origin of kamma? Contact (*phassa*) is its source and origin.

And what is the diversity of kamma? There is kamma the results of which are to be experienced in hell; there is kamma the results of which are to be experienced in the animal realm; there is kamma the results of which are to be experienced in the realm of afflicted spirits; there is kamma the results of which are to be experienced in the human world; there is kamma the results of which are to be experienced in the deva world. This is called the diversity of kamma. {296}

And what is the result of kamma? The result of kamma, I say, is threefold: [to be experienced] in this very life, or in the [next] rebirth, or on a subsequent occasion. This is called the result of kamma.

And what is the cessation of kamma? With the cessation of contact there is cessation of kamma. This Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of kamma, namely, right view ... right concentration.

When, monks, a noble disciple thus clearly understands kamma, the source and origin of kamma, the diversity of kamma, the result of kamma, the cessation of kamma, and the way leading to the cessation of kamma, he understands the holy life endowed with penetrative wisdom to be the cessation of kamma.

Monks, I will teach you new and old kamma, the cessation of kamma, and the way leading to the cessation of kamma....

And what is old kamma? The eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is old kamma, fashioned by conditioning factors, generated by volition, a locus of sensation. This is called old kamma.

And what, monks, is new kamma? Whatever action one does now by body, speech, or mind. This is called new kamma.

And what, monks, is the cessation of kamma? When one reaches liberation through the cessation of bodily action, verbal action, and mental action, this is called the cessation of kamma.

And what, monks, is the way leading to the cessation of kamma? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view ... right concentration. This is called the way leading to the cessation of kamma.

*S. IV. 132-3.*

Monks, this body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. It is to be seen as old kamma, created by conditioning factors, generated by volition, a locus of sensation.

*S. II. 65.*

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Greed ... hatred ... delusion is a cause for the origination of kamma. Any kamma performed through greed, born of greed, caused by greed, originated by greed, ripens wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever that kamma ripens, it is there that one experiences its result, either in this very life, or in the [next] rebirth, or on some subsequent occasion. Any kamma performed through hatred ... through delusion, ripens wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever that kamma ripens, it is there that one experiences its result....

Monks, there are these three [other] causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion is a cause for the origination of kamma. Any kamma performed

through non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, originated by non-greed, is abandoned when greed has vanished; it is cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated so that it is no more subject to future arising. Any kamma performed through non-hatred ... through non-delusion, is abandoned when delusion has vanished; it is cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated so that it is no more subject to future arising. {297}

*A. I. 134-5.*

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Greed ... hatred ... delusion.... Any kamma performed through greed, born of greed, caused by greed, originated by greed, is unwholesome and harmful and results in suffering. That kamma leads to the origination of kamma, not to the cessation of kamma. Any kamma performed through hatred ... through delusion ... leads to the origination of kamma....

Monks, there are these three [other] causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion.... Any kamma performed through non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, originated by non-greed, is wholesome and beneficial and results in happiness. That kamma leads to the cessation of kamma, not to the origination of kamma. Any kamma performed through non-hatred ... through non-delusion ... leads to the cessation of kamma....

*A. I. 263; see two similar suttas at: A. I. 264 and A. III. 338-9.*

Monks, the destruction of life, I say, is threefold: caused by greed, caused by hatred, and caused by delusion. Taking what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... false speech ... divisive speech ... harsh speech ... idle chatter ... covetousness ... ill-will ... wrong view, I say, is also threefold: caused by greed, caused by hatred, and caused by delusion.

Thus, greed is a source and origin of kamma; hatred is a source and origin of kamma; delusion is a source and origin of kamma. With the destruction of greed, a source of kamma is extinguished. With

the destruction of hatred, a source of kamma is extinguished. With the destruction of delusion, a source of kamma is extinguished.

A. V. 261-2.

Puṇṇa, there are four kinds of action proclaimed by me after realizing them for myself with direct knowledge. What are the four? There is dark action with dark result; there is bright action with bright result; there is dark-and-bright action with dark-and-bright result; and there is action that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, action that leads to the destruction of action.

And what, Puṇṇa, is dark action with dark result? Here someone generates an afflictive bodily formation, an afflictive verbal formation, an afflictive mental formation. Having generated an afflictive bodily formation ... he reappears in an afflictive world. When he has reappeared in an afflictive world, afflictive contacts touch him. Being touched by afflictive contact, he feels afflictive feelings, extremely painful, as in the case of the beings in hell.

On this account, a being's rebirth is due to previous actions; one is reborn through the actions one has performed. When one has reappeared, contacts touch one. Thus I say that beings are the heirs of their actions. This is called dark action with dark result.

And what, Puṇṇa, is bright action with bright result? Here someone generates an unafflictive bodily formation, an unafflictive verbal formation, an unafflictive mental formation. Having generated an unafflictive bodily formation ... he reappears in an unafflictive world. When he has reappeared in an unafflictive world, unafflictive contacts touch him. Being touched by unafflictive contact, he feels unafflictive feelings, extremely pleasant, as in the case of the Gods of Refulgent Glory. {298}

On this account, a being's rebirth is due to previous actions; one is reborn through the actions one has performed. When one has reappeared, contacts touch one. Thus I say that beings are the heirs of their actions. This is called bright action with bright result.

And what, Puṇṇa, is dark-and-bright action with dark-and-bright result? Here someone generates a bodily formation ... a verbal formation ... a mental formation that is both afflictive and unafflictive. Having generated a bodily formation ... that is both afflictive and unafflictive he reappears in a world that is both afflictive and unafflictive. When he has reappeared in a world that is both afflictive and unafflictive, both afflictive and unafflictive contacts touch him. Being touched by both afflictive and unafflictive contacts, he feels both afflictive and unafflictive feelings, mingled pleasure and pain, as in the case of human beings and some gods and some beings in the lower worlds.

On this account, a being's rebirth is due to previous actions; one is reborn through the actions one has performed. When one has reappeared, contacts touch one. Thus I say that beings are the heirs of their actions. This is called dark-and-bright action with dark-and-bright result.

And what, Puṇṇa, is action that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, action that leads to the destruction of action? In regard to those three kinds of actions, the volition in abandoning action that is dark with dark result, the volition in abandoning action that is bright with bright result, and the volition in abandoning action that is dark and bright with dark-and-bright result: this is called action that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, action that leads to the destruction of action.<sup>91</sup>

*M. I. 389-90.*

Monks, there are four kinds of kamma .... And what, monks, is dark kamma with dark result? Here, someone destroys life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, speaks falsely, and indulges in intoxicating beverages of liquor and spirits, the basis for heedlessness. This is called dark kamma with dark result.

<sup>91</sup>Cf.: A. II. 231-4; a list of these factors, without explanatory passages, is found at: D. III. 230; A. II. 230-31.

And what, monks, is bright kamma with bright result? Here, someone abstains from the destruction of life ... from taking what is not given ... from sexual misconduct ... from false speech ... from intoxicating beverages of liquor and spirits, the basis for heedlessness. This is called bright kamma with bright result.

And what, monks, is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright result? Here, someone generates a bodily volitional activity ... a verbal volitional activity ... a mental volitional activity that is both afflictive and non-afflictive.... This is called dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright result.

And what, monks, is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma? In regard to those three kinds of kamma, the volition in abandoning [these three kinds of kamma]: this is called kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma.<sup>92</sup>

A. II. 234.

Monks, there are four kinds of kamma ... And what, monks, is dark kamma with dark result?....

And what, monks, is bright kamma with bright result?....

And what, monks, is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright result?....

And what, monks, is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma? Right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration: this is called kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma. {299}

A. II. 236.

<sup>92</sup>Cf. the following sutta: A. 234-5.



Monks, there are four kinds of kamma ... And what, monks, is dark kamma with dark result?....

And what, monks, is bright kamma with bright result?....

And what, monks, is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright result?....

And what, monks, is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma? The enlightenment factor of mindfulness, the enlightenment factor of investigation of Dhamma, the enlightenment factor of effort, the enlightenment factor of rapture, the enlightenment factor of tranquillity, the enlightenment factor of concentration, and the enlightenment factor of equanimity ...

*A. II. 236-7.*

Here, Udāyī, a monk develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness ... the enlightenment factor of equanimity, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation; which is vast, exalted, measureless, free from oppression. When he develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness ... the enlightenment factor of equanimity, craving is abandoned. With the abandoning of craving, kamma is abandoned. With the abandoning of kamma, suffering is abandoned. Thus, with the destruction of craving comes the destruction of kamma; with the destruction of kamma comes the destruction of suffering.

*S. V. 86-7.*

## **F. SOCIAL OR COLLECTIVE KAMMA**

People often pose the question whether social or collective kamma exists. Some people claim that kamma is restricted to an individual; the kamma generated by an individual pertains only to that person: the person who sows the seed, reaps the fruit. Kamma therefore only exists on an individual level; it is a private matter. In sum, social or collective kamma does not exist. Holding to such a view, however, may be a form of delusion.

When faced with such questions it is not always necessary to answer them directly. Sometimes, it suffices to share specific principles on this subject with the questioners, and thus allow them to dispel their own doubts.

What is kamma? As most students of Buddhism are aware, kamma is action, specifically action generated by intention (*cetanā*). Indeed, the Buddha stated that kamma is intention (or intention is kamma).

In terms of the individual, whoever performs kamma – whoever is the owner of a volitional deed – experiences its fruit, the results of intention. From this perspective, kamma is an individual matter. If red dye is added to a glass of water, the water is red; if green dye is added to another glass, the water is green. The two glasses are clearly separate from one another.

Human beings are distinct from material objects found in nature, insofar as they perform volitional actions. All human affairs and occupations – building, agriculture, crafts, tailoring, etc. – are a consequence of human intention. They follow the volitional designs of human beings.

Collectively, the myriad activities and enterprises performed by human beings are referred to as human society or the human world. Human society comprises the world of human volitional activity, directed and determined by intention. The human world is thus a world of kamma.

In brief, kamma is a matter pertaining to human beings; human matters are equivalent to kamma. Individual kamma does exist, yet when one examines kamma from a broader perspective, kamma pertains to all human activities and is the catalyst for the formation of human society. Generally speaking, one need not differentiate the kamma of individual people and the kamma of society, or to distinguish between kamma on the personal level and kamma on the social level. Instead of making that distinction, one should distinguish kamma, all of which pertains to human beings, from matters dealing with material objects, the natural environment, trees and plants, etc.

Although each person leads an individual life, the very engagement and interaction with others is the basis for society. Similarly, although

everyone performs individual kamma, when people live together and perform volitional actions towards, or in collaboration with, others, a specific kind of social kamma is created. When viewing kamma in this broad sense, one sees that it encompasses both individual human beings all the way up to the entire human society. For this reason, except for the purpose of unique considerations, it is unnecessary to distinguish between individual and social kamma.

Take the example of a village in which the residents are farmers and sustain a decent living by work in the fields. One day a gambler skilled at cock-fighting visits the village and displays his craft. He drums up interest in others, encouraging them to engage in cock-fighting. This is his own intentional action, and he will receive the fruits of acting in this way. Here, the perspective is on the individual level. A further analysis reveals that before long almost every head of the household in this village adopts this new activity, delighting in the joys of cock-fighting, and they neglect their work. Each individual who acts in this way likewise receives the fruits of his or her intentional actions.

A broader perspective of the entire village, however, reveals the collective fruit of a change in lifestyle among a large portion of the villagers, including an increase in alcohol consumption and theft. The entire fortune of the village, even including the physical environment, undergoes an alteration as a consequence of these actions.

By examining this series of events one is able to distinguish between those matters pertaining to an individual and those pertaining to the community as a whole. In terms of the formal teachings, a broader perspective reveals how the set of conditions (*paccayākāra*) are naturally interconnected.

Many Buddhists may have heard the Pali adage: *kammunā vattatī loko*, which may be translated as ‘the world turns by way of kamma’. It is important to understand the deeper meaning of this teaching. The ‘world’ here refers to human society. Let us examine how the human world proceeds according to kamma.

This passage is found in the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, in which the Buddha teaches the principle of kamma in order to repudiate the caste system of the brahmins.

The brahmins held the doctrine that the God Brahma created the world and set up a definitive social system for human beings, determining the division into the four castes, of *khattiya* (kings, rulers), *brāhmaṇa* (brahmins), *vessa* (merchants, traders), and *sudda* (manual workers). Having been born into one of these social classes, one had to remain in that class for the rest of one's life; there was no way to alter one's status.

The Buddha refuted this doctrine, stating that the world of human beings proceeds according to kamma. He emphasized those intentional actions that are performed on a regular basis, becoming the ingrained way of life of an individual or the tradition of a community. This refers in particular to people's work or profession (in Pali the term 'kamma' often refers to an occupation or profession).

People's work and occupations are precisely what is meant by the term kamma in the phrase 'the world turns by way of kamma'. The world of human beings does not follow the dictates of the God Brahma, nor is it predetermined in any sort of unyielding or inflexible way. The world turns as a consequence of the work and activities intentionally chosen and undertaken by human beings themselves. {301}

Although the *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* has been cited in other chapters of *Buddhadhamma*, the subject material under discussion was different. Here are the passages relevant to this context:

Look here, *Vāseṭṭha*, you should know that he who makes his living among men by tending cattle is called a farmer; he is not a brahmin.... Whoever makes his living by varied crafts is called a craftsman.... Whoever makes his living by trade is called a merchant.... Whoever makes his living by serving others is called a servant.... Whoever makes his living by stealing is called a robber.... Whoever makes his living by archery and swordsmanship is called a soldier.... Whoever makes his living by priestly craft is called a chaplain; he is not a brahmin.... Whoever governs the town and

realm is called a ruler; he is not a brahmin.... He who harbours no residual defilements, who clings no more, he is the one I call a brahmin....

One is not a brahmin by birth. By action is one a brahmin; by action is one a non-brahmin. For people are farmers by their actions (kamma; 'work', 'occupation', 'behaviour'); by their actions are people craftsmen, merchants, servants, robbers, soldiers, chaplains, and rulers too. The truly wise, seers of Dependent Origination, skilled in action and its results, see action as it really is. Kamma makes the world go round; kamma makes this generation turn.

*M. II. 196; Sn. 117-23.*

In sum, according to the Buddhist teachings, human society manifests and proceeds according to people's work and occupations and the way in which people live their lives. It is not ultimately dependent on a caste system based on one's birth and family, which the brahmins claim was prescribed and created by Brahma.

As mentioned earlier, the principle of kamma is one aspect to the teaching on Dependent Origination. In the chapter on Dependent Origination, it was mentioned how the Buddha described a mode of conditionality (*paccayākāra*) in terms of how social problems originate. One can label this process 'Dependent Origination in regard to social affliction'.

The problem of individual suffering and the problems of society are all problems linked to, or arising as result of, human beings; they are interconnected and part of a whole. Individual problems spread outwards, creating social problems, which may then turn around and intensify individual problems. Therefore, the scriptures do not emphasize a distinction between these various kinds of kammic processes.

Of the three kinds of kamma – physical, verbal, and mental kamma – the Buddha stated that mental kamma produces the greatest consequences. And of all the factors of mental kamma, the one given special emphasis is 'view' (*diṭṭhi*), namely, a person's way of thinking, belief system, opinions, ideology, religious beliefs, ideals, etc.

An example of the impact views have on society is that religious and spiritual leaders have been able to create revolutionary events and changes throughout history by proclaiming their ideas, causing others to endorse, undertake, practise, and spread these teachings.

The driving force behind every society and civilization is a collection of views and beliefs. And the fortunes, both positive and negative, of human societies are a consequence of such mental kamma performed by people living in these societies.

The following passage by the Buddha confirms the juxtaposition of how views are volitional actions arising in the mind, while at the same time having a tremendous bearing on society and the world: {302}

Monks, there is one person who arises in the world for the harm of many people, for the unhappiness of many people, for the ruin, harm, and suffering of many people, of devas and human beings. Who is that one person? It is one who holds wrong view and has an incorrect perspective. He draws many people away from the true Dhamma and establishes them in a false Dhamma. This is that one person who arises in the world for the harm of many people, the unhappiness of many people, for the ruin, harm, and suffering of many people, of devas and human beings.

Monks, there is one person who arises in the world for the welfare of many people, for the happiness of many people, for the good, welfare, and happiness of many people, of devas and human beings. Who is that one person? It is one who holds right view and has a correct perspective. He draws many people away from a false Dhamma and establishes them in the true Dhamma. This is that one person who arises in the world for the welfare of many people, the happiness of many people, for the good, welfare, and happiness of many people, of devas and human beings.

A. I. 33.

In general terms, one may judge religious leaders, intellectuals, politicians, etc., who influence society through sharing their ideas, by the fruits of their actions, using the standard found in the Buddha's description of

the attributes of a ‘great man’ (*mahā-purisa*): ‘He is practising for the welfare and happiness of many people; he is one who has established many people in the noble way, of being endowed with wholesome and virtuous qualities.’<sup>93</sup> This corresponds with the frequently cited Buddhist maxim: ‘act for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world’ (*bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya*).

To reiterate, kamma is a matter pertaining to human beings. All other matters related to human beings, including those dynamics present in the human mind, involve other laws of nature and similarly proceed according to causes and conditions. But it is precisely kamma – volitional thoughts, speech, and actions – that is a unique and inherent quality of the human state of existence. One can say that human life is characterized by volitional actions (*kamma*).

The expression ‘social kamma’ or ‘collective kamma’ may be misleading. It is more apt to say ‘human kamma’, and then to distinguish between kamma dealing with an individual and kamma dealing with society, or kamma bearing fruit for an individual and kamma extending outwards and creating specific social conditions.

The most important matters affecting society are those actions performed by individuals when relating and associating to one another. The circumstances of individuals, or of society as a whole, are a consequence of people’s volitional actions. People’s thoughts, speech, and actions condition human society. The world turns because of kamma.

As mentioned earlier, the essence of kamma is intention. The world is thus shaped and moulded by human intention. A primary form of intentional activity on the social level, guided by human intelligence, is the establishment of conventional rules – a form of mutual agreement – in order to assist with social engagements and relationships. {303}

With wisdom guiding intention, human beings are able to participate as a vital factor in the natural, causal process, in order to alter the course of events in a way that fits with their desires. This participation

<sup>93</sup>A. II. 35–6.

is particularly effective in the context of establishing a system of social conventions, which lie at the heart of any society.

Here, wisdom has an understanding of Dhamma – the truth of nature or the laws of nature. Intention, the key factor of the law of kamma, applies this understanding to formulate a system of social conventions (*vinaya*). The society receives the fruits of these volitional actions, according to the level of wisdom and the quality of the mind inherent in those who formulate these conventions. This is the link between the laws of nature and human conventions, in particular the link between the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) and conventional laws (*sammati-niyāma*). A true civilization is only created when people are able to understand and reach this balance between the truth (Dhamma) and conventional prescriptions (*vinaya*).

Among public officials entrusted with specific social duties, there may be those who seek out personal advantage and profit. Other people may live out their lives outside of any formally appointed public position, yet be fully dedicated to the welfare of society. If one understands the principle of kamma, one will be able to distinguish in these cases which matters pertain to individual kamma and which to social kamma.

### G. KAMMA IN THE CONTEXT OF CONVENTIONAL LAWS

When people live together, forming communities and societies, it is necessary for there to be a system of communication. Human beings draw on their ingenuity to establish units or means of shared understanding, which they collectively acknowledge, uphold, and apply.

These shared and agreed-upon conventions are essential for any society to thrive and to reach a stage one may refer to as a ‘culture’ or ‘civilization’. In other words, every true civilization is based on such conventions.

A primary and vital form of convention pertains to speech, enabling people to communicate with one another. This gives rise to words and languages, which act as the medium for exchanging ideas. Based on these conventions of speech is another layer of social prescriptions, i.e. the act of naming things.



Besides the conventions of speech and nomenclature, people also set down prescriptions dealing with shared activities and actions, resulting in rules and regulations, laws, codes of discipline, and guidelines for behaviour.

And aside from these agreed-upon conventions dealing with common actions and activities, there are further prescriptions attending to the question of what society should do when someone transgresses the rules, regulations, etc. These are matters to do with administrative power and punishment.

In order for these agreed-upon prescriptions to be truly effective, certain individuals are appointed and supervisory systems established to ensure that the rules and regulations are obeyed. This is how governance and administration is created.

In order for the various conventions, both in regard to speech (including formal designations) and to actions, to truly function as they were intended and to exist as an integrated unit, a form of maintenance and management is required. Such an integrated system is referred to as ‘*vinaya*’.

The meaning of the term *vinaya* encompasses the establishment of conventions, the management of affairs in accord with conventions, say by maintaining a code of discipline, and the setting down of rules in accord with these conventions. {304}

The term *vinaya* thus has three layers of meaning: first, the establishment of a code of living or a system for regulating human activities; second, the specific data or subject material stipulating or defining suitable and unsuitable behaviour contained in such codes or systems; and third, the supervision and management of behaviour so that it accords with such codes or systems.

As mentioned earlier, conventional forms and structures lie at the heart of human societies and act to define them. A code of discipline (*vinaya*) helps to accomplish the objectives of society and to fulfil the advantages of a chosen set of conventions. Therefore, on a basic level, a code of discipline supports conventions and safeguards society.

On a deeper level, however, it is important to realize that such codes of discipline do not merely exist to control people, to maintain peace and order, or to ensure that people act in conformity with established forms and structures. These codes should be used to provide people with an opportunity to improve their lives. They should promote the mutual support and assistance among people, and to enable society to be a conducive venue for spiritual development for everyone.

Note that social conventions, and the regulatory codes truly giving form to such conventions, are created by human beings and may thus be imprecise and even flawed. The reason that they may not be flawed – that they are grounded in truth – is because they are linked to essential realities at a deeper level acting as a foundation.

What are these essential realities acting as a foundation? They are those natural phenomena – things that exist in nature – which in Pali are referred to as *dhamma*.

This term *dhamma* has a broad, all-inclusive meaning. In this context it may refer to all natural phenomena (also referred to as *sabhāva* or *sabhāva-dhamma*); or it may refer to systems and structures inherent in nature – to laws of nature.

It is precisely these real and actual phenomena that are the essence of human conventions; they act as the reference points and give meaning to such conventions. Without these reference points, human conventions are faulty and effectively futile.

The laws of nature governing such phenomena – the systems of inter-related causes and conditions – are a foundation for the codes of conduct (*vinaya*) established by human societies. If these codes, social systems, and structures are incongruous with the causes and effects inherent in these natural processes – these laws of nature – they will be flawed and are bound to come to naught.

Human beings require an access to the essential truths inherent in nature and the true benefits provided by laws of nature. The purpose of establishing conventions and setting down systems of conduct, either knowingly or unknowingly, is to meet these objectives.

A very simple example for this is of a doctor, who instructs the son or daughter of a sick man to return home with the patient, saying: ‘Everyday, prepare a pitcher containing a litre and a half of distilled water for your father to drink.’ {305}

Here we see a social convention (of language) pointing to a truth inherent in nature (a cure for the illness), and a disciplined system (a medicinal treatment plan) enabling people to benefit both from social conventions and from a system of interrelated conditions linked to various laws of nature. The greater is one’s wisdom, the deeper is one’s penetrative insight into how these various factors are interconnected.

If one is endowed with wisdom, clearly discerning the interrelationship of various conditions, one’s efforts will thus increasingly lead to success.

Here, we may outline two connected systems:

1. A natural system established in accord with natural laws. Whether human beings exist or not, or are aware of this system or not, it exists ‘just so’. In brief, one may call this system ‘Dhamma’.
2. A conventional human system created in order for society to be in harmony with and to benefit from nature and the laws of nature. In brief, one may call this system ‘vinaya’.

The human conventional system (*vinaya*) must be firmly based on the system of nature (Dhamma) in order for it to be genuine and effective.

In this sense, the Dhamma is both the foundation and the purpose of the *vinaya*. Human laws must be established on and be in harmony with natural laws in order for people to profit from the laws of nature.

As mentioned earlier, human society functions by way of conventions (*sammati*), forms based on mutual consent and approval, that allow for effective communication and management. The *vinaya* refers to formulating a system to effectively regulate social activities.

Mutually agreed-upon conventions require social unity and concord (*sāmaggī*), enabling people to accept, endorse, and follow the prescribed

rules and regulations. Social unity is a foundation for social conventions. Devoid of such concord and unity, these conventions are unsound and the society in question is unstable.

Without social concord, some people will reject the conventions. For instance, people will not respect the proprietary rights of others, the rights of others in legal disputes, the rights of other factions or groups of people, and the rules and laws of society. This leads to social turmoil and unrest, and may even lead to the demise of society.

Social concord is a foundation for codes of conduct (*vinaya*), a guarantee for social conventions, and a support for society. Over and above that, concord and harmony enables society to fulfil its potential, of having each individual provide support to others, and of being a conducive environment for all people to develop themselves and to attain greater blessings. {306}

Particularly in those communal systems or forms of governance in which all members have a participatory role, for example in the Buddhist monastic sangha and in state democracies, social harmony, concord, and unison lie at the heart of such systems. In this respect, the Buddha gave great emphasis to sangha harmony (*saṅgha-sāmaggī*), which must be paired with a secure monastic discipline (*vinaya*).

Those people responsible for society need to know how to apply codes of conduct skilfully in order to foster community harmony (*gaṇa-sāmaggī*). Another responsibility of social leaders is to develop the willingness in people to unite together in endorsing and upholding just conventions.

And on a deeper level, wise individuals are able to act in line with the system of natural laws in order to achieve results. They investigate and regulate various causes and conditions; when they acquire an ample and integrated set of conditions, there arises a ‘harmony of conditions’ (*paccaya-sāmaggī*). They realize the fruit of their aspired goal. If the conditions are inadequate and one lacks this integration, no matter how much effort one puts into one’s actions, they will not reach success.

As mentioned above, the codes of conduct (*vinaya*) need to be based on *dhamma*, which may be defined as natural phenomena or laws of

nature. This term *dhamma*, however, may also be interpreted as ‘truth’, ‘righteousness’, or ‘goodness’.

This links us back to social harmony. If social conventions, and the codes used to manage such conventions, are neither grounded in nor accord with Dhamma, people will quarrel with one another and lack unity, refusing to accept these conventions. This leads to discord and schism. If this conflict and discord is severe or widespread, it may even lead to the destruction of that community or society.

This matter of social harmony is thus of vital importance. Even if social conventions thwart the personal interests of an individual, he or she won’t be able to validly discredit them if they are established in righteousness.

If people contravene the truth inherent in nature, they will experience adverse effects according to natural laws. If they contravene social conventions, they will be at odds with others in society and experience the ill-effects due to the collapse of their community.

When social conventions and codes of conduct are grounded in righteousness, people realize that they should foster communal harmony for the stability of their community or society. This is the case, for instance, in the monastic community. Besides supporting the monastic community and strengthening communal harmony, monks also honour the community and give priority to communal wellbeing. Indeed, the Buddha himself honoured the sangha.<sup>94</sup>

The effort to strengthen one’s community is not made to boost some form of collective identity, but rather to generate a supportive environment for each individual to mature and flourish. {307} If the monastic community does not develop in stability, it will not be conducive to the prosperity and wellbeing of its members. It is for this reason that the principles of reverence for the sangha (*saṅgha-gāravatā*) and sangha harmony (*saṅgha-sāmaggī*) are given such importance.

<sup>94</sup>A. II. 21.

As mentioned above, codes of conduct (*vinaya*) are based on laws of nature (*dhamma*), yet these two factors are distinguished from one another. The Dhamma refers to truths inherent in nature, whereas the term *vinaya* refers to human conventions. Codes of conduct apply social conventions in order to support the Dhamma. One may even say that these codes help to direct the Dhamma. And from another perspective they act independently of the Dhamma; they need not wait for the Dhamma to be set in motion.

To illustrate this, let us take the example of someone who performs a bad action. From the perspective of Dhamma, one may refer to inherent laws of nature, i.e. the law of kamma, which dictates that this person will naturally reap the fruits of his actions. Determined codes of conduct (*vinaya*), however, need not wait for the Dhamma. Human laws set down authorized forms of conduct (*kamma-sammatti*), and the person who transgresses these laws by misbehaving is called into an assembly and punished. Here, the *vinaya* does not wait for the Dhamma, i.e. it does not wait for the law of kamma to complete its course. These human laws deal with this situation immediately.

Here, it is apt to offer a warning that there are many Buddhists who harbour a wrong understanding on this matter. Some people even claim that one need not respond at all to those who have done evil, because eventually they must receive the fruits of their kamma. This is a mistaken view. Such people lack insight into the truth and have an incomplete understanding. They fail to understand the essence of the Dhamma and the *vinaya*.

How is this true? Let us examine this matter more closely.

By making the distinction between a system of nature and a system of human conventions, one may be under the impression that these are indeed two separate systems: a world of nature and a world of human beings. In fact, the distinction is made simply for the convenience of examining various circumstances. Yet one should not be misled into believing that these are indeed two separate systems.

A comprehensive inspection of this matter reveals that human beings are one facet or aspect of nature. Therefore, any kind of human activity or issue relates to nature and is included as a part of nature.

Human volitional actions are described as following the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*), which may give the impression that this is a distinct law. In truth, however, the law of kamma is one kind of natural law; it is incorporated into the general law of cause and effect (*dhamma-niyāma*) and is part of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). It is distinguished simply to clarify one facet of the natural order.

The distinction between Dhamma and *vinaya* is made for the sake of convenience, when examining various stages of a natural process. Yet a comprehensive view reveals that the system of human codes of conduct is incorporated into the Dhamma, which is a single, large system of truth.

Here, we should examine just how these two systems are linked and how they are distinguished. {308}

Human activity is neither random nor haphazard. It does not resemble the branches of trees, which move and sway only when buffeted by the wind or some external force. Human beings, in contrast, are able to move their limbs out of an act of will. If a man were to be walking down a path and a rotten tree limb were to accidentally fall on his head, this would be different from someone else coming by and deliberately whacking him over the head with a stick. Even if someone were to fall out of a tree and accidentally hit someone else, this too would be distinguished from a random tree limb falling down.

What is the difference between these various scenarios? The answer is easy: branches, and other inanimate natural phenomena, do not willingly perform actions, whereas people do.

And if one investigates further, one asks: ‘What is the source of human action?’ One’s initial response may be: ‘People’s minds’. More to the point, the source of human action is intention (*cetanā*). Intention is human action; intention is kamma.

Intention (*cetanā*) refers to volition, purpose, intent: the deliberate choice to accept or reject something, the wilful choice to act in a particular way. Intention is the director of affairs, which induces various motivating factors, both positive and negative, including greed, hatred, and delusion, craving, conceit, and wrong view, and wisdom and loving-kindness, to step forward and take an active role.

Everything pertaining to the world of human beings – the establishment of conventions, the laying down of rules and legislation, allocation of resources, production, work, politics, technology, cultural traditions, social customs, etc. – arise by way of human action and are determined and created by intention.

Human beings are one cause and condition within the natural causal system, and intention is one factor in this process. Of all factors within the human mind, intention plays such a pivotal role that it is valid to say it represents the entirety of an individual person. It is the means by which people express themselves through actions, beginning with thoughts and then leading to speech and physical acts.

As intention plays such a significant role, affecting and altering people's circumstances in countless ways, it is recognized as comprising a key domain in the natural causal system, worthy of special attention and investigation. For this reason, the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*) is distinguished as a subsidiary law in the wider law of nature.

The law of kamma pertains to human society, to the world of human beings. Intention is the active agent behind kamma; as stated earlier, one may say that intention is kamma, or kamma is intention.

All human codes of conduct (*vinaya*) as part of a system of human conventions are established and managed by human intention. Although these are social matters, ultimately, they are included as causes and conditions within a larger natural process. They are not separate from nature.

Wise and virtuous people establish codes of conduct in order to foster social peace and wellbeing. They wish for society to be just and upright, to be based in righteousness (the Dhamma). For this purpose, they link



these codes of conduct with those systems inherent in nature, generating positive results for everyone in that society. {309} Such people are clever in managing causes and conditions; they understand two overlapping systems of causes and conditions.

When people are endowed with wholesome intention, they already engage in one form of positive kamma. But how should they act in order to generate good results according to such intentions? How can they affect the causes and conditions within natural dynamics so that they may achieve their desired end? The answer is simple: they must comprehend the requisite causes and conditions, and act accordingly.

Here, another vital spiritual faculty, inherent in people themselves, comes to the fore, namely, wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is another condition of nature that plays a participatory role in these natural processes.

Wisdom is crucial because it has insight into nature. When developed, it becomes deeper and more comprehensive, until it is perfected. This way, one realizes the truth.

Intention enables one to give rise to those causes and conditions leading to success. With good intentions and a comprehensive understanding of causes and conditions, wisdom then guides one's behaviour. In a social context, one then applies social conventions in order to bring about a virtuous and just society.

In regard to codes of conduct (*vinaya*), intention draws upon causes and conditions to establish systems of rules and regulations. These codes are effective for producing positive results, even for those individuals who are not particularly virtuous or wise themselves. At this stage, the natural causal process is embodied and manifest within this code of conduct, enabling wholesome causes and conditions to be effective in a widespread and long-lasting way.

As mentioned above, from the perspective of Dhamma, if one behaves immorally, one will reap the fruits of one's actions according to the law of kamma. Yet the *vinaya*, or the set of human laws, does not wait for these effects to come to fruition. Human laws lay down authorized forms of conduct (*kamma-sammatti*), and the person who transgresses these laws is

called into an assembly and punished. The *vinaya* does not wait for the Dhamma; it responds immediately, according to these authorized forms of conduct.

For example, if bhikkhus quarrel with one another, there are means for settling disputes, by taking legal proceedings in order to determine fault, give a verdict, and impose a punishment. Here, a sangha assembly acts according to established prescriptions, in order to settle the matter.

If there is a legal case pending, but the monks fail to carry it out, they are also considered blameworthy. The Buddha did not permit them to simply claim that they were waiting for the law of kamma to sort things out. The *vinaya* does not delay; it proceeds immediately with its own authorized form of kamma. (See the Vinaya Piṭaka for many examples of formal acts of the sangha, including acts of censure – *niggaha-kamma*.)

In sum, there exist two major systems: the Dhamma and the *vinaya*. In terms of social matters, the *vinaya* deals with certain matters immediately. The *vinaya* establishes and implements conventions that enable the Dhamma to become manifest in society. If one neglects this second system, one's Dhamma practice will be faulty and one's society will deviate from the truth.

Here, a deeper level of understanding is required. The expression 'the *vinaya* does not wait for the Dhamma' – for instance in the above example of the monastic community applying authorized prescriptions and not waiting for 'genuine' kamma to bear fruit – is an informal way of speaking.

One needs to guard against the misunderstanding that human beings are separate from nature and somehow exempt from its laws. {310} The establishment of conventions and the application of codes of behaviour pertain to a unique ability belonging to human beings, who are capable of taking personal sets of conditions and integrating them into wider dynamics of nature, in order to generate wholesome and desirable results.

In other words, the system of human conventions is a means for people to integrate their distinctive qualities of intention and wisdom into the wider natural causal process, influencing it so that it functions in such a way as to produce favourable results for individuals and their society.

Wisdom and wise deliberation are natural phenomena, but they belong to the domain of immaterial phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*), and they are exceptional qualities arising as a consequence of training and development, which is part of people's spiritual potential. Human beings' distinction and excellence, giving rise to cultures and civilizations, lies precisely at this point. For if people are unable to apply these spiritual properties to shape the world around them in positive ways, what good is it to be a human being?

The fact that human activities stemming from wisdom and deliberation have the capability to influence the stream of natural causes and conditions, giving rise to favourable results, is an appeal and summons for people to develop these spiritual qualities, in order to achieve true success.

Human communities (including the monastic sangha) require concord and unity (*sāmaggi*), so that their members accept the conventions and comply by the mutually agreed-upon prescriptions. The codes of conduct in such communities will thus succeed at bringing about desired results.

In sum, there are two kinds of kamma:

1. Kamma inherent in nature (*dhamma*), constituting the law of kamma.
2. Kamma inherent in conventional codes of conduct (*vinaya*), established by human beings.

In regard to the monastic code of discipline (the Vinaya), if a monk misbehaves, the sangha applies authorized forms of conduct (*kamma-sammatti*) prescribed by the Buddha to deal with the situation without waiting for the law of kamma to be fully activated. By applying these authorized prescriptions stemming from human wisdom and deliberation, one integrates human spiritual factors with the law of nature on a wider scale.

Note that the kamma inherent in conventional codes of conduct does not only pertain to punishment or to problem solving, but may also be linked to positive and favourable action. The formal sangha acts

## NOTE 5.3: DEFINITION OF SAMMĀSAMBUDHA

Trans.: note the definitions of these terms contained in Ven. Phra Payutto's 'Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology' (พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสน ฉบับประมวลศัพท์): *sammāsambuddha*:

A perfectly enlightened being; a being who realizes the Four Noble Truths, without having learned them from someone else, thus initiating the propagation of the Truth (*sacca-dhamma*) and establishing Buddhism; *pacceka-buddha*: a kind of Buddha whose realization is private and unshared; he does not teach others. Note also the well-known teaching from the Vinaya Piṭaka:

Here Sāriputta, the Lords Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa were diligent in teaching the Dhamma in detail to their disciples, and they had many discourses in prose, in prose and verse ... and catechetical discourses. They prescribed the training rules for their disciples, and laid down the Pāṭimokkha. When these Buddhas, these Blessed Ones, and their awakened disciples passed away, disciples of later generations of various names, families and clans went forth and preserved the teaching for a very long time. It is as if various flowers, loose on a plank of wood, well tied together by a thread, are not scattered and dispersed by a gust of wind. This is because they are well tied together by the thread.... It is for this reason that the teaching of the Lords Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa lasted long.

Vin. III. 8.

in the monastic Vinaya, for example, include ordination ceremonies (*upasampadā-kamma*), Uposatha Day ceremonies (*uposatha-kamma*), the formal invitation for admonishment (*pavāraṇā-kamma*), and various conventional activities (*sammati-kamma*) like electing sangha officers.

To conclude, those teachers endowed with supreme wisdom, who have realized the Dhamma, arrived at the highest truth, and are awakened, are known as Buddhas, but if they stop at this point, they are Silent Buddhas (*pacceka-buddha*). If, however, by virtue of their great compassion they establish and apply a Vinaya so that all of humanity benefits from the Dhamma, they are perfectly enlightened Buddhas (*sammāsambuddha*). (See Note 5.3)

Therefore, to derive the greatest value from Buddhism, besides realizing the Dhamma (realizing the laws of nature), one needs to establish a *vinaya* (attend to matters pertaining to human society). {311}

#### **H. DOES THE LAW OF KAMMA CONFLICT WITH THE TEACHING ON NONSELF?**

Some beginning students of Buddhism may wonder whether the law of kamma conflicts with the teaching on nonself (*anattā*). If everything, including our bodies and mind, is nonself, how is it possible for kamma to function? Who is that performs volitional actions? Who receives their fruit?

These sort of doubts existed even at the time of the Buddha:

[The following doubt arose in one of the monks]: ‘So it seems, material form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is not self. What self, then, will actions done by the not-self affect?’

Then the Blessed One, knowing in his mind the thought in the mind of that monk, addressed the monks thus: ‘It is possible, monks, that some misguided man here, whose mind is subject to ignorance and overcome by craving, might believe that he can outshine and outstrip the Teacher’s dispensation thus: “So it seems, material form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is not self. What self, then, will actions done by the not-self affect?”

‘Now, monks, you have been taught by me in-depth through repeated inquiry in regard to various subject matters and principles. What do you think? Is material form permanent or impermanent?’ – ‘Impermanent, venerable sir.’ ‘Is feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness permanent or impermanent?’ – ‘Impermanent, venerable sir.’ – ‘Is what is impermanent oppressive or easeful?’ – ‘Oppressive, venerable sir.’ – ‘Is what is impermanent, oppressive, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: “this is mine, this I am, this is my self”?’ – ‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Therefore, any kind of material form whatever ... is simply material form. Any kind of feeling ... perception ... volitional formations.... Any kind of consciousness whatever ... is simply consciousness. You should see it as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ Seeing thus, a well-taught noble disciple becomes disenchanted with material form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.... [His mind] is liberated.... There is no more for this state of being.’

*M. III. 19-20; S. III. 103-104.*

Before investigating this sutta passage more closely, let us consider the following comparison:

Imagine that one is standing next to a river. For the majority of its course the river passes through relatively flat land and its current is slow. The banks along the river contain mostly red clay and the colour of the river is thus reddish. Moreover, the river passes many densely populated areas, and it has been polluted by human waste and industrial toxins, decreasing the natural stock of aquatic life like fish and shrimp. {312}

The slow current, reddish tint, polluted water, and paucity of wildlife comprise the characteristic features of this river. Some of these features will be shared by other rivers, but this precise collection of features is characteristic to this river alone.

Later, someone mentions that this river is called Castle River. People then go on to confirm what one sees oneself, that the Castle River is polluted, absent of fish, slow-moving, and coloured by red clay.

One can make the observation that the body of water one is looking at is inherently complete according to its own nature. It is endowed with specific attributes, e.g. slow-moving, reddish, dirty, etc., because of various interconnected conditioning factors and processes giving rise to such attributes. When the current flows by the red clay banks, for example, the water is reddened. Various events and occurrences produce natural results.

Moreover, as one is watching this river, the current flows by nonstop. The water one observes at one moment is not the same water as that

which passes one by at a later time. This change and movement notwithstanding, the river retains its characteristic features, because the conditioning factors combining to form this body of water remain the same. If someone else comes by and declares that this river is called Castle River, and that Castle River is slow-moving, polluted, etc., this has no bearing on the true nature of the river. There exists no separate, distinct identity of a 'Castle River', which has some proprietary role over the body of water one is presently observing.

Others may say: 'Castle River erodes the red clay banks and is consequently tinted red.' This may give the impression that the river is functioning in some kind of active role as a separate identity and is duly fined for its actions. Yet it is obvious that this body of water exists as an inherently complete causal process. The water striking the banks and the clay dissolving into the water is the cause; the reddening of the water is the result. There exists no separate agent or recipient in this dynamic.

No concrete, independent entity called Castle River is visible. The current of water that has passed one by has flowed on; the water one observed a moment ago is no longer present; it is continually being replaced by a new current of water. We are able to describe or define this river simply by the various factors, conditions, occurrences, etc. that combine and produce visible characteristics. If an absolute or fixed entity called Castle River were to truly exist, then the current of water would not be subject to the various causes and conditions that interact with it. Eventually, one recognizes that the identity of a 'Castle River' is superfluous. One is able to describe and refer to this body of water in a fully accurate way without needing to apply this label. In truth, there is no such thing as a 'Castle River'. No fixed entity, no 'self', exists that is called Castle River, which owns, interferes with, or controls this current of water.

Later, one travels to another district. Here, one wishes to describe to its residents the body of water that one previously observed, but one is faced with a stumbling block. One is not sure how to express oneself. One remembers that earlier someone referred to this body of water as Castle River. Now, by applying this name, one is able to conveniently refer to this river when speaking to these other people. One can explain to them that Castle River is slow-moving, polluted, ruddy, etc. {313}

Here, one gains a clear recognition that the name ‘Castle River’ (and the related terms for the river’s attributes) applied to describe this natural body of water is simply a conventional designation used for the sake of convenience in communicating with others. Whether these terms exist or not, or whether one chooses to use them or not, however, they have no bearing on this body of water. The river exists as a dynamic stream of water flowing continuously according to its own causes and conditions. One is able to distinguish between these conventional labels and the natural phenomena. Endowed with a proper understanding, one is able to use these terms with a sense of ease.

In truth, conventional labels such as ‘person’, ‘Mr. Adams’, ‘Mrs. Pearce’, ‘we’, and ‘you’, refer to dynamics in nature existing as unbroken currents of interrelated causes and conditions. They manifest in myriad forms according to their specific conditional factors, including both factors inherent to the dynamic itself and related external factors.

When a particular kind of interaction between factors arises as a cause, it produces the effect of change and alteration within a specific dynamic. In relation to human beings, that which is called *kamma* and *vipāka* (i.e. action and the fruits of action) is equivalent to the events and occurrences unfolding in line with the causal continuum comprising a specific individual. Every natural phenomenon is inherently complete in the sense that it is independent of conventional labels. This is also true for human beings, who exist independently from such labels as ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘him’, ‘Susan’, ‘Paul’, etc., who may be referred to as an owner, instigator, recipient, and so on.

This is how things really exist according to nature. For the sake of convenience, while communicating with other people, however, one may choose to use conventional labels by assigning names and designations to these fluid dynamics, for instance as ‘David’, ‘Nancy’, ‘Duke’, ‘Duchess’, ‘boss’, etc. When people are identified by such labels they may validly be referred to as the owner, instigator, recipient, etc., according to the circumstances. Regardless of whether these names and designations exist or are used, however, the dynamics of nature proceed according to natural laws and are shaped by their respective causes and conditions. The important point here is to be able to clearly distinguish between natural phenomena themselves and their specific conventional designations. One



should not get these two aspects jumbled up. Before using conventional designations, one ought to have a thorough understanding of phenomena acting as a basis.

Natural phenomena themselves, and their conventional designations, are both indispensable. Natural phenomena (often referred to as ‘absolute realities’ – *paramattha*) are aspects of nature. Conventional designations have to do with the practical affairs of human beings. Problems arise because people often confuse these two, that is, they try to make the phenomena conform to the designations, causing all sorts of trouble. The phenomena themselves do not suffer any affliction; they simply proceed according to their own nature; they take no interest in whether people attach to them or not. It is human beings alone who are afflicted. And because the phenomena themselves are unsympathetic to people’s afflictions, people feel that their desires are thwarted and suffer even more.

In the earlier sutta passage, it is obvious that the doubt-stricken bhikkhu confused principles he had learned about natural phenomena with conventional concepts that he was personally attached to, giving rise to confusion and perplexity. In the sentence: *What self, then, will actions done by the not-self affect?* the clause ‘actions done by the not-self’ reflect this monk’s understanding of natural phenomena, while ‘what self will be affected?’ reveal his attachment to conventional terms and designations. As a matter of course, these two phrases are at odds with one another.

The principles of nonself and kamma are not mutually contradictory. Just the opposite: the former supports the latter, because the law of kamma is only possible because of the truth of nonself. When a specific dynamic in nature unfolds, all of its component factors interact as a continual and interconnected process of arising and passing away. This allows for an interrelated stream of causes and conditions. No solid and constant entity lies in rigid isolation in the middle of this stream, impeding the current and preventing it from flowing as it does.

If a fixed permanent self (*attā*) were to exist the law of kamma would be impossible, because such a self would not be subject to causes and conditions; nothing could gain access to it. Nothing would be able to

alter or transform such a self. Eventually, as one sees in some eternalist doctrines, human beings need to be separated into two overlapping layers: people only receive the effects of their actions on an external layer; essentially, or at the core, however, the ‘self’ or ‘soul’ remains constant, unchanging, and unaffected by any events in the world. {314}

Human beings are able to perform volitional actions and receive the fruits of such actions without a need for an enduring ‘actor’ or ‘recipient’ taking part. When one encounters any process in nature, one needs to inquire into what are the interrelated conditions giving rise to the dynamic. Similarly, what are the results of this dynamic, i.e. how does it transform and change? In reference to human beings, the conditional factors collectively referred to as ‘volitional action’ (*kamma*) are the cause, bearing fruit (*vipāka*) for the individual. One can refer to this process as human actions and the fruits of actions, without the need for a separate entity of an ‘owner’ of these actions and their results.

Kamma is equivalent to this process of cause and effect, which is distinct from the conventional labels we affix to things. When people agree with one another to apply conventional names on a natural dynamic comprising a single human individual, say by calling one person Mac and another person Lily, then an entity recognized as ‘Mac’ or ‘Lily’ is acknowledged as being the agent or recipient of specific actions. The natural phenomenon – the body-mind process – however, is inherently complete and proceeds irrespective of such names and conventions; it proceeds independently.

When one uses conventional language (e.g. one says, ‘Mac performed such-and-such an action, and he received such-and-such results’), then one should make it clear that one is speaking on this level. Likewise, when one speaks on an ultimate level, or refers to absolute truths (e.g. one describes the causes and conditions that bring about particular results in a body-mind dynamic), one should be clear about this too. If one is aware of one’s goals and objectives while using speech, and one does not mix up these various levels of truth, then there is no problem.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup>The Visuddhimagga states eloquently: ‘There is no doer of an action; no recipient reaping its fruit; only pure, natural phenomena exist. Discernment of this [truth] is right vision (*sammā-dassana*); Vism. 602.

One's examinations need not focus on human beings, who are made up of an extremely intricate and complex convergence of causes and conditions, on account of the addition of various mental factors. Even in the case of material things, for instance in the case of Castle River mentioned earlier, people are often attached to conventional labels and create fixed identities around natural phenomena.

Mental factors are extremely subtle and refined. It happens that some people are not even able to discern change within the mind. There are those who make the claim: 'Who says perception is impermanent and uncertain? Perception is permanent, because wherever it arises it invariably exists as perception. This is constant.' There are others who may be inclined to share this opinion, but this matter may be clarified by asking them to compare mental factors to material things. The above claim is similar to saying: 'Who says the body is impermanent? The body is constant and stable – wherever the body arises it exists invariably as the body.' The misunderstanding here is the same: it arises due to a confusion between the phenomenon itself (e.g. perception or the body) and its conventional designation (e.g. 'perception', 'the body'). Whereas the person here is ostensibly claiming that perception is permanent, what he in effect is saying is that the name 'perception' is stable and constant.

A study of the principles of kamma by only focusing on conventional identities leads to an overly broad understanding of cause and effect. One may examine particular bad deeds performed by someone on a specific day in the past and link these to negative results occurring ten years later. Here, one outlines a causal relationship spanning the single stretch of ten years. Such an examination fails to provide a clear and detailed glimpse of the causal process, because it does not explain the continual stream of relevant causes and conditions. A detailed study of phenomena, however, helps to discern the uninterrupted, interconnected stream of events, and reveals the true connection between actions and their fruit.<sup>96</sup> {315}

<sup>96</sup>The sub-commentaries of the Abhidhamma explain that designations (*paññatti*; 'concept', 'name') are timeless (*kāla-vinimutta*; independent of time), because they are indestructible and not subject to decay; ultimately, however, they do not exist. The designation of 'time' arises due to the appearance and passing away of various phenomena. (DhsA. 59; CompT.: *Pakiṇṇakaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Ālambaṇasaṅgahavaṇṇanā*.)

Chris may get into an argument with one of his neighbours and becomes so incensed that he murders him. Fearing capture by the authorities and the vengeance of the man's relatives and companions, he goes into hiding. Eventually, he is captured and punished.

Even after his prison sentence is complete, Chris still feels afflicted by this evil deed and is haunted by the image of his neighbour. He experiences both physical and emotional agony; he is unable to find any peace. His outward appearance also changes; he appears melancholy, suspicious, and miserable.

On account of other factors, for example the fact that he is physically strong, he becomes irascible and violent. After a long period of time his personality changes; he becomes crude and cruel, and he covers over his suffering by acts of force. He becomes a danger to society and is unable to find any joy among other people.

A short account of this story would simply state: 'Chris performed a vile act and reaped the fruits of his deeds.' Using such everyday, conventional language is easy for people to understand; it provides convenience for communication. But it only describes an external state of affairs or a coarse picture of refined interconnected causes and conditions. It does not reach the essential causal interrelationship of natural phenomena.

A discussion of the absolute nature of phenomena, on the other hand, describes the gist of natural processes. For instance, one may say: 'Within this particular dynamic of five aggregates, anger arises in the mind, resulting in further volitional activity and an expression of physical action. The mind continues to be shaped by anger, leading to an alteration in the quality of the mind, which is now characterized by such negative states as mistrust, fear, and malicious thoughts. When the mind is frequently conditioned by anger, negative mind states are accumulated until they become fixed personality traits. These negative mind states create suffering within the individual, and in this case even lead to physical pain and suffering.'

Such a discussion of phenomena is complete, without needing to refer to a man named Chris or to some conventional identity. The dynamic here is comprised of various factors which arise and act as interrelated causes

and conditions. There is action and the fruition of action, without the need for an ‘actor’ or ‘recipient’.

Regardless of which kind of language one uses, the essential truth of the phenomena in question remains the same. The difference is that a discussion of the absolute nature of things mentions only pure aspects of reality, without adding conventional concepts on top of reality.

The following story may help to clarify this matter:

A man named Pong visited one of the senior monks in the monastery.

He asked: ‘Luang Por,<sup>97</sup> the Buddha taught that everything is non-self (*anattā*); everything is selfless and insubstantial; everything exists without a true owner. There is no actor and there is no recipient of action. In that case, I can go and hit someone or kill someone, because there exists no one who acts and no one who receives the fruit of action.’

Hardly had these words left Pong’s mouth when the elder monk seized a cane from beside his seat and swung it at Pong. Pong barely had time to protect himself and the cane struck him squarely in the arm. He sat rubbing the bruise.

‘Luang Por, why did you do that to me?!’ Pong rasped, barely suppressing his anger.

‘What was that like?’ the monk asked nonchalantly.

‘You hit me. I’m in pain!’ Pong replied, his face strained. {316}

‘Action exists without an actor; the fruits of action exist without a recipient; feelings exist without an experiencer of feelings; pain exists without one who feels pain’, the monk said dispassionately, as if he were giving a sermon. ‘One who looks for selfish gain in the teaching on nonself does not escape from self. One who grasps onto the teaching of nonself is indeed one who grasps onto self, devoid of any understanding into nonself. One who attaches to the idea that there is no actor has not relinquished the idea that a victim of pain exists. He has no insight that in truth there is neither actor nor one who experiences pain.’

<sup>97</sup>Trans.: *Luang Por*: honorific titled meaning ‘venerable father’.

The moral of this story is that if one is bent on the claim that no doer exists behind volitional actions, then one must also abandon such statements as ‘I am in pain’.

## 5.6 PRACTICAL VALUE

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The practical value of the teaching on kamma may be summarized as follows:

- It establishes people firmly in reasoned discernment and sound judgement; it enables people to see actions and the fruits of action in the light of interrelated causes and conditions; it prevents people from gullible beliefs and from giving undue importance to sensationalized rumours and ideas, for example the belief that a particular river is sacred or divine.
- It reveals how desired results and aspired goals are achievable by way of action and engagement, therefore:
  - One must develop self-reliance and make determined effort.
  - One should not seek or expect results by prayer and supplication, for instance by propitiating divine forces.
- It encourages people to take responsibility for themselves by abstaining from immoral behaviour and to take responsibility for others by performing benevolent deeds.
- It confirms that all people equally possess the natural right to develop and improve themselves. Through their actions, people are able to either decrease or increase in virtuous qualities, and at the highest degree they are able to reach such distinction that they are greater than celestial beings.
- It asserts that the true yardsticks for determining human inferiority and excellence are each individual’s spiritual qualities, capabilities, and conduct. In this regard, distinctions made according to birth, caste, or social class are irrelevant.

- It urges people to use past kamma as a lesson for life and to increase their own self-understanding; it gives relatively little importance to blaming or focusing on others' misdeeds and offences. In this way one recognizes one's own basic qualities and condition, so that one is able to improve oneself and to correctly plan one's own spiritual development.
- It provides hope to people for the future.

These aspects of practical value are evident in the following teachings by the Buddha.

#### GENERAL ASPECTS OF KAMMA

It is volition, monks, that I call kamma. For having willed, one acts by body, speech, or mind.

*A. III. 415.*

Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are related to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior. {317}

*M. III. 203.*

Whatever sort of seed is sown,  
That is the sort of fruit one reaps:  
The doer of good reaps good;  
The doer of evil reaps evil.

*S. I. 227.*

That deed is not well done when, after having done it, one is in misery, and when weeping, with tearful face, one reaps the fruit thereof.

That deed is well done when, after having done it, one is free of misery, and when, with joy and pleasure, one reaps the fruit thereof.

*Dh. verses 67-8.*

Foolish people devoid of wisdom behave like enemies towards themselves. They go about doing evil deeds which yield only bitter fruit. That deed is not well done when, having done it, one is in misery, and when weeping, with tearful face, one reaps the fruit thereof.

But that deed is well done when, after having done it, one is free of misery, and when, with a joyful and satisfied heart, one reaps the fruit thereof. One should promptly do the deed one knows leads to one's own welfare.

S. I. 57.

#### KAMMA GROUNDED IN RATIONAL BELIEF

The rivers Bāhukā and Adhikakkā,<sup>98</sup> Gayā and Sundarikā too, Payāga and Sarassatī,<sup>99</sup> and the river Bahumatī – a fool may there forever bathe, yet will not purify dark deeds. What can the Sundarikā bring to pass? What the Payāga? What the Bāhukā? They cannot purify an evil-doer, a man who has done vile and brutal deeds. [On the contrary] one pure in heart fulfils at all times the Feast of Spring (a supreme auspicious occasion) and the Holy Day (uposatha); one fair in act, one pure in heart reaches perfection evermore.

In my teachings, brahmin, you should bathe, making yourself a refuge for all beings. If you speak no falsehood nor cause harm for living beings, nor take what is offered not, with faith and free from avarice, what need for you to go to Gayā? For even your drinking water will be your Gayā.

M. I. 39.

<sup>98</sup>Trans.: the author uses the spelling Adhikakka.

<sup>99</sup>Trans.: also known as the Sarasvatī.



If a person could escape evil deeds by bathing in water (by washing away their sins), the frogs, turtles, snakes, crocodiles, and other aquatic creatures would surely all go to heaven. If these rivers were able to sweep away your previous evil deeds, surely they would also sweep away your goodness.

*Thig. verses 240-41, 243.*

Purity does not come about by [holy] water, in which the manyfolk go to bathe. Endowed with truth and righteousness, one is pure, one is a brahmin.

*Ud. 6.*

One who does not attach to omens, who does not attach to meteors, dreams, and auspicious and inauspicious signs, is called one released from harmful attachment to portents and premonitions. He has command over the defilements that bind beings to birth, confining [them] like a moat; he will not return and be reborn. {318}

*J. I. 374.*

Goodness passes fools by, those who count on auspicious signs. Auspiciousness is intrinsic to goodness itself; what can the stars and constellations accomplish?

*J. I. 258.*

Any occasion when one does good is called truly propitious and auspicious, a happy daybreak, a joyful dawn, a precious moment, and a blissful hour; one's good acts are a worthy offering of homage to those leading the holy life.

Here, one's acts of body, speech and mind, one's aspirations too, are good auspices; having performed such actions, one reaps desired fruit filled with auspiciousness.

*A. I. 294.*

**KAMMA AS ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Hanker not after the past, nor fantasize over the future, for the past has been left behind and the future has not been reached. Let one who clearly discerns and understands the present, that which is absolute and unshakeable, strive to reach this state.

Hasten to put forth effort today; death may come tomorrow, who knows? The Lord of Death, the great general, shows us no leniency.

But one who dwells ardently, diligently, by day, by night – it is he, the Peaceful Sage has called supreme, even if living for a single day.

*M. III. 187.*

Householder, there are these five things that are desirable, enticing, agreeable, and difficult to obtain in the world. What five? Long life ... beauty ... happiness ... fame ... heaven.... These five things ... I say, are not obtained by means of prayer or ambition. If these five things ... could be obtained by means of prayer or ambition, who here would be lacking in anything?

Householder, the noble disciple who desires long life ought not to pray for or be preoccupied with long life due to a yearning for it. A noble disciple who desires long life should practice the way conducive to long life. For when he practises the way conducive to long life, it leads to obtaining long life, and he gains long life either human or divine. The noble disciple who desires beauty ... happiness ... fame ... heaven should practise the way conducive to beauty ... happiness ... fame ... heaven.

*A. III. 47-8.*

Monks, when a monk does not make constant effort to develop the mind, even though such a wish as this might arise in him: ‘Oh, that my mind might be liberated from the taints by non-clinging!’ yet his mind is not liberated from the taints by non-clinging.... Suppose there was a hen with eight, ten, or twelve eggs that she had not covered, incubated, and nurtured properly. {319} Even though such a wish as this might arise in her: ‘Oh, that my chicks might pierce

their shells with the points of their claws and beaks and hatch safely!’ yet the chicks are incapable of piercing their shells with the points of their claws and beaks and hatching safely.

*S. III. 153.*

#### BEHAVIOUR AS THE BENCHMARK FOR GAUGING A PERSON’S VALUE

You should know, Vāseṭṭha, that whoever makes his living among men by cattle herding is called a farmer; he is not a brahmin ... whoever makes his living by varied crafts is called a craftsman; he is not a brahmin ... whoever makes his living by trade is called a merchant; he is not a brahmin ... he who makes his living by serving others is called a servant; he is not a brahmin ... whoever makes his living by stealing is called a thief; he is not a brahmin ... whoever governs among men the town and realm is called a king; he is not a brahmin....

I call him not a brahmin because of the descent from his mother’s womb. If impurities still lurk in him, he is just one who addresses others as ‘Sir’.<sup>100</sup> One who has no mental impurities lingering in the mind, who clings no more, he is the one I call a brahmin....

Name and clan are assigned as mere designations in the world, originating as forms of address determined by the occasion. Those who do not know this fact, in whose hearts wrong view has remained buried for ages, declare: ‘One is a brahmin by birth.’ One is not a brahmin by birth, nor by birth a non-brahmin. By one’s occupation (kamma) is one a brahmin, by one’s occupation is one a non-brahmin.<sup>101</sup> By their occupations are men farmers, craftsmen, merchants, servants, robbers, soldiers, chaplains, and even kings.

The wise, seers of Dependent Origination, skilled in action and its results, see action as it really is. Action makes the world go round; action makes this generation of beings wander on. Living beings are bound by action, like the chariot wheel by the pin.

*M. II. 196; Sn. 119-23.*

<sup>100</sup> *Bhovādī*. [Trans.: it was the custom of the brahmins to address others with the word *bho* (‘sir’, ‘my dear’), implying some superiority of the speaker.]

I do not say, brahmin, that one is better because one is from an aristocratic family, nor do I say that one is worse because one is from an aristocratic family. I do not say that one is better because one possesses an influential social standing, nor do I say that one is worse because one possesses an influential social standing.<sup>102</sup> I do not say that one is better because one is of great wealth, nor do I say that one is worse because one is of great wealth.

For here, one from an aristocratic family ... one possessing an influential social standing ... one of great wealth may enjoy killing living beings, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, speaking falsely, speaking maliciously, speaking harshly, and engaging in gossip; he may be covetous, have a mind of ill-will, and hold wrong view. {320}

*M. II. 179.*

One is not an outcaste by birth, one is not a brahmin by birth. It is by deed that one becomes an outcast, it is by deed that one becomes a brahmin.

*Sn. 23-4.*

When members of the four social classes – khattiyas, brahmins, vessas, and suddas – go forth from the household life into homelessness in the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, they give up their former names and clans and are all considered renunciants following the Sakyan son.

*A. IV. 202.*

Whoever of these four castes, as a monk, has destroyed the mental impurities, completed the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, attained to the highest goal, completely destroyed the fetter of becoming, and become liberated by the highest insight, he is declared to be chief among them.

*D. III. 97.*

<sup>101</sup> As mentioned earlier, the term *kamma* literally means ‘action’, but in some cases, like in this passage, it has a broader meaning, referring to one’s occupation (‘work’, ‘profession’) related to earning a living.

**SELF-RELIANCE**

The Tathāgata can but point the way; your responsibility is to bring perseverance to fulfilment.

*Dh. verse 276.*

Oneself, indeed, is one's refuge, for who else could be one's refuge? With oneself well-trained one obtains a refuge difficult to find.

*Dh. verse 160.*

Purity and impurity are personal matters; no one can purify another.

*Dh. verse 165.*

Monks, dwell with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge.

*D. II. 100; D. III. 77; S. III. 42.*

**EXHORTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

A woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should reflect again and again: 'I am the owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, born of my kamma, related to my kamma, abide supported by my kamma; whatever kamma I shall do, for good or for ill, of that I will be the heir.'

*A. III. 71-2.*

If you are afraid of pain, do not an evil deed openly or in secret. If you shall do an evil deed or do one now, there is no escape from misery, though you spring up and flee.

*Ud. 51.*

<sup>102</sup>The commentaries (MA. III. 428) define one of an 'influential social standing' as someone belonging to the first three castes: *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa* and *vessa*. The Pali term *uḷāra-vaṇṇa* can also mean: 'dignified', 'eminent', 'imposing'.

Grain, wealth, silver, gold, or whatever other cherished possessions there are; slaves, workers, employees, and dependants: none of these can one take away, everything must be left behind.

But the actions one has done by body, speech or mind: these are truly one's own, these one takes when one goes. Actions follow one along like a shadow that never departs.

Therefore one should do what is good, accumulating what is useful for the future. Merits are the support for living beings in the world to come. {321}

S. I. 93.

## 5.7 APPENDIX: TWELVE KINDS OF KAMMA

The presentations in the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the twelve kinds of kamma (classified as three groups of four) can be summarized as follows:

### GROUP NO. 1

Classified according to the time of taking effect (*pākakāla*; 'time of ripening'):

#### 1. *Diṭṭhadhammavedanīya-kamma*:

'Immediately effective kamma'; kamma bearing fruit in the present, i.e. in this state of existence; either good or bad kamma performed at the time of the first 'impulsive mind moment' (*javana-citta*; 'mind moment of running through an object'). (Altogether there are seven such mind moments in one cognitive series – *javana-vīthi*; the first *javana-citta* is also referred to as the first 'intentional impulse' – *javana-cetanā*). This kind of kamma only bears fruit in this lifetime. If it does not have the opportunity to bear fruit in this lifetime, it becomes *ahosi-kamma*, i.e. it will no longer bear fruit (see below). The reason it bears fruit in this lifetime is that it constitutes the first moment of intention and is not subject to other forms of kamma; it

manifests as initial volitional activity, exerting a unique influence. Despite its influence, it bears no fruit beyond this lifetime, because it is not habitually repeated, and thus its effects are minor or negligible. This is compared to a hunter who sees a deer, grabs an arrow, and immediately shoots. If he strikes the target the deer falls on the spot, but if he misses the deer escapes.

2. *Uppajjavedanīya-kamma:*

Kamma bearing fruit in the next life, i.e. the next state of existence; either good or bad kamma performed at the time of the final ‘impulsive mind moment’ (*javana-citta*), i.e. at the seventh mind moment in one cognitive series; this final *javana-citta* is also referred to as the seventh ‘intentional impulse’. This kind of kamma only bears fruit in the next lifetime. If it does not have the opportunity to bear fruit in the next lifetime, it becomes *ahosi-kamma*. The reason it bears fruit in the next lifetime is that it comprises the final moment of intention. It fulfils one’s inclinations and it inherits the habitual repetition from previous moments of intention. At the same time, however, its power is limited, because it is the mind moment at which the cognitive series (*javana-vīthi*) comes to an end.

3. *Aparāpariyavedanīya-kamma:*

‘Indefinitely effective kamma’; kamma bearing fruit in subsequent states of existence; either good or bad kamma performed during the five intermediate ‘impulsive mind moments’ (*javana-citta*), i.e. between the second and the sixth impulsive mind moment (or ‘intentional impulse’) in one cognitive series. This kind of kamma bears fruit continually in the future, beyond the next lifetime, i.e. it bears fruit whenever there is an opportunity. As long as one remains in the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*), it does not become *ahosi-kamma*. It is compared to a hound chasing a deer; whenever it catches up with the deer, it clamps its teeth on it.

4. *Ahosi-kamma:*

Kamma ceasing to bear fruit; either good or bad kamma that has had no opportunity to bear fruit during the time when it had the

potential to bear fruit. When this time has passed by, it no longer bears fruit. (The term *ahosi-kamma* was originally used in Pali to denote ‘previously performed kamma’, rather than ‘kamma ceasing to bear fruit’ or ‘kamma having already borne fruit’. The commentators, however, use it with the specific meaning of ‘existing kamma devoid of fruit (*vipāka*)’.)<sup>103</sup>

## GROUP NO. 2

Classified according to function (*kicca*) in respect to fruition:

### 5. *Janaka-kamma*:

‘Productive kamma’, ‘kamma leading to birth’; either good or bad kamma (i.e. ‘intention’) causing the birth of the ‘aggregates’ (*khandha*), which constitute the ‘fruit of action’ (*vipāka*), both at the moment of conception (*paṭisandhi*) and during the entire course of one’s life (*pavatti-kāla*).

### 6. *Upatthambhaka-kamma*:

‘Supportive kamma’; kamma associated with productive kamma (*janaka-kamma*) that is unable to bear fruit on its own, but supports or consolidates productive kamma, causing the happiness and unhappiness arising within the aggregates to exist for a long time.

### 7. *Upapīḷaka-kamma*:

‘Obstructive kamma’; kamma opposed to productive kamma (*janaka-kamma*) which acts to obstruct the fruit of both productive kamma and supportive kamma (*upatthambhaka-kamma*), causing the happiness and un-happiness arising within the aggregates to exist for a short time.

### 8. *Upaghātaka-kamma*:

<sup>103</sup>See: Vism. 601; an abstract from Ps. II. 78.



‘Destructive kamma’; potent obstructive kamma that severs the power of less potent forms of kamma, supplanting or overriding them. An example is the parricide by Ajātasattu, which nullified his wholesome deeds. {322}

### GROUP NO. 3

Classified according to order of strength in bearing fruit (*pākadāna-pariyāya*):

#### 9. *Garuka-kamma*:

‘Weighty kamma’; kamma with exceptionally powerful effects. On the positive side this refers to the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*); on the negative side it refers to the five heinous deeds (*anantariya-kamma*), e.g. matricide. It tends to bear fruit first and override other forms of kamma, similar to a large reservoir overflowing its banks and flooding smaller bodies of water.

#### 10. *Bahula-kamma* (or *āciṇṇa-kamma*):

‘Habitual kamma’; either good or bad kamma performed frequently and made habitual, e.g. constant moral or immoral behaviour. Whichever kamma has been performed repeatedly and possesses more power bears fruit first. This is similar to two wrestlers; whichever one is stronger and more proficient wins. In the case that no weighty kamma exists, habitual kamma bears fruit.

#### 11. *Āsanna-kamma*:

‘Proximate kamma’, ‘death-threshold kamma’; the kamma that one performs or remembers immediately before one dies and that has recently made an impression on one’s mind. If the two aforementioned kinds of kamma do not exist, then this proximate kamma bears fruit. (Note, however, that the *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī* states that proximate kamma bears fruit before habitual kamma – *āciṇṇa-kamma*). This is similar to a pen crowded with cows; when the cowherd opens the gate, the cow closest to the gate exits, even if it is old and frail.

12. *Katattā-kamma* (or *katattāvāpana-kamma*):

‘Casual act’, ‘reserve kamma’; kamma performed with weak intention, or kamma performed indirectly, with some other intention in mind. This is a mild form of kamma. It is similar to an arrow shot by a madman; whenever the three aforementioned kinds of kamma do not exist, this reserve kamma bears fruit.

The Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha contains another set of four kinds of kamma, for a total of sixteen kinds:<sup>104</sup>

**GROUP NO. 4**

Classified according to location (i.e. sphere of existence – *bhava*) of effect (*pākaṭṭhāna*):

13. *Akusala-kamma*:

Unwholesome kamma, with the exception of restlessness (*uddhacca*). In another sense, this refers to the ten unwholesome courses of action (*akusala-kammaṭṭhāna*). Such unwholesome action is likely to lead to birth in states of misery (*apāya-bhūmi*).

14. *Kāmāvacarakusala-kamma*:

Wholesome kamma on the level of the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara*), for example the ten bases of meritorious action (*puññakiriyāvatthu*). Such action is likely to lead to birth in the seven sensuous happy planes (*kāmasugati-bhūmi*): the human realm and the six celestial realms (*sagga*).

15. *Rūpāvacarakusala-kamma*:

Wholesome kamma on the level of the fine-material plane (*rūpāvacara*); this refers to the four fine-material jhānas of those individuals who have not yet realized the fruit of arahantship.<sup>105</sup> Such

<sup>104</sup>Comp.: *Vīthimuttaparichedo*, *Kammacatukkaṃ*; explained at: *Compṭ.*: *Vīthimuttaparichedavaṇṇanā*, *Kammacatukkavaṇṇanā*.

<sup>105</sup>Note that in the Abhidhamma, the fine material jhānas are usually divided into five levels.

action is likely to lead to birth in the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-bhava*).

16. *Arūpāvacarakusala-kamma*:

Wholesome kamma on the level of the formless plane (*arūpāvacara*); this refers to the four formless jhānas of those individuals who have not yet realized the fruit of arahantship. Such action is likely to lead to birth in the formless sphere (*arūpa-bhava*).

### FURTHER NOTES

The Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha arranges these four groups of kamma in the following order:

Group 1 = group 2

Group 2 = group 3

Group 3 = group 1

Group 4 = group 4

The Visuddhimagga arranges the groups as follows:<sup>106</sup>

Group 1 = group 1

Group 2 = group 3

Group 3 = group 2

The Manorathapūraṇī explains the twelve kinds of kamma in more detail than in any other texts.<sup>107</sup> It defines this classification of kamma as an exposition by sutta specialists (*suttantika-pariyāya*). It only counts eleven distinct kinds of kamma, as it considers *ahosi-kamma* as simply the condition in which various forms of kamma do not bear fruit. It claims that this term is inserted in various passages simply to describe various (other) forms of kamma, and is thus not a distinct form of kamma in itself.

<sup>106</sup>Vism. 601-602.

<sup>107</sup>AA. II. 210-18.

It goes on to explain that an exposition in accord with the Abhidhamma (*abhidhamma-pariyāya*) refers to sixteen kinds of kamma based on the four accomplishments (*sampatti*) and the four defects (*vipatti*).<sup>108</sup> {323}

There are several other commentarial texts which present an incomplete description of these various kinds of kamma, most notably the Papañcasūdanī, which only explains the first and second groups.<sup>109</sup>

It is fair to say that these twelve kinds of kamma represent a commentarial interpretation, although some of these factors have a clear basis in the Pali Canon. This is true in particular with the first three factors of the first group, classified according to the time of taking effect:

Monks, what is the result of kamma? The result of kamma, I say, is threefold: [to be experienced] in the present (*ditṭhave dhamme*), or in the [next] rebirth (*uppajje vā*), or on some subsequent occasion (*apare vā pariyāye*).

A. III. 415.

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Greed ... hatred ... delusion ...

Any kamma fashioned through greed, born of greed, caused by greed, originated by greed ... fashioned through hatred ... fashioned through delusion ... originated by delusion ripens wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever that kamma ripens, it is there that one experiences its result, either in the present, or in the [next] rebirth, or on some subsequent occasion.

A. I. 134-5.

The commentary to these sutta passages is precisely the Manorathapūraṇī, which presents the most detailed description of the twelve kinds of kamma, as cited above.

<sup>108</sup> See the earlier section: 'Fruition of Kamma'.

<sup>109</sup> MA. III. 339; MA. V. 11.

In the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, the Buddha divides people into four kinds, related to the fruition of kamma, as follows:<sup>110</sup>

The first kind of person performs the ten unwholesome courses of action. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. This is because earlier he did an evil action to be experienced as painful, or later he did an evil action to be experienced as painful, or at the time of death he maintained acute wrong view. Since he has performed the ten unwholesome courses of action, he will experience the result of that either here and now (*diṭṭhave dhamme*), or in his next rebirth (*upapajje vā*), or in some subsequent existence (*apare vā pariyāye*).

The second kind of person similarly performs the ten unwholesome courses of action. Yet, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. This is because earlier he did a good action to be experienced as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be experienced as pleasant, or at the time of death he maintained right view to the full. But since he has performed the ten unwholesome courses of action, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

The third kind of person performs the ten wholesome courses of action. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. This is because earlier he did a good action to be experienced as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be experienced as pleasant, or at the time of death he maintained right view to the full. Since he has performed the ten wholesome courses of action, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

The fourth kind of person similarly performs the ten wholesome courses of action. Yet, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. This is because earlier he did an evil action to be experienced as painful, or later he did an evil action to be experienced as

<sup>110</sup>M. III. 214-15.

painful, or at the time of death he maintained acute wrong view. But since he has performed the ten wholesome courses of action, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

The commentaries explain this passage by using the terms *diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya*, *uppajja-vedanīya*, and *aparāpāriya-vedanīya*.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, one is able here to see the suggestion or source of the concept of *āsanna-kamma* (actions performed or reflected upon immediately before death). {323}

The Apadāna, which recounts the past lives of various disciples, mentions proximate kamma (*āsanna-kamma*) in numerous passages.<sup>112</sup> One example is the story of an elder who was a hunter in a past life. One day he encountered the Buddha Tissa. Out of faith he offered a handful of grass for the Buddha Tissa to sit on, and consequently his mind was pure and bright. Soon after that he was mauled and killed by a lion. Because of his deeds shortly before death, of meeting the Buddha Tissa, making an offering, and gaining faith, he was born in heaven. These passages reveal that the consideration of actions close to death and the use of the term *āsanna-kamma* in this context was prevalent at the time that this early text was composed.

The term *diṭṭhadhamma-vedanīya-(kamma)* is mentioned in several other passages of the Pali Canon,<sup>113</sup> but it is paired with the term *samparāya-vedanīya* ('bearing fruit in the future') in a group of ten factors. The remaining eight factors are: *sukha-vedanīya* ('bearing fruit as pleasure'); *dukkha-vedanīya* ('bearing fruit as pain'); *paripakka-vedanīya* ('bearing fruit for an individuality brought to maturity', 'bearing fruit for an individuality whose time has come'); *aparipakka-vedanīya* ('bearing fruit for an individuality whose time has not yet come'); *bahu-vedanīya* ('bearing abundant fruit'); *appa-vedanīya* ('bearing meagre fruit'); *vedanīya* ('necessarily bearing fruit'); and *avedanīya* ('not necessarily bearing fruit').

<sup>111</sup> MA. V. 19.

<sup>112</sup> Ap. 280, 378-9, 391, 454.

<sup>113</sup> Notably, at: M. II. 220-21; A. IV. 383-4.

The terms *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya-kamma*, *uppajjavedanīya-kamma*, and *aparāpariyavedanīya-kamma* appear clearly in their complete form in the *Kathāvatthu*, which Ven. Moggalliputta-Tissa Thera composed at the time of the Third Recitation, in about 218 B.E. (325 BC).<sup>114</sup> The term *ahosi-kamma* also appears clearly from early on, in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.<sup>115</sup>

The commentaries present an additional group of twelve kinds of kamma:

1. Previously performed action (*ahosi-kamma*), with previously existing fruits of action.
2. Previously performed action, without any previously existing fruits of action.
3. Previously performed action, with the fruits of action presently in existence.
4. Previously performed action, with no existing fruits of action.
5. Previously performed action, with fruits of action existing in the future.
6. Previously performed action, with no fruits of action existing in the future.
7. Existing action with existing fruits of action.
8. Existing action with no existing fruits of action.
9. Existing action with fruits of action existing in the future.
10. Existing action with no fruits of action existing in the future.
11. Action existing in the future with fruits of action existing in the future.
12. Action existing in the future with no fruits of action existing in the future.

The commentaries explain this group in conformity with the previous group of twelve kinds of kamma.<sup>116</sup> The gist of this teaching is that there

<sup>114</sup>Kvu. 611-12. [Trans.: the Third Recitation is also known as the Third Council. The author uses the spelling Moggalliputta-Tissa Thera.]

<sup>115</sup>Ps. II. 78.

<sup>116</sup>AA. II. 220-22.

are six kinds of kamma that bear fruit and six kinds of kamma that do not bear fruit. Note how the term *ahosi-kamma* here refers to ‘previously performed action’.

The other terms, e.g. *garuka* and *āciṇṇa*, were used in the Pali Canon in other contexts. Only in the commentaries were they used to describe distinct kinds of kamma.







## SECTION IV.

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### GOAL OF LIFE

Chapter 6

*Nibbāna: the Supreme Peace*

Chapter 7

*Awakened Beings*

Chapter 8

*Calm and Insight*



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# CHAPTER 6

## NIBBĀNA

### *The Supreme Peace*

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Human beings encounter many trials and tribulations. The situation can be summed up in one word: suffering (*dukkha*). (See Note 6.1.) Most people freely acknowledge that life, both on a personal and on a social level, involves facing problems. These problems affect their happiness and present moral dilemmas. A close inspection reveals that all of these problems stem from the same source, that is, by its very nature, human life is endowed with problems or it has the potential to cause problems.

Saying that the purpose of life is to pursue happiness implies suffering: the very search for happiness reveals an inner deficiency that drives people to seek fulfilment. This suffering has many consequences. The search for happiness gives rise to conflicts of interest and to social problems. What begins as a personal problem is magnified and spreads outwards.

Yet this description is still rather ambiguous; for the sake of clarity one needs to get to the heart of the matter. A basic truth of life is that it is characterized by *dukkha*; the very nature of human life is marked by this universal characteristic of *dukkha*. Human life is a conditioned phenomenon (*saṅkhāra*), subject to various causes and conditions. It is impermanent, unstable, fleeting, and devoid of any lasting self or substance. One is unable to sustain life or to shape it purely according to

NOTE 6.1: TRANSLATIONS OF *DUKKHA*

Trans.: there are many English translations for *dukkha*, including: ‘suffering’, ‘unsatisfactoriness’, ‘stress’, ‘pain’, and ‘misery’. The Buddha used this word in different contexts, most notably in:

- (a) The Three Characteristics, referring to the stress and pressure inherent in conditioned phenomena (see Chapter 3);
- (b) the Four Noble Truths, referring to human suffering caused by ignorance and craving (see chapter 19); and
- (c) the three kinds of feeling (*vedanā*), referring to ‘painful sensation’ (see chapter 1).

The author here is highlighting the overlap and connection between these meanings, especially (a) and (b).

one’s desires; one must conform to causes and conditions. This is *dukkha* on a more fundamental level.

The *dukkha* fundamental to life can be summed up by the words ‘aging’ (*jarā*) and ‘death’ (*maraṇa*), or by the words ‘decay’ and ‘dissolution’. In the wake of this fundamental *dukkha* follows *dukkha* as a human feeling or emotion, for example: ‘suffering’, ‘distress’, ‘grief’, and ‘regret’.

Due to the fact that life is characterized by a basic form of *dukkha*, for people to truly solve problems, bring suffering to an end, and experience real happiness, they must firmly abide in the truth. To begin with they must come to terms with the fundamental characteristic of *dukkha*, by applying wisdom in order to be free from it or to live with it at ease and to not create problems around it. If one is unable to reach this state, one should at least gain insight into this fundamental *dukkha* and develop a proper mental attitude in regard to it. One thus acknowledges and faces the truth with understanding.

If people lack this stability and are unable to come to terms with the fundamental characteristic of *dukkha*, they allow it to become a hidden problem lying within. They then try to bury their problems and to turn

a blind eye to suffering. They end up deceiving themselves, and the problems festering in the mind intensify and increase. {326}

People claim that they desire happiness and are averse to suffering, but they often create problems for themselves precisely through the means they use to achieve happiness. Instead of dispelling suffering and generating happiness, they evade suffering in order to pursue happiness. They do not attend to the underlying roots of suffering. Their problems then develop into more serious mental complexes. Instead of dispelling or reducing suffering, they increase and compound it, both within themselves and outwards in their conflicts with society.

For those people who attempt to cover over and conceal their suffering, their pursuit of happiness indicates a sense of lack, distress, anxiety, and unhappiness. They seek things in order to feel fulfilled or to dispel their agitation, yet in this search they come into conflict with others. Moral issues in society thus become intensified.

By attending to suffering incorrectly, people vent their frustrations outwards, increasing suffering both for themselves and others. As a consequence, the inherent stress which is part and parcel of the conditioned nature of life is neglected rather than addressed. With their singular ingenuity people concoct a whole host of problems, until the basic predicament of life (of inherent stress) is virtually forgotten.

People may even delude themselves by thinking that happiness results from turning a blind eye to suffering.<sup>1</sup> To make matters worse, that inherent stress, which has been avoided, covertly incites people to search for and indulge in ever more passionate and restless forms of pleasure, depriving them of confidence and contentment. As a result, moral crises in society become more serious, for instance through the increase of competition and oppression, and suffering is exacerbated.

As long as people are unable to come to terms with this fundamental aspect of life – unable to reconcile themselves to the universal characteristic of *dukkha* – they will not succeed in resolving their problems. They will not escape the oppression of *dukkha*, no matter how much pleasure

<sup>1</sup>Trans.: ‘Ignorance is bliss’.

they experience, and they will not meet with true, constant happiness, which is intrinsically complete and fully satisfying.

Human life involves solving problems and seeking release from suffering. But if we do not know the correct way leading to freedom, our attempted solutions to these problems only bring about increased suffering. The greater the effort, the greater the affliction, becoming an ever more complex cycle: a whirlpool of suffering. This state of affairs is *saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*, the ‘wandering around’ or round of rebirth, which the Buddha explained in the teaching of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) under the cycle of origination (*samudaya-vāra*) and the forward sequence (*anuloma-paṭiccasamuppāda*). There it is revealed how human suffering arises according to cause and effect.

If people are able to face the truth and to understand the true nature of *dukkha*, besides being free of mental disorders that create and compound problems, they will be able to develop wisdom and to free their minds, even from the fundamental *dukkha* inherent to life. {327} The stress and pressure inherent in nature is recognized simply for what it is. It then has no power to create suffering in the minds of these individuals.

Even before they have reached complete liberation, those people who are not deceived or obstructed by unhealthy mental complexes created from unresolved suffering are able to experience happiness in a full and satisfactory way. At the same time they have the opportunity to develop happiness, by accessing ever more refined, independent, spacious, replete, and pure forms of happiness, until they eventually realize the happiness that is completely free from suffering. Their pathway to happiness is unrestricted and limitless.

When the Buddha taught Dependent Origination, he did not end with the origin of suffering. He also taught the cycle of cessation (*paṭiccasamuppāda-nirodhavāra*), which is the process of turning back, or turning away (*vivaṭṭa*): the end of suffering. Human suffering can be remedied and there are ways to achieve this. The Buddha went on to reveal the supreme state, in which humans are able to live noble lives, enjoy genuine happiness, and bring true benefit and meaning to life. They



become free, without having to rely on external things or to depend on the happiness determined by conditioned phenomena.

Conditioned phenomena cannot sustain themselves, let alone sustain our happiness. Happiness dependent on external things offers no true support, since it is continually reliant on these things. Seeking meaning in this insecure form of happiness results in losing freedom and independence.

Although one may not fully attain the state of ‘turning away’ at first, to the extent that one correctly attends to problems – reducing the force of the origination cycle and increasing the force of the cessation cycle – suffering will gradually abate and one’s life will be enhanced. One will be able to experience the pleasures of the world with wisdom, not enslaved to them or harmed by their fluctuating currents. Worldly pleasures will not be a source of trouble to oneself or others, and this healthy relationship to pleasure will promote wellbeing within society.

The discussion here focuses on the cessation cycle and the end of suffering, which directly opposes the origination cycle with its resultant suffering.<sup>2</sup> {328}

## 6.2 CESSATION OF SUFFERING

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### A. LONG FORMAT

Before we can solve problems, however large or trivial these problems may be, we must first understand them accurately. If not, they may become more complex and severe. To effectively resolve life’s dilemmas we must understand each dilemma as well as the conditions giving rise to it. This is especially true when dealing with life’s fundamental problem: we must know suffering and the causes that bring about suffering. We must have an understanding of the truth, which is the essential factor for bringing an end to all suffering. A misunderstanding of the truth, on the other hand, creates problems. It results in people’s attempted solutions

<sup>2</sup>For further information on Dependent Origination see chapter 4.

having an effect counter to the desired effect and further intensifying suffering.

The origination cycle, i.e. the creation of suffering, begins with ignorance:

Ignorance (*avijjā*) → volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*) →  
consciousness (*viññāṇa*) → mentality and corporeality (*nāma-rūpa*)  
→ 6 sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) → contact (*phassa*) → feeling (*vedanā*)  
→ craving (*taṇhā*) → clinging (*upādāna*) → becoming (*bhava*) →  
birth (*jāti*) → aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sorrow (*soka*),  
lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*), and  
despair (*upāyāsa*) = origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*).

The reverse form of this is the cessation cycle, which begins with the extinguishing or absence of ignorance:

Ignorance ceases → volitional activities cease → consciousness  
ceases → mentality and corporeality cease → 6 sense bases cease  
→ contact ceases → feeling ceases → craving ceases → clinging  
ceases → becoming ceases → birth ceases → aging, death + sorrow  
... despair cease = cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). (See  
Note 6.2)

The word *nirodha* (cessation) does not merely mean that something comes to an end, but also that it cannot reappear or function in the future. It is prevented from arising; it is stilled or ‘detoxified’. The term *paṭiccasamuppāda-nirodhavāra* means the ending of existent suffering and the prevention of further suffering; a process in which suffering does not arise. The expression ‘ignorance ceases’ means both the end of existing ignorance and the non-arising of future ignorance. It refers to knowledge (*vijjā*): to freedom from ignorance. {329}

## B. SHORT FORMAT

Both the origination cycle and cessation cycle shown above are expressed in the long format, with all twelve constituent factors. Each cycle proceeds in consecutive order until all factors are complete. However, these cycles are not always shown in this way, with the entire sequence of

## NOTE 6.2: CYCLES OF PAṬICCASAMUPPĀDA

Traditionally, there are four formats for outlining *paṭiccasamuppāda*, both the *samudaya*vāra and the *nirodha*vāra cycles:

1. From beginning to end (the usual format): *avijjā* → *saṅkhāra* → *viññāṇa* → *nāmarūpa* → *saḷāyatana* → *phassa* → *vedanā* → *taṇhā* → *upādāna* → *bhava* → *jāti* → *jarāmarāṇa* + *soka ... upāyāsa* (e.g. S. II. 1-2).
2. From the end to the beginning: *jarāmarāṇa* (*dukkha*) ← *jāti* ← *bhava* ← *upādāna* ← *taṇhā* ← *vedanā* ← *phassa* ← *saḷāyatana* ← *nāmarūpa* ← *viññāṇa* ← *saṅkhāra* ← *avijjā* (M. I. 261-2).
3. From the middle to the beginning: 4 *ahāra* ← *taṇhā* ← *vedanā* ← *phassa* ← *saḷāyatana* ← *nāmarūpa* ← *viññāṇa* ← *saṅkhāra* ← *avijjā* (S. II. 11-12).
4. From the middle to the end: (*saḷāyatana* → *phassa*) → *vedanā* → (*taṇhā*) → *upādāna* → *bhava* → *jāti* → *jarāmarāṇa* + *soka ... upāyāsa* (M. I. 266).

In the context of *nirodhavāra*, the long format beginning with the cessation of ignorance is most commonly used. When explaining *nirodhavāra* in the first three formats, the complete sequence is shown (from or up to *avijjā*), but in the fourth format a shorter sequence is presented, as will be discussed soon.

twelve factors. In the Pali Canon there are passages where for practical application the Buddha presented a process observable in daily life. The structure of these shortened formats depends on the point at which a problem begins or on the aspect he wished to emphasize.

The short format of the origination cycle begins with cognition at the six sense bases (*āyatana*) and then proceeds as an unbroken chain to aging, death, sorrow and despair. The initial part of the process, from ignorance up to the six sense bases, is omitted as its inherent influence is understood. The short format of the cessation cycle begins at the cessation of craving – after initial contact and feeling.

Here are two examples from the Pali Canon of the origination cycle (short format):

Monks, a child grows up and his faculties mature still further; the youth enjoys himself provided and endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure: with forms, sounds, odours, flavours, and tangibles that are wished for, desired, agreeable and endearing, connected with sensual desire, and provocative of lust.

On seeing a form with the eye, hearing a sound with the ear, smelling an odour with the nose, tasting a flavour with the tongue, touching a tangible with the body, cognizing a mind-object with the mind, he is fond of it if it is pleasing; he dislikes it if it is displeasing. He abides with mindfulness of the body unestablished, with an inferior (undeveloped) mind, and he does not understand as it actually is deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom wherein evil, unwholesome states cease without remainder. {330}

Engaged as he is in favouring and opposing, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he is gratified by that feeling, he broods over and welcomes it, and submits to it. As he does so, delight (*nandi*; ‘infatuation’) arises in him. Now delight in feelings is clinging. With his clinging as condition, becoming arises; with becoming as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.<sup>3</sup>

*M. I. 266-7.*

Bhikkhus, what is the origin of suffering? Dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises. The union of these three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling. With feeling as condition, there is craving. This is the origin of suffering. (The same for the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.)

*S. II. 72-3; S. IV. 87.*

Selecting the principal elements in the above texts the origination cycle can be shown as follows:

<sup>3</sup>Trans.: this passage and several others are based with permission on Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translations.

1. (Six sense bases → contact →) feeling → delight (*nandi*) → clinging → becoming → birth → aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair = the arising of suffering.
2. (Six sense bases →) contact → feeling → craving (*taṇhā*) = the arising of suffering.

These two examples are essentially the same; they both begin with cognition at the sense bases. The first example presents the process up to the end. The second example presents the process only up to craving; the remainder is to be inferred.

Now, two examples of the cessation cycle (short format):

1. The aforementioned child has studied and practised the Dhamma, consisting of moral conduct and sense restraint, and developed concentrative absorption (*jhāna*): On seeing a form with the eye ... cognizing a mind-object with the mind, he is not fond of it if it is pleasing; he is not annoyed with it if it is displeasing. He abides with mindfulness of the body established, with a developed, immeasurable mind, and he understands as it actually is deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom wherein those evil, unwholesome states cease without remainder. Having thus abandoned favouring and opposing, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he is not gratified by that feeling, he does not welcome it or submit to it. As he does not do so, delight (infatuation) in feelings ceases in him. With the cessation of his delight comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth – aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. {331}

*M. I. 270.*

2. Bhikkhus, what is the passing away of suffering? Dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises. The union of these three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling. With feeling as condition, there is craving. Because

that craving ceases and is extinguished without remainder, clinging ceases. With the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases. With the cessation of becoming, birth ceases. With the cessation of birth – old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease. In this way the entire mass of suffering ceases. This is the passing away of suffering. (Same for the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.)

*S. II. 72-3; S. IV. 87.*

Based on these two texts the cessation cycle can be depicted as follows:

1. (6 senses bases → contact →) feeling → delight (*nandi*) ceases → clinging ceases → becoming ceases → birth ceases → aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and affliction cease = the cessation of suffering.
2. (6 senses bases →) contact → feeling → craving (*taṇhā*); (but) craving ceases → clinging ceases → becoming ceases → birth ceases → aging and death, sorrow ... affliction cease = the cessation of suffering.

The first example presents all components of the short format but in reversed form to the origination cycle. The second example begins the same way as example two of the origination cycle, above. But where the origination cycle ends at craving, here the process changes course and completes the cycle of cessation. These two examples are essentially the same; they both demonstrate a severance of the cycle following initial cognition and feeling. As a result, delight or craving is prevented from arising and suffering ceases.

Note that the meaning of *nandi* in the first passage is similar to that of *taṇhā* in the second. The meaning differs only slightly, suited to the context of the first passage. Note also that the expression ‘delight ceases’ in example one indicates clearly that delight does not arise; there is no delight (infatuation). One can apply this to passage two: unlike the origination cycle where craving arises subsequent to initial cognition and feeling, craving is now uprooted; the cycle is broken and the subsequent factors do not arise. The cessation of suffering is accomplished.

Although the short formats of *samsāra-vaṭṭa* and *vivaṭṭa* do not mention ignorance, the notion of ignorance is integral to both the origination and cessation cycles. When a feeling is experienced in the origination cycle, craving arises as a result of not fully comprehending the truth about the object encountered: that it is impermanent (*anicca*), subject to stress (*dukkha*), and nonself (*anattā*), and that it cannot be truly held on to as one's own. Also, a person does not know how the object is beneficial or harmful. He cognizes with ignorance: *avijjā-samphassa*.<sup>4</sup> The feeling ensuing from such contact gives rise to craving. {332}

In contrast, when a feeling is experienced in the cycle of cessation, craving does not arise, because the conditioned nature of the object is fully understood. With knowledge (*vijjā*) as a basis, cognition occurs in a way not influenced by ignorance; contact and feeling then do not lead to craving. The expression 'craving ceases' implies the cessation of ignorance. Here, the short format indirectly points to the cessation of ignorance by highlighting the cessation of craving. This is analogous to the Buddha's concise definition of the second and third noble truths: craving is the cause of suffering, and the end of suffering occurs with the end of craving. The Buddha used this way of speaking for practical reasons, to illustrate the Path and its immediate benefits.

The key feature of cessation, in both the long and short formats, is the breaking of the sequence. Generally, the sequence is broken at one of two junctures: the primary break is at ignorance and the secondary break is at craving. Breaking the cycle is of two types: directly at ignorance, and indirectly at craving. In either case, the break that is made must include the elimination of ignorance.

Once the cycle is broken, the round of rebirths (*samsāra-vaṭṭa*) ends, the process of turning away (*vivaṭṭa*) is reached, and freedom from suffering is attained. A person thus vanquishes all of life's troubles and is without sorrow and affliction. He or she has true happiness, arriving at knowledge (*vijjā*), liberation (*vimutti*), purity (*visuddhi*), peace (*santi*), and *Nibbāna*. This is the highest benefit that human beings can obtain, making life worthwhile.

<sup>4</sup>Literally: 'ignorance-contact' (S. III. 46, 96).

### 6.3 STATE OF NIBBĀNA

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Etymologically, *Nibbāna* derives from the prefix *ni-* (‘out’, ‘without’, ‘finished’, or ‘ended’), and *vāna*, (‘to blow’, ‘to go’, ‘to move’, or in another sense a ‘restraint’). It can be used in relation to fire or burning, meaning extinguishing, quenching, cooling, or coolness – but not extinction. In reference to the mind, it means peaceful, refreshed, and happy: an absence of agitation and anxiety.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, it refers to the end of defilements: of greed, hatred and delusion. The commentaries and subcommentaries usually define *Nibbāna* as the end of or escape from craving, which binds people to repeated existence. (See Note 6.3)

When the round of rebirth (*saṃsāravatṭa*) ends, freedom from rebirth (*vivatta*) takes over immediately and automatically.<sup>6</sup> One does not travel from a place of *saṃsāravatṭa* to a place of *vivatta*, unless one is speaking figuratively or comparatively. Ignorance, craving and clinging cease and *Nibbāna* appears simultaneously in their place. One can say that the cessation of ignorance, craving and clinging is *Nibbāna*.

Ignorance, craving and clinging disturb the minds of unenlightened people (*puthujjana*) and conceal wisdom; they entangle the mind with defilements (*kilesa*) and distort vision. When ignorance, craving and clinging cease, luminous wisdom (*vijjā*) arises. With such wisdom one sees all things accurately, not through the lens of one’s desires. A person’s perception, attitudes and personality change. A new knowledge and vision arises; things appear that one has never known, seen or conceived

<sup>5</sup>In this context, the verb and adjective form *nibbuta* is most often used, e.g.: A. I. 162, 197; A. II. 212; Sn. 153; AA. II. 259, 307; AA. III. 184; NdA. I. 199; in particular: DhA. I. 85; JAtA. I. 60; BudA. 280.

<sup>6</sup>The words *saṃsāravatṭa* and *vivatta* are used here corresponding to the evolution of language; they are not the original specific terms. In the Canon, the preferred terms for *saṃsāravatṭa* are *saṃsāra* (e.g. S. II. 178; A. II. 12) and *vatṭa* (e.g. S. III. 64; S. IV. 52; Ud. 75). In later texts the two were used as a compound (e.g. Nd1. 343; Nd2. 17). As for *vivatta*, it was not generally used in the Canon in this sense, except in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (e.g. Ps. I. 2, 107–11.) Later, in the commentaries and sub-commentaries it was frequently used (e.g. Vism. 694; VinA.: *Pācittiyakhaṇḍaṃ*, *Musāvāda* *avagga*, *Padasodhammasikkhāpadavaṇṇanā*; AA. III. 337; VismT.: *Paṭhamo Bhāgo*, *Silaniddesa* *vaṇṇanā*, *Dutiyasīlapañcakavaṇṇanā*.)



## NOTE 6.3: DEFINITIONS OF NIBBĀNA

Analyses of the word *nibbāna* occur at many scriptural passages, especially: Nd2. 33; VinA.: *Pārājikaṇḍaṃ*, *Paṭhamapārājikaṃ*, *Sudinnabhāṇavāraṇṇana*; DA. II. 464; AA. II. 283; KhA. 151; ItA. I. 165; SnA. I. 253, 299; NdA. I. 82, 104; DhsA. 409; Vism. 293–4; VinT.: *Paṭhamo Bhāgo*, *Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā*, *Vinayapaññattiyācanakathā*; VismT.: *Paṭhamo Bhāgo*, *Samādhiniddeśavaṇṇanā*, *Samādhi-ānisaṇsakathāvaṇṇanā*; CompT.: *Abhidhammatthavibhāviniṭṭikā*, *Paramatthadhammavaṇṇanā*.

Most of these explanations are identical or similar.

Further definitions include:

- ‘free from the jungle’ (i.e. the tangle of impurities): A. III. 344; AA. III. 371; Dh. verse 283; DhA. III. 204; and
- an ‘end to the triad of *dukkha*’: *dukkha-dukkha*, *vipariṇāma-dukkha*, and *saṅkhāra-dukkha*: VismT.: *Paṭhamo Bhāgo*, *Samādhiniddeśavaṇṇanā*, *Samādhi-anisaṇsakathāvaṇṇanā*.
- free of ‘piercing arrows’: included in the *Dhammavicāraṇa* of Somdet Phra Mahāsamaṇa Chao Krom Phraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa (Mahāmakuta University Press, 1958, p. 55).

[Trans.: this introductory paragraph is found at p. 385 of the Thai edition.]

of because they were concealed in the shadows or because one was preoccupied with other objects. The mind unfolds and expands immeasurably; it is clear, free, resplendent, peaceful, and profound. {333} When the state of *Nibbāna* is reached one knows this for oneself:

Nibbāna is to be seen for oneself,<sup>7</sup> timeless, inviting one to come and see, to be brought within and realized, to be experienced individually by the wise.<sup>8</sup>

A. I. 158–9.

<sup>7</sup>Alternatively, ‘realizable in this lifetime’.

<sup>8</sup>Note that these five qualities are identical to the last five qualities of the Dhamma. This is consistent with the explanation that the first quality of the Dhamma

Ordinary people are unable to comprehend or imagine the state of Nibbāna. When encountering new concepts people normally use previous knowledge as a basis for comparison, and in attempting to understand Nibbāna they create an image that is a composite of pre-existing perceptions.

Take for example a person who has never heard of an elephant. On hearing the word ‘elephant’ he may think it is a foreign word or simply nonsense. Learning that an elephant is an animal, he may consider all animals, from ants to whales, irrespective of size or type. The image is clearer when he is told that an elephant is an enormous land animal with big ears, small eyes, tusks, and a trunk.

This image may be close to reality or far from it; if he were to draw a picture on paper of what he sees in his mind, it may resemble some bizarre, mythological beast. Having never seen the real thing, he uses familiar perceptions to create an elaborate new image. The image will depend both on the accuracy of the speaker’s descriptions of the object, and on the listener’s stored perceptions used as components for a new perception.

In the case of something utterly different from anything previously perceived, and thoroughly incomparable, the listener has no way to conceive of it. If he attempts to understand this thing by means of familiar concepts and perceptions, the only reasonable way for the speaker to respond is by negation. Further speculation by the listener, using stored perceptions for comparison, can easily lead to misunderstanding. He may even go so far as outright rejection, accusing the speaker of deception and claiming that the thing in question does not exist. {334} Such rejection, based on unfamiliarity and an inability to conceive of something, would be ungrounded.

Nibbāna is beyond everything known by ordinary people – beyond their sphere and range – surpassing cognition influenced by ignorance, craving and clinging. It is a state arrived at directly with the abandonment

(*svākkhāto*) is the teaching, later called *pariyatti-dhamma*, the Dhamma that should be studied. Qualities 2-6 (*sanditthiko* to *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*) are attributes specific to *lokuttara-dhamma*, the Transcendent (Vism. 215-18).

of defilements, like sliding back a screen and seeing the sky. *Nibbāna* has no properties similar to things known by ordinary people. But claiming *Nibbāna* does not exist is incorrect.

The following fable has been used to illustrate how the unknown is not necessarily the unreal:

A fish and a turtle were close friends. The fish had spent its entire life in a lake, whereas the amphibious turtle knew both land and lake. One day the turtle returned to the lake after a walk on land. He told the fish how refreshing it was to walk on land, among open fields and a pleasant breeze. The fish listened for a while perplexed and thought: ‘What is walking?’ ‘What is dry land?’ ‘How can there be happiness without water? Certainly, it just spells death.’

The fish grew impatient and interrupted the turtle, seeking clarification. The turtle explained using earth terms; when the fish inquired with water terms, the turtle could only reject them. The turtle could not find any suitable comparisons and the fish thus concluded that the turtle was lying, that the story wasn’t true: dry land does not exist and nor do fields, pleasant breezes or happiness outside of water. The turtle spoke of something that does exist but it lay beyond the fish’s ken. Since the fish had never been on land it was unable to understand.

Consider the distinct experience and perception arising from each of the senses. Sense impressions differ absolutely from each other and are not comparable: sights cannot be compared with sounds, nor can sounds with smells. A person blind from birth cannot understand the nature of green, red, orange, pink, or other characteristics of sight, using perceptual knowledge from other sense bases. Words such as ‘loud’, ‘faint’, ‘malodorous’, ‘fragrant’, ‘sour’ or ‘sweet’ would all be inadequate. No one can accurately explain to a person born without the sense of smell the quality of fetid, fragrant, the smell of roses, citrus or jasmine. Words such as ‘red’, ‘blue’, ‘heavy’, ‘light’, ‘fat’, ‘thin’, ‘bitter’ and ‘salty’ would all be unsuitable. Human beings have five sense organs for cognizing the world’s properties, the sense objects (*ārammaṇa*). Knowledge surpassing the domain of mundane objects generally remains hidden. Even the five

recognized sense objects are known according to disparate qualities. Lack of familiarity or an inability to conceive of something is therefore not a guarantee of its non-existence.

Soon after the Buddha's enlightenment, before proclaiming the Dhamma, he had this thought:

The Dhamma<sup>9</sup> that I have attained is profound, difficult to see, difficult to realize, peaceful, excellent, not accessible by reasoning,<sup>10</sup> subtle, to be known by the wise. {335}

This is followed by the verse: I should not now teach what I have attained with such tribulation; this Dhamma cannot be easily realized by those overcome with greed and hatred. Beings dyed in lust, enveloped in darkness (ignorance), will not discern that which goes against the current, is subtle, profound, difficult to see, refined.

*Vin. I. 5; M. I. 168.*

Despite its complexity the Buddha did make great effort to teach and explain the Dhamma. However, Nibbāna cannot be penetrated by mere thought. No words or perceptions exist to accurately describe or define it. Conceptualizing and disputing the subject of Nibbāna only leads to misunderstanding. The correct way is to apply the teachings so as to arrive at Nibbāna and see it clearly for oneself. With proper determination, rather than being 'inconceivable' or 'indescribable', Nibbāna is merely 'difficult to see, difficult to realize', as quoted by the Buddha above.

It is worth noting the expressions the Buddha used when he spoke about Nibbāna. The definitions of Nibbāna can be summarised in the following four ways:

1. **By negation:** those expressions marking the renunciation and removal of some inferior, unlovely or disadvantageous condition belonging to the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*). For example: *Nibbāna* is

<sup>9</sup>The word *Dhamma* here refers to Dependent Origination, Nibbāna, or the Four Noble Truths – the essential meaning is the same.

<sup>10</sup>'Not within the realm of reasoning'.

the end of greed, hatred and delusion;<sup>11</sup> *Nibbāna* is the cessation of becoming;<sup>12</sup> *Nibbāna* is the end of craving;<sup>13</sup> and, the end of suffering.<sup>14</sup> Such descriptions also use terms revealing a quality directly opposite to an attribute of *vaṭṭa*. For example, *Nibbāna* is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), ageless (*ajara*), and deathless (*amata*).

2. **By synonym:** those terms indicating completion or perfection. For example: *santa* ('peaceful'), *paṇīta* ('excellent'), *suddhi* ('pure'), and *khema* ('secure').<sup>15</sup> {336}
3. **By simile and metaphor:** similes are more often used for explaining the state and traits of a person who has attained *Nibbāna* than for *Nibbāna* itself. For example, the comparison of an arahant to a bull, leading his herd across the river to arrive at the other side,<sup>16</sup> or to a person crossing a great ocean filled with dangers and reaching the shore.<sup>17</sup> The Buddha claimed that it is inaccurate to say an arahant is reborn ('reappears') somewhere, or is not born; he compared an arahant to a fire that is extinguished because there is no more fuel.<sup>18</sup>

There are some direct similes, for example: *Nibbāna* is like a tranquil, pleasant region;<sup>19</sup> like the other shore, secure and free from danger;<sup>20</sup> and like a message of truth.<sup>21</sup> There are many

<sup>11</sup>S. IV. 251, 261.

<sup>12</sup>S. II. 117.

<sup>13</sup>S. III. 190.

<sup>14</sup>This last is an indirect rather than an explicit definition. See e.g. S. IV. 43; Ud. 80; It. 47.

<sup>15</sup>Trans.: note also the passage from the chapter in *Buddhadhamma* on happiness: 'Finally, the highest goal of Buddhism – *Nibbāna* – is described as a form of happiness, the supreme form of happiness (*parama-sukha*)'. M. I. 508-509; Dh. verse 204; (this passage is found on p. 1023 of the original Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*).

<sup>16</sup>M. I. 226.

<sup>17</sup>S. IV. 157, 174.

<sup>18</sup>M. I. 486-7; S. IV. 399.

<sup>19</sup>S. III. 108-109.

<sup>20</sup>S. IV. 174.

<sup>21</sup>S. IV. 195.

metaphors, for example: *ārogya* (without illness; perfect health), *dīpa* (an island; freedom from danger), and *leṇa* (a cave; shelter from danger). In later scriptures composed by disciples there are metaphors referring to Nibbāna as a city, e.g. *puramuttamaṇi* ('magnificent city')<sup>22</sup> and *nibbāna-nagara* ('fortress of Nibbāna')<sup>23</sup> used as oratorical and literary terms. Thai idioms include 'great deathless citadel' (*amatamahānagara-nirvāṇa*), and 'crystal city', but these later words are not recognized as accurate terms revealing the true state of Nibbāna.

4. **By direct explanation:** these explanations occur in only a few places, but they are of much interest to scholars, especially for those who consider Buddhism a philosophy. The varying interpretations have given rise to numerous debates. I have presented a selection below.

Epithets for Nibbāna are occasionally found grouped in a single passage. Examples of all four kinds of definition are listed below, in Pali alphabetical order.<sup>24</sup>

*Akaṇha-asukka*: 'not black, not white' (not confined to social class or caste; neither good nor bad; neither *puñña* nor *pāpa*).

*Akata*: not made; not built.

*Akiñcana*: nothing lingering in the mind; free from anxiety.

*Akuto-bhaya*: fearless.

*Accuta*: immovable; undeparting.

*Acchariya*: marvellous.

*Ajara, Ajajjara*: ageless; undecaying.

*Ajāta*: not born.

<sup>22</sup>Ap. 530.

<sup>23</sup>Miln.: Book IV, Aṭṭhamavaggo, no. 5: The Gift of Vessantara (dilemma 71).

<sup>24</sup>From many sources, the important ones being: S. IV. 359-73; M. I. 173; S. IV. 210; A. II. 247-8; Ud. 80-81.

*Anata*: not swayed; an absence of craving.

*Ananta*: limitless.

*Anādāna*: no grasping.

*Anāpara*: sublime; foremost.

*Anālaya*: without longing; an absence of clinging.

*Anāsava*: without āsava (effluents/taints).

*Anidassana*: not seen with the eye; signless.

*Anītika*: without calamity.

*Anuttara*: unsurpassed; supreme.

*Apalokita* (-na): not disintegrating; not dissolving.

*Abhaya*: free of danger.

*Abbhūta*: ‘has not been before’; wonderful.

*Abyādhi*: without disease.

*Abyāpajjha*: without oppression; free from *dukkha*.

*Abhūta*: ‘not coming to be’.

*Amata*: deathless.

*Amosa-dhamma*: not declining; immutable.

*Asaṅkiliṭṭha*: undefiled.

*Asaṅkappa*: unshakeable.

*Asaṅkhata*: not constructed.

*Asaṅhīra*: unshifting.

*Asoka*: sorrowless.

*Ārogya*: without sickness; perfect health.

*Issariya*: freedom; mastership.

*Khema*: security; safety.

*Taṇhakkhaya*: the end of craving.

*Tāṇa*: defender; protection.

*Dīpa*: island; refuge.

*Dukkha*: the end of suffering.

*Duddasa*: difficult to see.

*Dhuva*: enduring.

*Nipuṇa*: subtle.

*Nippapaṇa*: without obstructive defilements; without *papaṇa*.

*Nibbāna*: the cessation of defilements and all suffering.

*Nibbuti*: cooling; the allayment of affliction. {337}

*Nirodha*: cessation of suffering.

*Paṇīta*: excellent.

*Paramattha*: the supreme benefit.

*Parama-sacca*: the supreme truth.

*Pāra*: the other shore; safe destination.

*Mutti*: release; emancipation.

*Mokkha*: salvation.

*Yogakkhema*: freedom from bondage.

*Leṇa*: sanctuary; shelter from danger.

*Vimutti*: liberation; freedom.

*Vimokkha*: liberation.

*Viraja*: stainless.

*Virāga*: the fading, cooling off, and expiration of lust.



*Visuddhi*: purity; impeccable.

*Sacca*: truth.

*Santa*: peaceful; still.

*Santi*: peace.

*Saraṇa*: refuge.

*Siva*: highest bliss.

*Suddhi*: purity.

*Sududdasa*: exceedingly difficult to see.

There are many more references and descriptions for *Nibbāna* in the scriptures containing verses by disciples and in the commentaries (e.g. *Niddesa*, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Apadāna*), as well as in later scriptures, (e.g. *Abhidhānappadīpikā*). Examples are listed below:

*Akkhara*: imperishable; interminable.

*Akhalita*: unfaltering.

*Acala*: unwavering.

*Anārammaṇa*: free from constraints; independent of sense objects.

*Anuppāda*: not born.

*Apavagga*: without formations (*saṅkhāra*); final emancipation.

*Amaraṇa*: deathless.

*Arūpa*: without *rūpa*; formless.

*Asapatta*: without enemies.

*Asambādha*: unconfined; unoppressed.

*Kevala*: unadulterated; inherently complete.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup>*Kevala* (Sanskrit: *kaivalya*) is a word expressing the ultimate goal of the Jain religion. In the Buddhist Pali Canon this word is not used as a direct reference to

*Nicca*: constant; certain.

*Nirupatāpa*: free from distress.

*Paṭipassaddhi*: tranquillity; calm.

*Pada*: place to be reached; destination.

*Para*: the beyond; the ultimate.

*Pariyosāna*: conclusion; goal.

*Pahāna*: the abandonment of defilements.

*Vivaṭṭa*: deliverance from the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*); without *vaṭṭa*.

*Vūpasama*: stillness. {338}

Some of these terms are very important, since they are repeatedly used as definitions for Nibbāna, for example: *asaṅkhata*, *nirodha*, *vimutti*, *virāga*, *santa* and *santi*. Other words are used infrequently. Some are used in only one location, others in two or three locations, so they should not be regarded as highly significant. They are included here to increase understanding. The same is true for the translations; they provide some sense of the meaning, but they might not give a complete flavour as they lack the supportive context.

And very important, many terms were familiar to people in the specific time period, region, and community in which the Buddha taught, and the terms were associated with their personal values or religious beliefs. When the words were spoken, the listeners probably understood the meaning completely. Sometimes the Buddha used descriptive words for Nibbāna to facilitate communication while substituting a new meaning in accord with Buddha-Dhamma. People outside of those time periods, places, and groups may not completely understand the meaning of these words.

Nibbāna, but rather as a name for someone who has attained Nibbāna, e.g. *kevali* or *kebali*. In many locations, e.g.: M. II. 144; S. I. 167; A. I. 162; A. V. 16; Sn. 88.

An important word for describing *Nibbāna* is *asaṅkhata* ('not constructed'). *Nibbāna* does not exist as a result of causes or conditions. It may be claimed that *Nibbāna* must arise from causes, since *Nibbāna* is the fruit of *magga* (the Path, the Way) or of practice in accordance with the Way. This doubt can be answered briefly by way of analogy: if we compare practice for reaching *Nibbāna* with travelling to the city of Chiang Mai, we see that Chiang Mai, which is the goal of the journey, is not the result of the path or the act of travelling. Regardless of the road or of travelling, Chiang Mai exists. The road and travelling are causes for reaching Chiang Mai, but not for Chiang Mai itself. It is the same with the Path and practice along the Path, which are causes for attaining *Nibbāna*, but not for *Nibbāna* itself.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from *vimutti*, there are many other synonyms that reveal facets of *Nibbāna*, as presented earlier. Of all these synonyms, there are two often-used words that represent important properties: *visuddhi* and *santi*. *Visuddhi* is purity or cleanness, the absence of defilements, which tarnish and obscure, and refers to the ability to see things clearly. *Santi* is peace, the absence of agitation and affliction, the end of turmoil; this state of mind is serene, deep, cool, settled, self-reliant, able to fully experience the fruits of practice, and ready to be employed for action.<sup>27</sup>

The few passages that explain the state of *Nibbāna* explicitly are presented below. In some cases a story is provided in order to give the context for the Buddha's words:

At one time the Buddha gave a Dhamma discourse to the bhikkhus concerning *Nibbāna*. As the bhikkhus were listening intently, the Buddha uttered this exclamation:

Monks, there exists that sphere (*āyatana*) where there is neither the earth, water, fire, or air elements; nor the realm of infinite space; nor the realm of infinite consciousness; nor the realm of nothingness; nor the realm of neither perception nor non-perception; nor

<sup>26</sup>This matter is discussed in the *Milindapañhā*: Book IV, Sattamo vaggo, no. 8: *Nibbānassa Atthibhāvapañho* (dilemma 65). [Trans.: this paragraph is brought forward from pp. 341-42 of the original text.]

<sup>27</sup>Trans.: this paragraph is brought forward from p. 382 of the original text.

this world; nor the next world; nor the moon; nor the sun. I do not say that that sphere has going, coming, arising, staying, or passing away. It has neither foundation, nor movement, nor constraint (*ārammaṇa*). That is the end of suffering.

*Ud. 80-81.*

On another occasion, the Buddha gave a similar teaching to the bhikkhus, and uttered this verse:

Indeed, *anata* (the state of not inclining towards birth; being without craving, i.e. Nibbāna) is difficult to see. Truth (*sacca*) is not easily discerned. Having penetrated craving, and by knowing and seeing [the truth], there will be nothing lingering in the mind (nothing to cause mental anxiety).<sup>28</sup>

On a similar occasion:

Monks, there is the Not-born (*ajāta*), Not-become (*abhūta*), Not-made (*akata*), Not-constructed (*asaṅkhata*). If there were not the Not-born, Not-become, Not-made, Not-constructed, then there could not be known the escape here from the born, the become, the made and the constructed. But because there is the Not-born, Not-become, Not-made, Not-constructed, therefore the escape here can be known from the born, become, made and constructed.<sup>29</sup> {339}

On a similar occasion:

Still being dependent, there is wavering. Not being dependent, there is no wavering. There being no wavering, there is tranquillity. With tranquillity, there is no favouring. With no favouring, no coming and going. With no coming and going, no passing away and arising. With no passing away and arising, there is neither this world, the other world, nor a between-the-two. This is the end of suffering.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Another account describes the Buddha correcting the view of Brahma. In brief, at one time this pernicious view arose in the Brahma named Baka:

This abode of Brahma is permanent, enduring and eternal. It is absolute and imperishable. This abode of Brahma is not born; it does not originate, age, die, or pass away. A superior salvation cannot be found.

The Buddha, knowing Baka's thought, went to him and said: Brahma, you have lapsed into ignorance. Therefore, you claim that which is impermanent as permanent, unstable as enduring, and uneternal as eternal ... and there being a superior salvation, you claim there is none.

Then Māra possessed one of Brahma's retinue, who spoke to the Buddha: Bhikkhu, bhikkhu, do not offend Brahma, do not offend Brahma. This is Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Lord (*abhibhū*), the Unvanquished, The All Seeing One, the Omnipotent, the Sovereign, the Maker, the Creator, Excellence, Providence, the Master, Father of those born and to be born....

The Buddha admonished Māra, finishing with: Brahma and all his company and retinue are in your hands, are in your power ... but I have not fallen into your hands, nor am I under your power.

When Baka maintained: I have declared the permanent as permanent, the enduring as enduring, the eternal as eternal ... the Buddha announced that there are many things that Brahma does not know, including:

The state that can be known (*viññāṇa*), not seen with the eyes (*anidassana*),<sup>31</sup> limitless (*ananta*), and all radiant (*sabbato-pabhā*),<sup>32</sup> which the solidity of earth cannot hold, the wetness of water ... the heat of fire ... the movement of wind cannot hold, the existence of beings ... the divinity of devas ... the rule of Pajāpati ... the grandeur of Brahma ... the brilliance of the Ābhassara Brahmas ... the beauty

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

of the Subhakiṇḥa Brahmas ... the abundance of the Vehapphala Brahmas cannot hold, the lordship of the Lord cannot hold, the characteristics of all things cannot hold. {340}

Baka replied to this by saying that he would vanish from sight, but he was unable to do so. The Buddha in turn said he would vanish and did vanish. Brahma and his retinue could only hear his voice speaking: Having seen the danger in being, and seen the existence of those who seek non-being (*vibhava*), I do not praise any sort of being, nor cling to delight (i.e. *bhava-taṇhā*: the craving for being).

M. I. 327-8.

Another story tells of a bhikkhu who travelled through every realm until he reached the Brahma world, seeking an answer to a question:

This bhikkhu had the following doubt: Where are the four great elements – earth, water, fire and air – extinguished without remainder? He then entered a state of concentration and visited the various deities, beginning with the realm of the Four Great Kings, to pose his question. Unable to answer him, the gods suggested he go to progressively higher heaven realms until he arrived at the Brahma world. The Brahmas too could not answer but said that the Great Brahma, the Lord, would surely know. With a splendid radiance the Great Brahma revealed himself to that bhikkhu.

The bhikkhu posed his question to the Great Brahma, who prevaricated: I am Brahma, Great Brahma, the Lord, the Unvanquished, the All Seeing One, the Omnipotent, the Sovereign, the Maker, the Creator, Excellence, Providence, the Master, Father of those born and to be born.

<sup>31</sup> Another translation is 'incomparable'.

<sup>32</sup> Another translation is, 'can be reached from every direction', or 'can be reached by every method', i.e. it can be attained by every method of formal meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

The bhikkhu continued: I did not ask you if you are Brahma, Great Brahma, the Lord.... I asked you where the four great elements are extinguished without remainder.

Brahma replied again, that he is Great Brahma, the Lord, etc.

The bhikkhu asked again, for a third time, at which point Brahma took him by the arm and led him to one side, saying: Monk, these gods, followers of Brahma, recognize me as one for whom there is nothing not known, seen, experienced, or realized. Therefore, I did not answer in front of them. Monk, I also do not know where the four great elements are extinguished without remainder. It is thus your misdeed and mistake that you have abandoned the Blessed One, and come to search for an answer to this problem elsewhere. Go and approach the Blessed One to pose this question and accept whatever answer he gives.

The bhikkhu then went to ask the Buddha, who answered: You should not ask: ‘Where are the four great elements – earth, water, fire and air – extinguished without remainder?’ You should ask: ‘Where can earth, water, fire and air find no footing? Where can long and short, small and large, beautiful and repulsive find no firm ground? Where do mentality and corporeality terminate without remainder?’ He then explained as follows: {341}

The state that can be known (*viññāṇa*), is not seen with the eyes (*anidassana*),<sup>33</sup> is limitless (*ananta*), and can be reached from every direction (*sabbatopabhā*)<sup>34</sup> – here, earth, water, fire and air can find no footing; long and short, fine and coarse, beautiful and repulsive can find no firm ground; mentality and corporeality terminate without remainder. Because sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases, mentality and corporeality terminate here.

*D. I. 215-23.*

These descriptions of *Nibbāna* have resulted in various interpretations and debates. Some scholars interpret the last two passages as a Buddhist

<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, ‘incomparable’.

<sup>34</sup> Another translation is ‘all radiant’.

attempt to combat Brahmanism by assimilation, by incorporating the Brahmanic personification of God. Note that in all these passages the Buddha was either teaching bhikkhus, who had a basic knowledge of Dhamma, or was speaking to Brahma, who is a master theoretician. I will not elaborate upon these details here, but remember that this disparity of interpretation arises because Nibbāna cannot be conceived of; it must be known directly through spiritual practice.

Pali words are sometimes translated differently. The word *āyatana* in the first passage, for example, can be translated as ‘sphere’, and some interpret this to mean a dwelling or place. Others interpret *āyatana* as another dimension. The term *viññāṇa*, in passages five and six, is considered by some to be identical with *viññāṇa* in the expressions eye-*viññāṇa*, ear-*viññāṇa*, etc. They thus interpret Nibbāna as some form of consciousness, defining Nibbāna as a consciousness that is not seen with the eyes, etc.

In the commentaries, however, *viññāṇa* is explained in this passage to be a name for Nibbāna – ‘the state that can be known’ – as used above.<sup>35</sup> We can see that in passage six the word *viññāṇa* occurs twice. The first *viññāṇa* refers to Nibbāna, with its own distinct translation (‘the state that can be known’), while the latter *viññāṇa*, in the phrase ‘*viññāṇa* ceases’, refers to the consciousness that is the condition for the arising of mentality and corporeality, as explained in Dependent Origination.

We should refrain from drawing conclusions about Nibbāna simply because an interpretation accords with our preferences and preconceptions. If we establish firm convictions about something we do not yet clearly know, we may be greatly deceived. Rather, we should emphasize those methods leading to Nibbāna, along with the benefits of gradual liberation. This is more practical. As our spiritual practice develops, we will clearly see the results for ourselves. {342}

The following quote is an affirmation by the Buddha that the realization of Nibbāna, and other sublime states, can truly occur, when the ‘eye’ of wisdom opens. This is the Buddha’s conversation with the brahmin student Subha. The Buddha refutes the brahmin Pokkharasāti’s assertion

<sup>35</sup>DA. II. 393; MA. II. 412.



that it is impossible for humans to experience superlative knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*):

‘Young man, suppose there were a person blind from birth who could not see black forms, white forms, green, yellow, red or pink forms. He could not see even and uneven forms, the stars, the moon or the sun. Were he to say that black and white forms do not exist, and beholders of black and white forms do not exist; that green forms do not exist, and beholders of green forms do not exist ... that the moon and sun do not exist, and beholders of the moon and sun do not exist; were he to say ‘I do not know or see those things, therefore they do not exist’; would he be speaking correctly?’

‘Incorrectly,’ the young man replied.

The Buddha then continued: ‘Just so, the brahmin Pokkharasāti of the Opamañña clan, lord of the Subhaga Grove, is blind and visionless. That he could know, see or realize outstanding knowledge and vision, which is competent, excellent and superhuman, is impossible.’<sup>36</sup>

*M. II. 201-202.*

Although we may have considered these explanations of *Nibbāna*, if we have not practised and arrived at this state, we should remember that all ideas of *Nibbāna* are comparable to the images the blind men formed after touching the elephant. The story from the Pali, in brief, is as follows:

At one time in the city of *Sāvattthī*, a large number of religious ascetics, wanderers, and brahmins, of various creeds, adhered to their own beliefs and doctrines as the only truth, while repudiating those of others. This gave rise to quarrelling: ‘The truth is this way, not that way; the truth is not that way, it is this way.’ In response the Buddha told the following story:

In former times a king of *Sāvattthī* ordered his advisors to gather all those men in the city who were blind from birth and present them with an elephant. The advisors showed one group of blind men the elephant’s

<sup>36</sup>Trans.: note that Bhikkhu Bodhi uses the spelling ‘Upamañña clan’.

head; to another they showed the elephant's ear. They showed the tusks to another group, the trunk, the abdomen, the legs, the back, the tail, the tip of the tail, to each respective group, saying each time that this is an elephant. They then informed the king that the blind men had become familiar with the elephant. {343} The king went to the gathering of the blind and asked them, 'Have you seen the elephant?' They replied, 'We have, Your Majesty.' The king inquired further: 'As you say you have seen an elephant, describe it to me.'

Those blind men who had touched the head said that an elephant is like a waterpot. Those who had felt the ears said an elephant is like a winnowing basket. Those who had touched the tusks – a ploughshare. Those who had touched the trunk – a plough shaft. Those who had touched the abdomen said an elephant is like a granary. Those who had touched the legs, claimed it is like a pillar. Those who touched the back – a mortar. Those who touched the tail – a pestle. Those who touched the tip of the tail said an elephant is like a broom. When this was finished, the blind men began to argue: 'An elephant is this way, not that way; an elephant is not that way, it is this way', to the point of brawling.

At the end the Buddha uttered this verse:

*Indeed, some ascetics and brahmins  
cling to such views and doctrines;  
people who see only one part,  
being contentious, argue and quarrel.*

Ud. 67-8.

## 6.4 ELEMENTS OF NIBBĀNA

The discussion so far has focused on Nibbāna as an absolute and transcendent quality. It is possible, however, to distinguish different kinds of Nibbāna.

Essentially, only one Nibbāna exists; it is divided into categories in order to describe the characteristics of persons in contact with Nibbāna, or to describe various properties of Nibbāna itself.<sup>37</sup> A widely known division of Nibbāna from the Itivuttaka is into the two ‘elements of Nibbāna’ (*nibbāna-dhātu*):<sup>38</sup> {386}

1. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna with remaining *upādi* (‘fuel’).
2. *Anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna with no remaining ‘fuel’.

The commentaries define the distinguishing factor here – *upādi* – as the five aggregates (*pañca-khandha*), in the sense that they are governed by impure actions or are subject to grasping.<sup>39</sup> The definitions of these terms based on this interpretation are:

1. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna linked with the five aggregates, or Nibbāna with the five aggregates still remaining.
2. *Anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna free from the five aggregates.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup>ItA. I. 164 states that ultimately Nibbāna is indivisible; the division is merely figurative.

<sup>38</sup>It. 38; the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha claims this division is a causal representation (*kāraṇa-pariyāya*), and presents another division, which is a qualitative representation: *suññata-nibbāna*, *animitta-nibbāna*, and *appaṇihita-nibbāna* (Comp.: Rūpaparicchedo, Nibbānabhedo).

<sup>39</sup>E.g.: ItA. I. 164; SnA. II. 410; NdA. 6; PsA. I. 323; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Dutiyo Bhāgo, Dukkhaniddesakathāvaṇṇanā, Ekavidhādivinicchayakathāvaṇṇanā; CompT.: Rūpaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Nibbānabhedavaṇṇanā.

<sup>40</sup>See Appendix 1.

Here is the passage where these two terms appear in the Itivuttaka:

This was said by the Blessed and Fully Enlightened One, so I have heard: ‘Bhikkhus, there are these two elements of Nibbāna, namely, Nibbāna with fuel remaining and Nibbāna with no fuel remaining.

And what is the Nibbāna with fuel remaining? Bhikkhus, there is the case of a monk who is an arahant with taints destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge. His five sense faculties still remain, and owing to their being intact, he experiences the agreeable and the disagreeable, he feels both pleasure and pain. His ending of lust, hatred and delusion is termed the Nibbāna with fuel remaining.

And what is the Nibbāna with no fuel remaining? There is the case of an arahant with taints destroyed ... who is completely liberated through final knowledge. For him, all that is felt (vedayita), not being delighted in (anabhinandita; ‘not being infatuated with’), will become cool right here. This is termed Nibbāna with no fuel remaining. {387}

*The One with Vision, secure and free,  
Has proclaimed the dual elements of Nibbāna.  
One element, present and visible (diṭṭhadhammika),  
Is called Nibbāna with fuel remaining;  
Exhausted are the taints,  
Conduits to renewed existence.  
The other, the supreme state,  
Is Nibbāna with no remaining fuel;  
In which all becoming totally ceases.*

*It. 38-9.*

This passage introducing the two elements describes the quality of association with Nibbāna, that is, it describes Nibbāna in connection to enlightened beings. It uses enlightened beings as a means to understand Nibbāna; it does not attempt to explain Nibbāna in an absolute sense. This

is because *Nibbāna* is *sandiṭṭhika*, ‘to be seen for oneself’, and is *paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ viññūhi*, ‘to be experienced individually by the wise’, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, this division of *Nibbāna* does not introduce anything different or mysterious into the earlier examination of the nature of *Nibbāna*. As the commentators say, *Nibbāna* is essentially indivisible; the division is a didactic tool.<sup>41</sup> Before looking more closely at the two kinds of *Nibbāna*, let us familiarize ourselves with three important terms:

1. *Vedayita*: this term stems from the same root as *vedanā*, and in some cases it is used as a substitute for *vedanā*. It refers to ‘sense experience’ or to ‘sense impressions’. Here, the plural is *vedayitāni*, which refers to all objects that have been sensed or cognized. It is equivalent to what people nowadays refer to as their whole range of ‘experience’.
2. *Anabhinandita*: this term, used above as a qualifying adjective for *vedayita*, is derived from *abhinandita*, which means ‘pleasing’ or ‘delightful’. In this context *abhinandita* implies infatuation and a heart adulterated by craving, and it applies to both positive and negative experiences, to delight and aversion. Adding the negating prefix *an-*, the meaning becomes ‘not infatuated’; in this case, craving does not accompany sense impressions. Sense experience occurs in a pure, spacious, and unobstructed way, free from fretting and brooding. One does not distort or deviate from direct sense experience, because the mind is not controlled or overwhelmed by greed, hatred and delusion.
3. *Diṭṭhadhammika*: literally, this word means ‘visible’ or ‘visible object’. In reference to time, it means ‘in the present’ or ‘in this life’. In reference to objects or mental states, it means ‘common’, ‘mundane’, ‘basic’, ‘material’, or ‘exterior’. It is generally paired with *samparāyika*, which literally means ‘further’ or ‘beyond’. In relation to time it means ‘future’, ‘later’, ‘beyond this life’, or ‘in the next world’. In other contexts, it means ‘transcendent’, ‘supreme’, ‘sacred’, ‘spiritual’, or ‘internal’.<sup>42</sup> {388}

<sup>41</sup>ItA. I. 164.

<sup>42</sup>For more on *diṭṭhadhammika* see Appendix 2.

At this point, let us look more closely at the two kinds of Nibbāna:

*Sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu* refers to Nibbāna connected to the five aggregates. It is the Nibbāna of arahants as they cognize sense objects, pleasurable and painful, through the senses. Cognition is inextricably linked with the five aggregates; the five aggregates are directly involved in sense experience and the aggregates themselves become further objects of cognition.<sup>43</sup> This aspect of Nibbāna highlights arahants' contact with the world. It focuses on the end of greed, hatred and delusion,<sup>44</sup> which leads to an unobstructed experience of life. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is the arahant's liberated state of mind, free from defilements. Arahants are not influenced by defilements and therefore sense contact does not give rise to craving, either as coveting or aversion. Additionally, no craving exists that leads to renewed existence (*bhava-netti*). An arahant with unimpaired sense faculties is thus able to receive sense impressions freely and with wisdom.

This free state of mind has two facets. The first is the ability to receive sense impressions as pure 'feeling' (*vedanā*), since there are no residual attachments or obsessions to interfere. The second is not being overwhelmed by experience, and thus one does not form future habits of attachment or infatuation. For arahants this is the ordinary, usual state of mind. It is immediate and accessible in every moment of sense contact. Therefore, it is called *diṭṭha-dhamma*: visible or immediate. This type of Nibbāna is the state of arahants while they are still alive and in contact with the external world.

*Anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is the Nibbāna independent of the five aggregates. It is the Nibbāna beyond the process of experiencing phenomena through the five senses, or over and above the five aggregates engaged in cognition. It is the Nibbāna transcending mundane reality, transcending sense contact and experience.

In other words, *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is the essential nature of Nibbāna which is revealed to arahants when experience by way of the five

<sup>43</sup>For the five aggregates as objects of cognition, see chapter 2 on the sense faculties.

<sup>44</sup>The end of greed, hatred and delusion is called Nibbāna (S. IV. 251, 261); the removal of greed, hatred and delusion is an epithet for *nibbāna-dhātu* (S. V. 8).

senses ceases, when cognition ceases, or when there is no involvement with sense contact (including input from the five senses still remaining in the mind).

An arahant receives sense impressions without craving-induced delight (*abhinandita*), without the inflaming influence of greed, hatred and delusion. {389} Sense impressions do not linger and smoulder; they ‘become cool’ (*sīti-bhavissanti*); they become completely peaceful and ‘detoxified’. And they are unable to lead to further birth or becoming. Arahants are capable of neutralizing any obstructive potential of sense experience, ‘cooling’ and mastering it. They therefore acquire the epithet *sīti-bhūta* or *sīta*, meaning ‘one who is cooled’.<sup>45</sup>

This state of clarity, absent of residual sense experience, is internal and personal. It is the state of ‘non-becoming’ or of no renewed existence. In this state where the five aggregates are no longer objects of awareness, arahants thus have Nibbāna as their object; they realize Nibbāna as a *dhammāyatana*.<sup>46</sup> This quality can only be discussed in its relational context, by saying that ordinary mundane experience ceases. The essential absolute nature of Nibbāna can only be seen and realized for oneself.

An analogy for this division of Nibbāna is to being shipwrecked in the ocean. An unenlightened person is swimming, struggling against the waves and currents. A person who has realized Nibbāna has reached dry land. The arrival at land, where one is perfectly satisfied and at ease, is like *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*. The absence of oppression and danger, not

<sup>45</sup>For example in the passages: ‘The Tathāgata, perfectly quenched, is cool like a deep lake’ (Sn. 83); and ‘(One whose heart is liberated) is here and now hungerless, extinguished, and cooled, and abides experiencing bliss, having become holy’ (M. I. 349, 412; M. II. 162). See also: Vin. I. 8; Vin. II. 156; D. III. 232-3; M. I. 171; S. I. 141, 178; A. I. 138, 197; A. II. 212; A. V. 65; Sn. 101, 122.

<sup>46</sup>*Dhammāyatana* (= *dhammarammaṇa*) are the sixth of the six external sense objects, the objects that the mind is conscious of, which includes the five aggregates and Nibbāna. Nibbāna is a *dhamma* beyond the five aggregates, as confirmed by the commentarial expression for Nibbāna *khandha-vimutti*, meaning ‘free of the five aggregates’, i.e. unable to be classified within the five aggregates (PañcA. 61; see also: Comp.: Samuccayaparicchedo, Sabbasaṅgaho; CompT.: Samuccayaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Sabbasaṅgahavaṇṇanā). Nonetheless, Nibbāna is included within the *dhammāyatana*; see VbhA. 51 and chapter 2 of *Buddhadhamma* on the sense faculties.

being battered by the waves, being able to engage with things freely, and being able to move about as one wishes, is like *sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*.

One can also compare an unenlightened person to someone suffering a fever. An enlightened person is someone who has recovered from fever or is in perfect health. {390} Good health is inherently complete; when one is healthy one knows this state for oneself. The contentment, joy, ease and relief is purely subjective. Others observing from outside may conjecture on that state, but they are unable to experience it directly. This state of wellbeing is like *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*. The related condition, which affects behaviour and influences a person's surroundings, that is, of not being oppressed or impeded by illness, and being able to act as one wishes, is like *sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*.

To summarize, there is only one Nibbāna, but with two aspects. One aspect (*sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*) focuses on the end of defilements, which has a bearing on the relationship to the outside world or on everyday life. The second (*anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*) is limited to Nibbāna's essential nature, which is realized solely by enlightened beings. It cannot be fathomed by way of the five senses, and is beyond experience confined to the five aggregates. In other words, in *sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu* arahants have the five aggregates as the object of attention; in *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* arahants have Nibbāna as the object of attention.

To say *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is Nibbāna's essential nature is compatible with the commentarial opinion found in the Paramatthadīpanī, which describes *amatamahānibbāna-dhātu* ('deathless Nibbāna element') as *anupādisesā* ('with no remaining fuel'). It is also consistent with the Buddha's words: 'Monks, there exists that sphere (*āyatana*), where there is neither the earth, water, fire, or air elements; nor the realm of infinite space....'<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere, the commentaries and sub-commentaries point out that *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is identical to *anupādā-parinibbāna* ('final, absolute Nibbāna'),<sup>48</sup> which is the goal of Dhamma practice and comprises the highest realization in Buddhism. {391}

<sup>47</sup>Ud. 80. (See the earlier discussion on Nibbāna); also referred to at UdA. 151; ItA. I. 135.

<sup>48</sup>For more on *anupādā-parinibbāna* see Appendix 5.



In most cases, cognition by way of the five senses and contact with the external world clearly and decisively ends at death.<sup>49</sup> With the utter end of sense contact at death, arahants realize the indivisible aspect of *Nibbāna*, i.e. *anupādisesa-nibbāna*. Colloquially, the term *anupādisesa-nibbāna* is used as an expression for the death of an arahant. From a word denoting quality, *anupādisesa-nibbāna* came to refer to an action or event. Where this word is found elsewhere in the scriptures, it refers to the death of the Buddha or of the arahants.

As for the term *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna*, in the *Tipiṭaka* it is not used to describe an event and is found only in this one passage of the *Itivuttaka*. There are synonyms of *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* that are used frequently.<sup>50</sup>

There are many passages in the *Tipiṭaka* where the term *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu* is used alone. For example, in the Buddha's comparison of the *Dhammavinaya* to the marvels of the ocean:

Just as in the great ocean neither a decrease nor an increase will appear though rain falls into it from the sky; even so, even if many monks attain final *Nibbāna* in the *Nibbāna* element that is without remainder, there is no decrease or increase in the *Nibbāna* element that is without remainder.

*Vin. II. 239-40; A. IV. 202-203; Ud. 55.*

The *Mahāniddesa* refers to *anupādisesa-nibbāna* as *anabhinibbattisāmaggī*, meaning 'fully prepared to not be reborn'.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup>The *Paramatthamañjūsā* (*VismṬ.*: *Dutiyo Bhāgo*, *Paññābhāvanānisaṃsanid-desavaṇṇanā*, *Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā*) states that arahants realize a virtual *anupādisesa-nibbāna* during their lives when they enter *saññāvedayitanirodha*, called in short *nirodha-samāpatti* (someone in *nirodha-samāpatti* outwardly resembles someone who has died). See: *M. I. 296, 302, 333.*

<sup>50</sup>The use of *anupādisesa-nibbāna* and *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* to show the dual nature of *Nibbāna* is found only once in the *Tipiṭaka*, as quoted above. Otherwise, one finds *anupādisesa-puggala* and *sa-upādisesa-puggala*, or *anupādisesa-nibbāna* on its own to depict the death of an arahant (see below). Note also that the recently devised division of the term *nibbāna* for the Buddha and the arahants while they are still alive, and the word *parinibbāna* for the death of the Buddha and the arahants, is technically incorrect as it conflicts with scriptural terminology.

<sup>51</sup>*Nd1. 132.*

The accounts in the Pali Canon of the Buddha's life frequently use the term *anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*, each time in reference to the Buddha's final Nibbāna at death. For example, the Buddha claimed that his complexion is particularly resplendent on two occasions, on the night of his enlightenment and on the day of his final Nibbāna in the Nibbāna element without remainder.<sup>52</sup> Almsfood offered to the Buddha is exceptionally meritorious on two occasions: the meal offered before his enlightenment and the meal before his final Nibbāna in the Nibbāna element without remainder.<sup>53</sup> {392}

There are further examples: the location of the Buddha's final Nibbāna in the Nibbāna element without remainder is one of the four Buddhist holy places.<sup>54</sup> The Buddha's final Nibbāna in the Nibbāna element without remainder is one cause for the earth to quake.<sup>55</sup> Another passage explains that the Buddha is called the 'Tathāgata' because:

Between the night in which the Buddha gains supreme enlightenment and the night in which he attains the Nibbāna element without remainder, whatever he proclaims, says, or explains is so and not otherwise.

*D. III. 135; It. 121-2; Nd2. 41.*

There are many other scriptural passages with a similar theme and an identical sequence to the teaching on the two kinds of Nibbāna above. The only difference is that they do not distinguish these kinds of Nibbāna. For the sake of comparison, here are some examples:

A. When a bhikkhu has abandoned ignorance and aroused true knowledge, then, with the discarding of ignorance and the arising of true knowledge, he does not generate a meritorious volitional

<sup>52</sup>D. II. 134.

<sup>53</sup>D. II. 135-6; Ud. 85.

<sup>54</sup>D. II. 140; A. II. 120-21.

<sup>55</sup>D. II. 108-109; A. IV. 313.

formation, or a demeritorious volitional formation, or an imper-turbable volitional formation. Since he does not generate or fashion volitional formations he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated.<sup>56</sup> Not being agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna. He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.’

B. If he feels a pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘It is impermanent’; he understands: ‘It is not indulged in’; he understands: ‘It is not delighted in’ (anabhinandita). If he feels a painful feeling, he understands: ‘it is impermanent’; he understands: ‘it is not indulged in’; he understands: ‘it is not delighted in.’ If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands: ‘it is impermanent’; he understands: ‘It is not indulged in’; he understands: ‘It is not delighted in.’ If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it detached; if he feels a painful feeling, he feels it detached; if he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. If he feels a feeling limited by the body (by way of the five physical sense doors), he understands: ‘I feel a feeling limited by the body.’ When he feels a feeling limited by life (by way of the mind door), he understands: ‘I feel a feeling limited by life.’ He understands: ‘With the breakup of the body, following the exhaustion of life, all that is felt (vedayitāni), not being delighted in (anabhinandita), will become cool right here (at the twelve sense spheres); mere bodily remains will be left.’

C. Suppose, bhikkhus, a person would remove a hot clay pot from a potter’s kiln and set it on smooth ground: its heat would be dissipated right there and the fired pot would be left. So too, when he feels a feeling limited to the body ... limited to life ... he understands: ‘With the breakup of the body, following the exhaustion of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here; mere bodily remains will be left.’ {393}

*Paragraphs A., B. and C.: S. II. 82-3.*

<sup>56</sup>*Paritassati* (noun: *paritassanā*) has a range of meaning, including: ‘to fear’, ‘to tremble’, ‘to be agitated’, ‘to be anxious’, ‘to be disturbed’.

D. Bhikkhus, just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on the oil and the wick, and with the exhaustion of the oil and the wick it is extinguished through lack of fuel, so too, when a bhikkhu feels a feeling limited to the body ... limited to life ... he understands: 'With the breakup of the body, following the exhaustion of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here.'<sup>57</sup>

M. III. 244-5; S. III. 126; S. IV. 213; S. V. 319-20.

There is, however, one passage with a varying description and analogy:

The monk whose heart is perfectly released attains six constant abiding states. Seeing a form with the eye, he is neither elated nor depressed, but rests equanimous, mindful, and clearly comprehending. Hearing a sound with the ear ... smelling a scent with the nose ... tasting a savour with the tongue ... contacting a tangible object with the body ... cognizing mental states with the mind, he is neither elated nor depressed, but rests equanimous, mindful, and clearly comprehending.<sup>58</sup> When he feels a feeling limited by the body, he understands: 'I feel a feeling limited by the body.' When he feels a feeling limited by life, he understands: 'I feel a feeling limited by life.' He understands: 'With the breakup of the body, following the exhaustion of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here.'

Suppose that a shadow is cast by a tree. Along comes a man with an axe and basket, and cuts the tree at the trunk. He then digs and pulls out the roots, even the rootlets and root fibres. He chops that tree into logs, and having done so chops the logs into chips. The chips he dries in wind and sun, then burns them with fire and makes an ash-heap. The ashes he winnows in a strong wind or lets them be

<sup>57</sup> Paragraphs B. and D. occur at M. III. 244-5; S. III. 126; S. IV. 213; S. V. 319-20, although paragraph B. does not contain the phrase: *mere bodily remains will be left*. The initial paragraph (A.) differs in each passage, because different ways of practice are being described. Following the explanation at MA. V. 57, the phrase, *will become cool right here* means an end of 'poisonous influence', specifically at the twelve sense spheres. ItA. I. 166, SA. II. 80, and AA. III. 178, however, interpret it as: *will become cool here in this very self*, meaning one does not take renewed birth.

carried away by a swiftly flowing river. That shadow cast by the tree is cut off by the root, made like a palm tree stump, made not to become again, of a nature not to arise again. In the same way, a monk whose heart is perfectly released attains six constant abiding states ... all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here.<sup>59</sup>

A. II. 198-9.

For a thorough understanding of the two kinds of *Nibbāna*, let us go back and examine the commentarial explanations. {394} As mentioned earlier, the term *anupādisesa-nibbāna* is used in the Pali Canon to describe an event – the death of an arahant – in particular of the Buddha. However, the commentaries began to use the term *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* to describe an event as well, as can be seen by comparing two passages describing the same event:

*Pali Canon:*

These two alms-givings are of very great fruit, of very great result, more fruitful and advantageous than any other. Which two? The one is the alms-giving after eating which the Tathāgata attains supreme enlightenment, the other that after which he attains the *Nibbāna* element without remainder at his final passing.

D. II. 135-6; Ud. 85.

*Commentary:*

The Buddha, having eaten the almsfood offered by Sujātā, attained the supreme enlightenment of the *Nibbāna* element with remainder. Having eaten the almsfood offered by Cunda, he attained the *Nibbāna* element without remainder at his final passing.<sup>60</sup>

DA. II. 571; UdA. 405.

<sup>58</sup>Note that equanimity is accompanied by mindfulness and clear comprehension; it is not a state of foolish or absent-minded indifference.

<sup>59</sup>The preceding paragraph of this passage (not included above) reveals the practice of eradicating the defilements; the definitive results of this practice are seen in this lifetime. This teaching refutes that of the Jains, who claim that previous evil deeds which have not yet borne fruit will ripen in the next life.

## NOTE 6.4: CONSTANT NIBBĀNA

In a manner of speaking one can say that *anupādisesa-nibbāna* is the state of Nibbāna that is constant, both throughout an arahant's life and after death. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* is the 'superficial' state of Nibbāna (as if overlapping), existing between the time of full enlightenment and death. When an arahant dies only *anupādisesa-nibbāna* remains. This explanation, however, may be deviating from the practical emphasis of Buddha-Dhamma, veering in the direction of philosophical reasoning.

With the development of meaning of these two terms, they were applied in many commentarial passages to indicate events in the life of the Buddha or the arahants. They are used to emphasize the realization of certain states, rather than the nature of the states themselves.<sup>61</sup> From the commentarial perspective, the meaning of these two kinds of Nibbāna is restricted. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* here refers to the extinguishing of defilements with the five aggregates remaining, to the Nibbāna of an arahant while still alive, that is, to the attainment of arahantship. *Anupādisesa-nibbāna* refers to the ending of defilements with no aggregates remaining, that is, to the death of an arahant. The commentators define *anupādisesa-nibbāna*, in particular, by applying the principle of 'final mind' or 'final consciousness',<sup>62</sup> limiting the meaning to refer to an arahant's death.<sup>63</sup>

The commentaries interpret canonical passages relating to arahants by distinguishing between *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* and *anupādisesa-nibbāna*. For example, from the Canon: {395}

Because of the utter end of craving, its remainderless fading away and cessation, [this is] Nibbāna. For a monk who has thus been quenched, free from grasping, there is no renewed birth.

Ud. 33.

<sup>60</sup>See related material at: AA. III. 2, 373; SnA. I. 129; NdA. 150 (expanding on: Sn. 12).

<sup>61</sup>See related material at: ItA. II. 190; SnA. I. 41, 257. For more on the meanings of these two terms see Appendix 1.

<sup>62</sup>For more on the 'final mind' see Appendix 3.

<sup>63</sup>See Appendix 1.

The commentaries assert that the first sentence of this passage refers to the *Nibbāna* element with remainder, and the second sentence refers to the *Nibbāna* element without remainder.<sup>64</sup> This interpretation accords with the canonical passages presented earlier.

Combining these commentarial explanations, we can summarize the meaning of these two kinds of *Nibbāna* as follows:

The *Nibbāna* element with remainder is the end of defilement and craving, leading to harmless, peaceful and beneficial interaction with the world, and relates to awakening or arahantship. The *Nibbāna* element without remainder is the end of being bound to the five aggregates, of mental proliferation, of birth and continued existence, and it relates to the end of life in the world. The *Nibbāna* relating to the activity of the five sense faculties is *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna*; the *Nibbāna* free from the five sense faculties is *anupādisesa-nibbāna*. In short, the end of defilement is *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna*, the end of birth is *anupādisesa-nibbāna* (see Note 6.4).

The first term refers to the *Nibbāna* of an arahant who is still alive; all mental impurities have been removed, but the five aggregates still exist. This corresponds with the term coined by the commentators: *kilesa-parinibbāna* (eradication of defilements). The second term refers to the *Nibbāna* of an arahant after death, corresponding with the commentarial term *khandha-parinibbāna* (release from the aggregates).<sup>65</sup>

In fact, the evidence in the Pali Canon shows that not much significance was given to these two kinds of *Nibbāna*. What are highlighted are the things that can be applied to realize *Nibbāna* clearly for oneself. Lengthy

<sup>64</sup>UdA. 216; some supporting passages: SnA. I. 215 states that the end of *nandi* (= *tanhā*) equals *sa-upādisesa*, and the end of *bhava* equals *anupādisesa*; SA. I. 21 equates *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* with the end of the four *anupādinna-khandha*, and *anupādisesa-nibbāna* with the end of the five *upādinna-khandha*; VismṬ. (Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Cha-anussatiniddesaṇṇanā, Dhammānussatikathāvaṇṇanā) equates *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* with *arahatta-phala*, and *anupādisesa-nibbāna* with *Nibbāna*.

<sup>65</sup>*Kilesa-parinibbāna*: e.g. DA. II. 565; DA. III. 842, 872, 1046; MA. II. 282; SA. I. 20, 315; SA. II. 391; AA. II. 128, 174; AA. III. 4, 373; AA. IV. 52, 116, 159, 207; SnA. I. 365; SnA. II. 506; *khandha-parinibbāna*: e.g. SA. I. 224; SnA. I. 364; the two terms appearing together: e.g. UdA. 407; DA. III. 899; MA. IV. 116; VibA. 433; VinṬ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Acariyaparamparakathāvaṇṇanā.

theorizing on these two kinds of Nibbāna is likely to complicate a matter that is actually straightforward, and may lead to students of Buddhism overemphasizing their importance.

If the examination of the nature of Nibbāna becomes too technical, there is the risk that people will form misleading conceptions. This is because the person presenting the explanation may not translate important words accurately and clearly, and the person receiving the teaching may have limited understanding about terms or points of Dhamma. The misunderstanding may be reinforced by people's emotions; for example, one may read the technical terms above and form an impression of an arahant as someone heartless and indifferent. {396}

Therefore, to prevent such misunderstandings, it is important to accompany the study of theoretical teachings with practical application, to see how theory and practice complement one another. An examination into the essential meaning of the theoretical teachings and their expression as real human attributes reveals how these teachings, which may at first seem contradictory, are compatible and mutually supportive.

## 6.5 JHĀNA, NIRODHA AND NIBBĀNA

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At this point, let us examine another way of distinguishing kinds of Nibbāna.

Besides stating that the attainment of jhāna<sup>66</sup> is a good basis for realizing Nibbāna, the Buddha sometimes used the term jhāna to imply Nibbāna or to show related features. For example, the Buddha referred to the four fine-material jhānas, the four immaterial jhānas, and the 'cessation of perception and feeling' (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*)<sup>67</sup> as 'temporary Nibbāna' (*tadaṅga-nibbāna*; alternatively, 'Nibbāna by substitution of opposites'),

<sup>66</sup> A state of deep, refined concentration; 'concentrative absorption'.

<sup>67</sup> These nine states as a group are called the nine *anupubba-vihāra* ('successive refined abidings') or the nine *anupubbavihāra-samāpatti* ('abidings to be gradually attained').



‘visible Nibbāna’ (*diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*), and ‘Nibbāna to be seen by one-self’ (*sandiṭṭhika-nibbāna*), respectively.<sup>68</sup> Further examples of Nibbāna being used in connection with spiritual attainments include:

A bhikkhu, secluded from sensual pleasure, secluded from unwholesome states, attains the first jhāna. Even this much the Blessed One calls direct Nibbāna by representation....<sup>69</sup> {401} Going beyond the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, by seeing with wisdom, all cankers are destroyed. Even this much the Blessed One calls direct, immediate Nibbāna.<sup>70</sup>

[A practitioner of insight meditation] understands form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness as impermanent, subject to stress, and subject to change. He abandons sorrow, lamentation, (etc.), is free from agitation and worry, and dwells happily. He is said to be quenched in that respect (*tadaṅga-nibbāna*).<sup>71</sup>

*S. III. 43.*

When a person is overwhelmed by lust ... hatred ... and delusion, then he plans for his own harm, for the harm of others, for the harm of both; and he experiences in his mind suffering and grief. But when lust, hatred and delusion have been abandoned, he neither plans for this own harm, nor for the harm of others, not for the harm of both; and he does not experience in his mind suffering and grief. In this way, Nibbāna is directly visible, timeless, inviting one to come and see, to be brought within and realized, to be personally experienced by the wise.

*A. I. 158-9.*

<sup>68</sup>However, believing that the attainment of jhāna is equivalent to Nibbāna is wrong view (M. II. 228, 237); and see: D. I. 36-7; Vbh. 379-80.

<sup>69</sup>Or: ‘direct Nibbāna in one respect’.

<sup>70</sup>See A. IV. 410-14, 453-5.

<sup>71</sup>This passage does not mention the quality of ‘not-self’ (*anattā*). The commentators state that it refers to insight meditation (*vipassanā*), and that the mental defilements cease due to the opposing spiritual factor of insight meditation.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga divides *nirodha*, which is an important synonym for Nibbāna, into five categories:<sup>72</sup>

1. *Vikkhambhana-nirodha*: the suppression of the five hindrances in the first jhāna. (In fact, all eight concentrative attainments – *samāpatti* – i.e. the four fine-material and the four immaterial jhānas count as *vikkhambhana-nirodha*, because, while abiding in all of these states, unwholesome qualities, e.g. the hindrances, are temporarily stilled.)
2. *Tadaṅga-nirodha*: the stage at which concentration (*samādhi*) begins to dispel the defilements;<sup>73</sup> wrong views are vanquished by the substitution of opposite qualities. This stage implies the dispelling of defilements through insight and the use of wisdom to examine the true nature of things, for example the nature of impermanence. Whatever truth is focused on, knowledge arises to eliminate antagonistic views and attachments. For example, seeing oneself or others as merely mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) dispels the view of fixed identity (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), observing impermanence dispels the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), acknowledging *dukkha* dispels the perception of unchanging happiness (*sukha-saññā*), and reflecting on selflessness dispels the perception of a fixed self (*atta-saññā*). This cessation is similar to turning on a light and dispelling darkness, but it is still a temporary cessation – as soon as the light is extinguished darkness returns.
3. *Samuccheda-nirodha*: the cutting off of defilements by one who develops the supermundane paths (*lokuttara-magga*), i.e. the paths

<sup>72</sup>Ps. II. 221; at PsA. I. 323 these items are called *vikkhambhana-parinibbāna*, *tadaṅga-parinibbāna*, and *samuccheda-parinibbāna*, respectively.

<sup>73</sup>*Nibbedhabhāgiya-samādhi* = *vipassanā-samādhi*. *Nibbedhabhāgiya-samādhi* is customarily translated as ‘truth-penetrating concentration’; *vipassanā-samādhi* means ‘insight-accompanying concentration’ or ‘concentration applied to insight’; see: Vism. 88-9; VismT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddesaṇṇanā, Samādhicatukkavaṇṇanā; Dutiyo Bhāgo, Nāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā, Pariññādiṭṭhapaṭṭhapanā.

of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*), once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-magga*), non-returning (*anāgāmi-magga*), and arahantship (*arahatta-magga*). The defilements, e.g. the ten fetters, cease irrevocably, never to return, like a tree that has been uprooted or shattered by lightening. {402}

4. *Paṭipassaddhi-nirodha*: the utter stilling of defilements at the moment of supermundane fruition (*lokuttara-phala*): the noble fruition of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning and arahantship. This is a state of profound tranquillity, due to the complete removal of mental impurity.
5. *Nissaraṇa-nirodha*: the release from defilements; an abiding untouched by defilement. This cessation is equivalent to Nibbāna, also called *amata-dhātu* ('deathless element'), the state of deliverance.

The first two qualities, *vikkhambhana*- and *tadaṅga-nirodha*, are mundane; the remaining three are supermundane. The first four qualities are called Nibbāna 'indirectly' or 'in some respects' (*pariyāya*). The fifth quality refers to Nibbāna directly (*nippariyāya*), in its full and true meaning.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga divides *pahāna* (abandoning), *viveka* (seclusion), *virāga* (dispassion), and *vossagga* (release) each into the five identical qualities as with *nirodha* above, with identical definitions and meanings.<sup>74</sup> The commentaries divide *vimutti* (liberation) in the same way.<sup>75</sup>

A well-known division into realizations of Nibbāna is the division into path (*magga*) and fruit (*phala*), or into the four paths and four fruits, i.e. *sotāpatti-magga*, *sotāpatti-phala*, *sakadāgāmi-magga*, *sakadāgāmi-phala*, *anāgāmi-magga*, *anāgāmi-phala*, *arahatta-magga*, and *arahatta-phala*. This division, however, is made in connection with enlightened beings, who will be discussed in the next chapter. At this point, let me simply remind

<sup>74</sup>Ps. I. 26-7; Ps. II. 220-22.

<sup>75</sup>E.g.: Vism. 410; DA. II. 427; SA. III. 209; MA. IV. 168; DhA. I. 158, 433; UdA. 32; see also the explanations at Vism. 693-4 and VismT: Duttiyo Bhāgo, Nāṇadassanav-isuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Pariññāḍipphabhedakathāvaṇṇanā.

the reader that *magga* and *phala* are not Nibbāna, but rather stages or levels of realization.

## 6.6 ANATTĀ AND NIBBĀNA

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{440} Several misunderstandings exist about Nibbāna and its relationship to the principle of nonself (*anattā*). The word *anattā* often becomes linked with beliefs from other religious traditions. There are two such beliefs in particular: first, the theory of union with a supreme reality or being, for example with Brahma, God, or a higher consciousness. This theory propounds the inseparable dissolving into or joining of the self with a supreme reality. This state of union is then called nonself.

The second belief is the resolute dedication of service to a divinity with no concern for oneself, with no selfish desire. A person practising this way is said to be ‘selfless’, and such practice is seen as identical to the *anattā* of Buddhism.

In truth, these two beliefs are alien to the Buddhist teaching of non-self. As there are almost no common features, comparing them with the Buddhist understanding of nonself is flawed.

*Anattā* in Buddhism is a characteristic of all things, a truth pertaining to all existence. This principle is to be investigated with wisdom and understood, that essentially all things are insubstantial. Things exist and proceed according to their own nature; they possess no core, hidden essence, overlapping reality, or controlling agent, which can validly be clung to as a self. A lucid understanding (*ñāṇa* or *vijjā*) of this leads to a liberated heart, which is not encumbered or enslaved by anything. This is liberation by way of wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*).

In this sense, *anattā* is not a matter of an existent self dissolving into or unifying with anything.

Some people equate a union with a Supreme Being or higher consciousness with Nibbāna. Putting these claims aside, even some idiomatic

phrases in Buddhist circles can cause confusion and lead to misunderstanding, for example: ‘attaining final Nibbāna’<sup>76</sup> and ‘reaching the great deathless citadel of Nibbāna’. Why introduce abstruse and ambiguous theories from other sources to make one’s understanding even more muddled?

Normally, the Buddhist teachings use simple, easy to understand expressions when explaining Nibbāna, for example: ‘the end of impurity’, ‘the end of agitation’, and ‘a heart that is free, unrestricted, griefless, bright, and joyous’. These descriptions are sufficient – one need not merge or unify with anything.

An arahant’s heart is spacious, limitless, and perfectly free; no thought arises about becoming one with anything. On the contrary, it is unenlightened people who conjecture on an arahant’s state of mind, which more likely reveals their longing for certainty, fear of extinction, and lingering doubt.

The equation of Nibbāna with losing oneself into a supreme entity that involves the mind ceasing to consciously engage and entering a trance-like state is also false. For even in the correct practice of *jhāna*, in which the mind is deeply concentrated and one-pointed, mindfulness is still clearly established and mental agility is enhanced; it is not a trance. The fourth *jhāna*, in particular, is endowed with the attribute: ‘equanimity that purifies mindfulness’ (*upekkhā-satipārisuddhiṃ*). And in relation to penetrative knowledge, descriptions of the fourth *jhāna* end with this passage:

With mind concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, malleable, workable, established, and having gained imperturbability one directs and inclines one’s mind towards knowing and seeing.<sup>77</sup>

*D. I. 76.*

<sup>76</sup>See Appendix 4.

<sup>77</sup>This passage occurs frequently in almost every volume of the Tipiṭaka; for an explanation see: Vbh. 261, Vism. 167-8.

There is a general criterion one can use in light of this discussion. Regardless of how deeply absorbed the mind is in an exalted state, or to what level it has merged with a supreme truth, as long as the mental impurities have not been eradicated by wisdom, which discerns conditionality and the true nature of the world, that is, as long as one has not reached ‘deliverance by wisdom’ (*paññā-vimutti*), one can not yet claim to have attained Nibbāna. Without this deliverance, the profound and absorptive states remain confined to psychic or concentrative achievements, and the release from the clutches of defilement is merely a temporary suppression or abeyance, lasting only so long as the force of mind can be maintained.

The principle of selfless or altruistic conduct is also not the same as *anattā*. There is a similarity, in that a clear discernment of *anattā* brings about an end of selfishness. Indeed, selfishness is only truly uprooted with insight into the nature of nonself. Both understanding selflessness and humble submission to a deity lead to selfless conduct. The similarity extends this far. {441} The first is a wise investigation of truth leading to liberation. The second is an application of faith, leading to intense devotion to the object of that faith, not distracted by personal concerns. We may then ask the question: Which of these practices is a temporary self-abandonment, and which an utter and complete removal of self-preoccupation?

The term *anattā* can be applied in a practical context regarding selfless behaviour. Here, the term refers to the possession of mindfulness and clear comprehension, leading to thorough self-understanding. The mind is fully aware of the activity in which it is engaged, to the extent that no opportunity arises for concepts of a fixed identity to impinge and hijack the process of awareness. In this context, *anattā* means ‘knowing the insubstantiality of all things’.

Finally, it is common for contemporary Buddhists to use expressions relating to the self (*attā*) and nonself in an ethical context. For example: ‘this person has a strong ego’, ‘deflate (or annihilate) your ego’, ‘he acts to boost his ego’. These colloquial expressions simply refer to a fixed belief in self or to an adherence to a self-image, and are used for convenience. They are not meant to imply an actual existing self. The common and

widespread use of these expressions, however, leads some people to confuse or distort the meaning of *anattā*, to the extent that it strays entirely from its original Buddhist connotation.

## 6.7 VALUE AND UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF NIBBĀNA

### A. NIBBĀNA IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFETIME

{487} Nibbāna, the highest goal of Buddhism, can be realized by people in this present life, when they apply effort and are endowed with the necessary spiritual qualities. One need not wait until the next life, as revealed by the dual attributes of Nibbāna: *sandiṭṭhiko* (seen clearly by oneself; realizable in this life) and *akāliko* (not subject to time; timeless; immediate).<sup>78</sup> The Buddha offered ways of practice for realizing Nibbāna in this present life,<sup>79</sup> as confirmed in this passage:

I tell you this: let a wise person come to me who is sincere, honest and straightforward, and I will instruct him, I will teach him Dhamma. If he practises what he is taught, then within seven years by realizing for himself here and now through direct knowledge he will enter upon and abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. Let alone seven years – in six years, five years ... in a fortnight, in seven days he can achieve that goal.<sup>80</sup>

D. III. 55-6.

<sup>78</sup>A. I. 158-9. *Sandiṭṭhika* means the same as *diṭṭhadhammika*, e.g. at KhA. 124; SnA. I. 71; see also A. III. 40 and the Aṅguttara sub-commentaries, referred to in the Maṅgalatthadīpanī (Sumanavaggo, Sihasenāpatisuttādivaṇṇanā).

<sup>79</sup>E.g.: S. II. 18, 115 = S. III. 164 = S. IV. 141; A. IV. 351-3, 454-5.

<sup>80</sup>Related passages at Vin. I. 9-10; M. I. 172; M. II. 44. (See the chapters in *Buddhadhamma* on *cetovimutti/paññāvimutti* and *satipaṭṭhāna* which pertain to realization in the present lifetime. See also D. II. 314-5; M. I. 62-3.)

## B. NIBBĀNA IS ATTAINABLE BY ALL

Every person with determination and spiritual aptitude can realize Nibbāna. No restrictions exist concerning race, class, caste, wealth, gender, or whether one is a householder or monastic, as verified by the Buddha's verses:

*'The straight way' that path is called,  
And 'fearless' is its destination.  
The chariot is called 'silent,'  
Fitted with wheels of righteousness.*

*A sense of shame is its rearguard,  
Mindfulness its armour;  
I say this Dhamma vehicle,  
Has right view guiding as charioteer.*

*One who has such a vehicle,  
Whether a woman or a man,  
Has, by means of this vehicle,  
Arrived at the abode of Nibbāna. {488}*

S. I. 33.

The Buddha permitted women to be ordained as bhikkhunīs (*bhikkhunī*) despite the opposition by elements of Indian society at that time; he claimed that women who follow the Dhammavinaya are capable of realizing supermundane states, from stream-entry to arahantship, equally as men.<sup>81</sup>

At one time, Somā Bhikkhunī was sitting at the foot of a tree when Māra approached, and wanting to disturb and frighten her, exclaimed in verse:

*That state so hard to achieve  
Which is to be attained by the seers,  
Cannot be attained by a woman  
With her two-fingered wisdom.*

<sup>81</sup>Vin. II. 254-5.



Somā Therī replied:

What does womanhood matter at all  
When the mind is concentrated well,  
When knowledge flows on steadily,  
Seeing correctly into Dhamma.

One to whom it might occur,  
'I am a woman' or 'I am a man',  
Or I am anything at all, Is fit for Māra to address.

*S. I. 129; Thīg. verses 60-62.*

In relation to householders and monastics the Buddha had this to say:

I do not praise the wrong way of practice on the part either of a householder or one gone forth; for whether it be a householder or one gone forth, one who has entered on the wrong way of practice, by reason of his wrong way of practice, is not accomplishing the true way, the Dhamma that is wholesome. I praise the right way of practice on the part either of a householder or one gone forth; for whether it be a householder or one gone forth, one who has entered on the right way of practice, by reason of his right way of practice, is accomplishing the true way, the Dhamma that is wholesome.

*M. II. 197; cf. S. V. 18-19.*

I say there is no difference between a lay follower who is [thus] liberated in mind and a bhikkhu who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years, that is, the one liberation is the same as the other.<sup>82</sup>

*S. V. 410.*

<sup>82</sup>The Thai translated edition renders the phrase 'the one liberation is the same as the other' as 'they are both liberated by deliverance', since the Thai Pali edition reads: *yadidaṃ vimuttiyā vimuttanti*. The Burmese and Roman editions read: *yadidaṃ vimuttiyā vimuttinti*. The phrase also occurs at A. III. 34, for which the Thai edition translates it differently. The commentaries (SA. III. 292 and AA. III. 244 explain 'vimutti' as *arahattaphala-vimutti*. The scriptures from around the first century B.C. onwards, for example the *Milindapañhā* (Miln.: Book IV, Chātṭhavaggo, no. 3, Gihī-arahattapañho, dilemma 62), assert that a

The Buddha frequently discussed the issue of caste, which was an important point of debate and controversy in India at that time. One example is the discussion between the Buddha and the brahmin Esukārī:

‘Master Gotama, the brahmins prescribe four types of wealth: ... they prescribe wandering for alms as the wealth of a brahmin ... the bow and the quiver as the wealth of a noble ... farming and cattle-breeding as the wealth of a merchant ... the sickle and carrying-pole as the wealth of a worker.... What does Master Gotama say about this?’ {489}

‘Well, brahmin, has all the world authorized the brahmins to prescribe these four types of wealth?’ – ‘No, Master Gotama.’ – ‘Suppose, brahmin, they were to force a cut of meat upon a poor, penniless, destitute man and tell him: “Good man, you must eat this meat and pay for it”; so too, without the consent of those [other] recluses and brahmins, the brahmins nevertheless prescribe these four types of wealth.

‘I, brahmin, declare the noble supermundane Dhamma as a person’s own wealth.... What do you think, brahmin? Suppose a head-anointed noble king were to assemble here a hundred men of different birth and say to them: “Come, sirs, let any here who have been born into a noble clan or a brahmin clan or a royal clan take a fire-stick of teak, sal-wood, pine, sandal-wood, or pomegranate wood and light a fire and produce heat. And also let any who have been born into an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers’ clan, a cartwrights’ clan, or a scavengers’ clan take a fire-stick made from a dog’s drinking trough, from a pig’s trough, from a dying vat, or from castor-oil wood and light a fire and produce heat.”

‘What do you think, brahmin? When a fire is lit and heat is produced by someone in the first group, would that fire have a flame, a colour,

layperson realizing arahantship must take higher ordination (*upasampadā*) on that very day or else attain *parinibbāna*. On the question of why an enlightened householder would take ordination, see Miln: Book IV, Chaṭṭhavaggo, no. 9, Gihapabbajitasammāpaṭipattipaṇḥo (dilemma 54).

and a radiance, and would it be possible to use it for the purposes of fire, while when a fire is lit and heat is produced by someone of the second group, that fire would have no flame, no colour, and no radiance, and it would not be possible to use it for the purposes of fire?’

‘No, Master Gotama.... For all fire has a flame, a colour, and a radiance, and it is possible to use all fire for the purposes of fire.’

‘So too, brahmin, if anyone from a clan of nobles goes forth from the home life into homelessness, and relying on the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata ... holds right view, he is one who fulfils the wholesome qualities that are the way of deliverance. If anyone from a clan of brahmins goes forth ... from a clan of merchants ... from a clan of workers goes forth from the home life into homelessness, and relying on the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata ... holds right view, he is one who fulfils the wholesome qualities that are the way of deliverance.’ {490}

*Esukārī Sutta: M. II. 180-84.*

### C. NIBBĀNA IS THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT

Although the attainment of Nibbāna is dependent on mental deliverance (*cetovimutti*), that is, it relies on a particular achievement of *jhāna*, and this achievement has a bearing on the everyday life of enlightened beings, Nibbāna is distinct from *jhāna*. Nibbāna is a release even from these psychic achievements and is accessible when one is able to transcend them. There are some unique aspects to the attainment of Nibbāna:

The realization of Nibbāna is decisive, final and irreversible. In regard to moral conduct, for example, true spontaneous selflessness arises. This selfless conduct stems from eradication by wisdom of selfish hankering, to the point that all self-obsession is abolished.

As this selflessness arises naturally and of its own accord, it is not the result of willpower or force; one need not seize one opinion or habit in order to let go of another. One need not hold up some ideal, sacrifice

oneself to an object of faith, suppress one's passions by calm or insight, or get absorbed in *jhāna*.

No matter how lofty a person's mental achievements, one must see into their causal nature and let go of attachment to these achievements before realization of Nibbāna is possible.

This letting go ultimately supports, consolidates, and perfects further spiritual development, even for enlightened beings.

For example, such beings can benefit from proficiency in *jhāna* in order to abide in a state of ease and happiness (*ditṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*) when they are not engaged in other activities. If originally they accessed the eight levels of *jhāna*, with the realization as a non-returner or an arahant, they may achieve 'cessation of perception and feeling' (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*).

Some spiritual accomplishments can suspend defilements and suffering for a long period, but not yet irrevocably. The defilements and suffering can return, and therefore these heightened mental states are temporary; they are a means to suppress other conditions or to engage the mind in something else. The realization of Nibbāna, however, puts an absolute end to suffering and mental impurities. And through this realization, only harmful conditions cease, for example: greed, craving, anger, woe, confusion, fixed views of self, and ignorance; all goodness remains.

Furthermore, the vices are automatically replaced by the exceptional wholesome qualities of a life guided by wisdom and compassion, which surpass ordinary happiness and cannot be securely accessed by other spiritual achievements. {491}

Therefore, although a person who has realized Nibbāna may not have experienced the most refined states of *jhāna*, he or she is still superior to someone who has these experiences but is as yet not fully enlightened.

The realization of Nibbāna brings about a fundamental transformation of a person's heart, personality, thinking process, worldview and behaviour. There are two principal aspects to this mental transformation. The first involves knowledge, understanding, opinions, and beliefs, which

pertain to ignorance and wisdom. The second involves a person's sense of values or relationship to desire, which pertains to craving and wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*).

A student who believes her teacher will criticize and punish her may tremble at the thought of meeting the teacher, whereas if she knows that the teacher is kind she will feel happy and at ease. People who see others as enemies and those who see others as friends will behave differently. A person finding a map that shows the location of a hidden diamond may risk his life and even kill others for that treasure, while another person may not give it much thought. People desiring pleasurable sights, tastes, fragrances, sounds, and tangible objects tend to be engrossed with these things. If they believe that they can truly possess these objects then their happiness is dependent on their acquisition.

In contrast, fully enlightened beings understand the world as it really is, they see nothing that can be truly owned or controlled, they go beyond the search for pleasurable sensations, and they recognize how to act in harmony with truth. They do not yearn for sense impressions. As a consequence, a new understanding arises of one's relationship to the world, including material possessions, other people, nature, and even one's own life. One is of the world but not bound to or tarnished by it.

This liberation and inner transformation is difficult to describe and therefore the scriptures explain it with similes, for example: recovering from an illness, sobering up, cooling down, clearing out refuse, escaping from a snare or chain, and crossing over an expanse of water to a safe haven.

Many of these similes depict the happiness of relieving an original entanglement, inconvenience, confinement and struggle. The release from these constraints to a state of freedom and safety is *Nibbāna*. Enlightened persons can move about as they please, without worrying about self-protection. Some of the above similes can be used for other spiritual achievements; the difference lies in the fact that *jhāna*, for instance, provides only temporary results. {492}

In every time period, at least a small percentage of human beings will seek the meaning and ultimate goal of life, beyond merely being

born, searching for sense pleasure, and dying. Sometimes material difficulties or a struggle for survival will cause them to temporarily neglect or interrupt their search, but when circumstances permit and as long as doubt persists people will concern themselves with these matters. Therefore any creed or philosophy that merely answers to material comfort and does not meet people's spiritual needs is incomplete and unable to offer adequate satisfaction. To use Buddhist terminology, responding to 'mundane welfare' (*ditṭhadhammikattha*) alone is insufficient; one must also attend to 'spiritual welfare' (*samparāyikattha*) and 'supreme welfare' (*paramattha*).<sup>83</sup> The teachings on Nibbāna and other spiritual achievements fulfil this requirement. Some psychic attainments, however, although surpassing mundane phenomena, are still classified as subordinate, that is, one is encouraged to reach the final stage of Nibbāna, the supreme benefit and true perfection.

## 6.8 COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT NIBBĀNA

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### A. ATTACHING TO NON-ATTACHMENT

The origin of suffering can be identified with its two primary agents: ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Likewise, the cessation of suffering can be identified with two essential qualities: knowledge (*viññā*) and deliverance (*vimutti*). The former process may be described as 'ignorance leading to attachment', and the latter as 'deliverance through knowledge'.

In the former process, the link which leads to birth and becoming is *upādāna*, translated as 'grasping', 'clinging', or 'attachment'. In the latter process, the link which leads out of the round of rebirth (*samsāra-vaṭṭa*) is *nibbidā*, translated as 'disenchantment' or 'dispassion': the end of craving and attachment. As a pair *upādāna* and *nibbidā* are polar opposites.

*Upādāna* stems indirectly from not knowing the true nature of things. This not-knowing opens the door to craving – the wish to possess and consume things. Craving leads to getting tied up and investing in things being a certain way, which is *upādāna*.

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix 2.

In contrast, *nibbidā* springs from a thorough understanding of those things formerly attached to; one understands their faults and dangers, and one sees the harm of getting obsessed with them. This gives rise to disenchantment; one is no longer fascinated by these things and is willing to relinquish them. Disenchantment arises from knowing the true nature of things; this knowledge is called *yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*. {493}

It is important to note that both the arising of disenchantment and the eradication of clinging are due to knowledge. With a true understanding of things, *nibbidā* arises and *upādāna* ceases automatically; it is a natural causal process or a state that arises following causes and conditions.<sup>84</sup>

One sometimes hears the injunction ‘don’t be attached’, ‘let go’, or ‘all that is necessary is non-clinging’.<sup>85</sup> This teaching is laudable, but one should bear in mind that non-attachment needs to arise correctly in line with a natural process. If it does not, one’s practice may be incorrect and even harmful. The risk is that one attaches to non-attachment, which can have the same detrimental effects as clinging to anything else.

Imagine that a beautifully wrapped bundle has been placed within a locked glass case. A man sees the bundle and is convinced that it contains something valuable. He is fixated on obtaining that object, but is unable to get at it. Later, someone whom he respects tells him that there is nothing of value in that bundle and that coveting it is harmful. One part of the man wants to believe this advice and realizes the damaging effects of his actions, but on a deeper level he is still convinced the bundle contains a treasure. He is unable to sever his longing through will-power, although he tries to prove to others that he has let go. His outward behaviour displays a disinterest for the bundle, but even if he were to

<sup>84</sup> *Yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana* is knowledge of the severance point (i.e. at *upādāna*), but it is not yet the final knowledge of *vimutti-ñāṇadassana*; it is natural that *nibbidā* follows the arising of *yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana* (see: A. V. 3, 313); see the Buddha’s teaching that with the fading of ignorance, knowledge arises and clinging ceases: M. I. 67; for how much knowledge is necessary to end grasping, see, e.g.: M. II. 237-8.

<sup>85</sup> A much quoted passage by the Buddha on non-attachment is: *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, meaning ‘nothing is worth adhering to’ or ‘nothing can be seized’ (M. I. 251, 254; S. IV. 50, 88); *abhinivesa* is a synonym of *upādāna* (e.g.: Vbh. 149).

loudly broadcast this, his heart is still bound. Moreover, in his attempt to show others he does not care, he may behave oddly and inappropriately.

Later the contents of the bundle are revealed to the man and he sees that they are indeed worthless. Knowing this clearly for himself the hankering then ceases immediately. Even if he were to try and convince himself to desire the object he would remain disinterested. His mind is prepared to engage fully with other things. {494}

The behaviour above can be compared to that of unawakened persons, whose desires and attachments are influenced by craving. They may have been told that their desired objects are essentially undesirable and that their attachment is potentially harmful. They may agree through reasoning that the desire and attachment is harmful and want to believe that the longed for objects are of no value, but they do not yet truly see it this way. Deep down the desire and attachment remains. They may seemingly be disinterested in those pleasurable things, but this disinterest or non-attachment is not genuine and is a form of posturing. They are simply conforming behaviour to an idea of non-attachment. Their non-attachment is a form of attachment and their actions are dictated by this attachment. This can result in disingenuous or eccentric behaviour.

In contrast, when one understands the true nature of conditioned phenomena, that specific conditions bring about inevitable results, the heart is delivered and grasping ceases of its own accord. One's behaviour is then natural and uncontrived. {495}

Returning to the former example of the man who desires the bundle, his friend may explain the entire sequence of how the bundle and its worthless contents were prepared. Following this reasoning the man may be convinced that the contents are indeed valueless. This firm conviction may have a strong bearing on his thoughts and actions. Although he is not yet completely free of desire, only a mild longing remains, quite different from his initial passion. This is similar to the knowledge and state of mind of persons who have achieved the first three stages of enlightenment,



from stream-enterers to non-returners – those ranked between ordinary people and arahants.<sup>86</sup>

Examples from everyday life that reveal a person's true level of non-attachment are the emotions of worry and fear. Some people feel nervous, seemingly for no reason. Even scolding themselves for this feeling does not help. A person may be in a safe place with no cause for fear, but as soon as he hears the cry of a wild animal or a siren he involuntarily gets frightened. Rational thought alone cannot uproot these emotions – one must get to the heart of the matter.

Ordinary people, without deep insight, may ask if they should practise non-attachment. Because the recognition of the dangers of attachment is beneficial, they are advised to practise in this way. They should bear in mind, however, that they still abide at one level of attachment and that it is detrimental to believe prematurely that they have attained true non-attachment. By acting judiciously and wisely, the harmful consequences of excessive and deceptive behaviour are avoided. This virtuous conduct and self-discipline creates a foundation for genuine non-attachment in the future.

Although attaching to non-attachment is usually well-intentioned, there are those with ill intent who may argue that since all things are insubstantial and people are made up of component parts, no one exists in any real sense; therefore it is acceptable to harm others. This is simply an extreme form of attachment; they are selecting an aspect of truth to justify their own desires. If they were not in some way obsessed with the victim and had no evil intent, why would they wish to cause the person harm?

<sup>86</sup>In this context compare the Buddha's words on knowing but not yet fully awakening, that is, having an insufficient understanding of causality and therefore not yet being utterly released (S. III. 160-61; M. I. 234-5). An *anāgāmi* has abandoned *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* but still retains some *asmimāna* and a fine residue of craving. He or she may have abandoned self-conceptions but a latent sense of 'me' and 'mine' has not yet been purified (see S. II. 117-18; S. III. 127).

## B. OVERESTIMATION

Most people are preoccupied by material concerns. When they experience subtle, unfamiliar spiritual events, they are easily impressed. But because they lack a fundamental understanding of the workings of the mind, they are unable to distinguish between the different experiences and get confused. Even skilled practitioners can have this problem. An analytical or reflective ability goes a long way to prevent misunderstanding and misguided effort.

People who are fascinated with miracles and the supernatural tend to praise those with psychic powers and believe they have reached the highest spiritual goal. Likewise, someone who is keen on solitude, develops the mind, and has tasted the joy of seclusion will often instil faith in others, even if he or she has not yet reached any exceptional states of mind. {496}

People who have attained the fruits of serenity practice (*samatha*) – the *jhānas* – will appear even more impressive. They themselves may mistake serenity for insight, or they may overestimate their achievements and believe to be enlightened. They may attain the ‘joy of insight’ (*vipassanā-sukha*), which is technically classified as an impurity (*upakkilesa*), and mistake this for Nibbāna. They may get carried away by the praise lavished by others. This is not to say that one should be suspicious or find fault, since it is suitable to respect those who are worthy, but one should know clearly what other people have to offer. This way the rewards of Dhamma practice for both practitioners and their admirers will not lead to ill-effects, and they will avoid getting stuck in extreme asceticism or another form of wrong practice.

## C. HAPPINESS AND READINESS FOR HAPPINESS

Happiness is an essential ingredient for Dhamma practice. Buddhism encourages people to experience the different levels of happiness, in particular the refined happiness independent of material things, which provides a great benefit to practice. (Delight in sensual pleasures needs no encouraging as people are preoccupied enough with this already.)

Buddhism, does not promote attachment to any kind of happiness,<sup>87</sup> and is more interested in cultivating a readiness in people to experience happiness than in the various states of happiness themselves. When this state of readiness is developed, a person can choose at will from those levels of happiness already established. This readiness is itself an inherent form of happiness, which surpasses all other happiness. For realized persons, who have developed this readiness, no source of suffering remains, permitting them to experience all forms of happiness without causing harm to themselves or others. This inherent happiness is one vital feature of Nibbāna.

## 6.9 POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

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### A. NIBBĀNA AND THE SELF

Let us look once more at the questions about self (*attā*):

- In the final analysis, does Buddhism acknowledge the existence of a self?
- Does the Buddha's rejection of the five aggregates as self indicate that he wished us to discover a true self beyond the body/mind?
- Is Nibbāna the ultimate self? {497}

There are several points here to bear in mind:

All beliefs about the self or soul spring from *bhava-taṇhā*: the desire for eternal life. This desire incites one to seize something as stable and lasting, leading to suppositions, beliefs and theories on self. Initially, one takes the body as self, but as soon it is clear that the body cannot satisfy one's desire one searches for something else. When even the mind cannot fulfil one's desire, one goes further, grasping, for instance, to exalted states encountered in *jhāna* as the true self. Some define *attā* in a broader

<sup>87</sup>For non-attachment to immaterial happiness see: M. II 237; for not indulging in Nibbāna see: M. I. 6.

sense than the ego, as the source of all things or an immortal spirit. But no matter how refined these concepts of self, they are essentially the same, in that they satisfy the craving for eternal life.

The error here does not lie with the objects identified with or grasped onto as self. These phenomena exist according to their own nature. In the case that they are conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*), for example, they proceed according to specific causes and conditions. They require no self, no core, no essence to interfere with, overlap, or control their natural process. Any such fixed ‘self’ would create chaos and conflict with the insubstantial nature of things.

The belief in such a fixed self is thus misguided and erroneous. It is the creation of an image or idea of something that does not in fact truly exist. How do people fall into this error? Its root cause is the craving for being (*bhava-taṇhā*; alternatively, ‘craving for becoming’), which gives rise to grasping (*upādāna*). When people identify with things by way of grasping, regardless of whether that object is real or purely imaginary, they create a distorted perception of that thing. This distorted perception then becomes an image of ‘self’, which is cherished and falsely believed to be real.

Ideas of self depend on the relationship between craving and the object taken to be self. The self is associated with such an object, but it does not exist separate from the craving for being – the source of these beliefs. {498}

Self-perceptions (*atta-saññā*), self-views (*atta-diṭṭhi*), and the grasping that leads to repeated assertions of self (*atta-vādupādāna*) are accumulated so habitually that they become deeply lodged in the mind. When these views are contradicted, people tend to look for a loophole and search for something else to call self.

The search for a replacement is proof of the urgency in maintaining a self. When the original perception of self is threatened or ruled out, the person fears annihilation and reaches for a new concept of self. The basic craving for existence and self-views are still fully intact, and nothing essentially changes by attaching to a new object. The idea of self is merely expressed in a more elaborate and detailed way. One may grasp onto an

## NOTE 6.5: NIBBĀNA IS NOT A SELF

This is a very important distinction between Buddhism and religions that avow a soul or an eternal God. The absolute truth as presented by some religions and branches of theology can appear almost identical to that of Buddhism. The difference is that these faiths define the highest reality in terms of a Self or Supreme Being.

Although adherents of these faiths may reach profound states of consciousness, they are still caught up with the latent yet insistent need for a self. When discussing one of these profound states, they look for an angle or reference to label it as self in the hope that they will continue to exist in some enduring, constant way, which indicates that they still harbour *bhava-taṇhā*.

In Buddhism this mechanism is called the ‘master-ensnaring net’ (*brahmajāla*: ‘the net that traps Brahma’; see the *Brahmajāla-Sutta*, D. I. 12-46). More important than any concept of self is the desire for self, which breeds all pursuit for and debates over self.

aspect of truth in this way, but it will result in a misrepresentation of that truth.

Grasping at *Nibbāna* as self results in a distorted image of *Nibbāna* that is masked by desire, indicating that one has not yet realized true *Nibbāna*. (See Note 6.5.) Any viable solution to this problem is prevented by the inability to abandon craving. One may acknowledge that one’s self-view is false, but deep down this idea still conflicts with craving and the acceptance of it is therefore not complete. When one belief is invalidated the tendency is to search for another belief to take its place. One may also swing to the opposite extreme: the theory of nihilism.

Solving this dilemma is not a matter of identifying the true self, but rather correcting the very belief in self and addressing the root of the problem: the craving which creates ever more elaborate ideas of self. One must uproot self-view (*atta-diṭṭhi* or *attānudiṭṭhi*), reject the belief in an enduring self or soul (*atta-vāda*), and abandon the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). When this craving and grasping are abandoned, the self or the ideas of self in which one invests so much importance are also relinquished. With this relinquishment the question of self is concluded; one need not affix a concept of self onto something else. The self ceases

automatically with the destruction of this native craving.<sup>88</sup> Nothing more needs to be said about the self; the self becomes meaningless.

The extreme and controversial interpretation that Buddhism rejects the five aggregates as self, yet claims that Nibbāna is the true self, is an error resulting from misdirected focus. Proponents of this view pay too much attention to what the Buddha rejected as self, rather than how he rejected the self and how he rejected the attachment that gives rise to the self.

The reason the Buddha chose the five aggregates as the focus in the Three Characteristics, asserting that they are insubstantial and not truly controllable, is because the aggregates are all that ordinary people are able to know and conceive of.<sup>89</sup> They comprise all things that are generally held to be self, including experiences in *jhāna*. The Buddha's rejection of the aggregates as self was not an encouragement to find something else to grasp onto. The aim of his teaching is precisely to eradicate self-view, self-attachment, and craving for existence, not merely to know the insubstantiality of the aggregates.

If the Buddha wanted us to reject the aggregates as self in order to adopt something else as the true self, he would have made it amply clear what that is. He would not have left us guessing and disputing. {499}

Nonself as part of the Three Characteristics is usually referred to in the scriptures in the phrase: *All conditioned phenomena are impermanent, all conditioned phenomena are dukkha, all things are nonself (anattā).*

This passage by the Buddha shows that *anattā* has a range of meaning broader than *anicca* and *dukkha*. The first two clauses state that all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra* or *saṅkhata-dhamma*) are impermanent and subject to stress, whereas the third clause states that all 'dhammas' – all things – both conditioned phenomena and the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-dhamma* and *asaṅkhata-dhamma*, or *saṅkhāra* and *visaṅkhāra*), are nonself.

<sup>88</sup> On the apparent contradiction between intentional action (*kamma*) and nonself (*anattā*) see chapter 5 on *kamma*, especially the Buddha's statements quoted there.

<sup>89</sup> The 12 sense spheres (*āyatana*) are also frequent topics of analysis in this context.

And the following passage in the Parivāra of the Vinaya Piṭaka clearly reiterates that *Nibbāna* is included in the clause ‘all things are nonself’: *All formations are impermanent, dukkha, and nonself; Nibbāna and designations are nonself.*<sup>90</sup>

Although evidence shows that the Parivāra is a later text in the Tipiṭaka, one must concede that this is a consensus from early, pre-commentarial Buddhism. In any case, although such text material exists one ought to define *anattā* with caution.

Even the Buddha showed caution when discussing *attā/anattā*. His approach can be summarized as follows: firstly, when the listener had an adequate basis of understanding, the Buddha would explain the nature of the object held to be self and the grasping that needs to be abandoned, as can be seen in his references to the five aggregates and twelve sense bases in the teaching of the Three Characteristics. Secondly, if someone asked him the isolated metaphysical question whether the self exists or does not exist, the Buddha remained silent and would not answer:

At one time the wanderer Vacchagotta approached the Buddha and asked: Is there a self? The Buddha was silent. Vacchagotta resumed: Then, is there no self? The Buddha remained silent. Vacchagotta then rose from his seat and departed. Later, Ven. Ānanda said to the Buddha: Why is it that when the Blessed One was questioned by the wanderer, he did not answer? The Buddha replied: If I had answered, ‘There is a self’, this would have been siding with those who are eternalists. If I had answered, ‘There is no self’, this would have been siding with those who are annihilationists.<sup>91</sup> {500}

S. IV. 400.

In the first manner of teaching about nonself stated above, the Buddha points out how the things a person identifies with as self cannot be held

<sup>90</sup>Vin. VI. 86.

<sup>91</sup>If the Buddha had answered, ‘There is a self’, this would have been inconsistent with the arising of the knowledge that ‘all things are nonself’. If he had answered, ‘There is no self’, Vacchagotta, already confused, would have fallen into even greater confusion, thinking, ‘It seems that the self I formerly had no longer exists.’

in any real way. When a person recognizes this misapprehension, the dangers of grasping and the advantages of letting go become apparent. One understands the meaning of freedom and knows how to conduct one-self appropriately in the world, living with purpose rather than drifting aimlessly and allowing craving to develop into a more serious mental complex. By gaining understanding, a practitioner removes self-views and reduces craving for existence. At the same time questions about self gradually dissolve.

This way of explaining differs greatly from trying to answer metaphysical questions about the self, which spring from people's craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) or craving for extinction (*vibhava-taṇhā*). The craving is tied up with fixed views: either a variant of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) or of annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*).

Answering or repudiating these kinds of questions to someone with fixed beliefs is risky and leads to confusion. No matter how one answers, the person will base his conceptions upon established beliefs. If the answer is consistent with his views, he will take this as confirmation of his specific understanding. If inconsistent, he will conclude the opposite. For example, if one answers that the self exists the view of a listener biased towards eternalism will be reinforced. If one negates the self he will go to the opposite extreme and interpret this as a form of annihilationism. He may then develop the misguided idea that since no self exists, persecution of others has no consequences; since no one acts, no one receives the fruits of action and therefore why should one perform good deeds? People form conclusions according to their cravings and fixed opinions; these biased conclusions inevitably result in the extreme views of eternalism or annihilationism, neither of which is espoused by Buddhism.

Moreover, some people may develop a phobia of extinction. Some may conclude that Nibbāna equals extinction and give up practising the Dhamma out of fear. Such reactions and views are extremely unfortunate.

{501}



When someone asks whether things exist or do not exist, if one is not careful, both answers ‘they exist’ and ‘they do not exist’ may potentially cause problems, because such answers may maintain the views of eternalism and annihilationism. One should not answer categorically; instead, one should explain that those things people refer to as existing come into being as a result of causes and conditions. They are conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*; *saṅkhata-dhamma*); they exist temporarily or momentarily, continually arising and passing away. They arise mutually dependent on one another (*paṭicca-samuppanna*), in the form of a stream or a conditioned process.

The Buddha therefore did not answer with a simple affirmative or negative; he referred to the process of origination. This form of response aims to dispel our misconceptions of things.

The teachings on *anattā* function to remove self-concepts fabricated by craving and wrong view. With the release of attachment, the self or self-concepts cease automatically. If one comprehends *anattā* as the common (i.e. unawakened) belief of ‘no self’, however, then one falls into the wrong view of annihilationism.

In the Suttanipāta the Buddha often characterizes enlightened beings as having neither *attā* nor *nirattā*: having neither ‘a self’ nor ‘an absence of self’.<sup>92</sup> They have no thirst for being (*bhava-taṇhā*) which hankers after a self, nor do they hold a view of existence (*bhava-diṭṭhi*), which leads to a view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*) or a view of self-extinction (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*). Another definition is that they believe neither in an ‘existing self’ nor an ‘expired self’: they avoid the misinterpretation of a fixed self-identity followed by the belief that the self has vanished. (See Note 6.6.)

In conclusion, although the Buddha declared the truth, the truth must always be linked to practical application. He wished that those who receive his teachings apply and benefit from them.

The way of explaining *anattā* by examining the objects a person identifies with, and by examining people’s relationship to craving, intends to

<sup>92</sup>See: Sn. 154, 157, 168, 180; elucidated at: Nd1. 82, 107-8, 247, 352-3.

## NOTE 6.6: NO DOER OF A DEED

Note the teaching in the Visuddhimagga:

*There is no doer of a deed, or one who reaps the deed's results.... For here there is no Creator God, no Creator of the round of births; phenomena alone flow on, dependent on the marriage of conditions.*

This matches the teaching in the Sammohavinodanī:

*When no being can be found, there is neither substantiality nor extinction*

*Vism. 602-3; VbhA. 194*

The use of expressions such as ‘inflated ego’ and ‘destroy the ego’ are simply idioms of speech. They are often used in the context of intensified levels of clinging to self. It is the clinging which should be eradicated rather than the self, since no self exists to eradicate. The thought of eradicating the self is linked to an annihilationist view. The self is merely a mental concept fabricated by *bhava-taṇhā* and superimposed on something which occurs naturally on its own. The self does not exist independently and therefore has no inherent reality. Furthermore, the term *attavādupādāna* suggests clearly that clinging exists merely to the word (or idea of) ‘self’, since no real self exists to be clung to.

*Vism. 569; VismT.: Dutiyo Bhāgo, Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā,  
Taṇhāpaccaya-upādānapadavittārakathāvaṇṇanā*

free the listeners from harmful views and attachments, enabling them to have a liberated heart and to prosper.

Metaphysical responses, when indulged in, add to confusion and deepen wrong view. The Buddha therefore remained silent when asked such metaphysical questions.

Now let us turn to the specific question of whether Nibbāna constitutes a form of self (*attā*), or whether Nibbāna is endowed with some form of substantial essence that could be described as ‘self’. {502}

First, all existing phenomena, which can be defined by the terms *dhamma* (‘thing’), *sabhāva* (‘existing phenomenon’), or *sabhāva-dhamma* (‘natural phenomenon’), exist according to their own inherent nature. In respect to conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*; *saṅkhata-dhamma*), they exist in line with their causes and conditions. Nibbāna, on the other hand, is the

Unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*; *asaṅkhata-dhamma*). It also exists according to its own nature and is endowed with its own inherent attributes, say of purity and independence, as confirmed many times by the Buddha.

As Nibbāna exists according to its own nature, it is impossible for a ‘self’ to interfere with, rule over, control, or dictate it. If a ‘self’ – some form of static, ruling essence – were to exist, Nibbāna would not be able to exist as it does.

Second, some people who discuss these questions about Nibbāna and its relationship to the self do not understand these terms adequately. They lack a scholarly clarity within themselves and cause confusion for others.

Until we ourselves are awakened, we can rely on the words the Buddha used to describe and explain Nibbāna. As for the term *attā* (‘self’), one should define it in the context of the traditional philosophical questions posed by others to the Buddha, rather than create one’s own definition or rely on ambiguous contemporary definitions of this term.

Some people misunderstand this topic of the self versus selflessness (*anattā*), and begin to wonder, for example, whether they themselves exist or not.

Ultimately, the concept of ‘self’ (*attā*) should be understood as the belief in ‘me’, in the ‘I’, in ‘him’ and ‘her’, etc., as distinct, fixed entities. In the Pali language, however, the term *attā* is also used to refer to the conventional sense of self, as is clearly evident in the Buddha’s teaching: ‘One is one’s own refuge’ (*attā hi attano nātho*; literally: ‘the self is the refuge of the self.’) Although the teachings state that in truth there is no abiding, fixed essence or substantial entity, the conventional designation of a self is valid and useful. In the discussion of Nibbāna, however, one is examining the true nature of phenomena, and asking the questions: Does Nibbāna constitute a self? Is Nibbāna my true self? Is the realization of Nibbāna the attainment of one’s true self?

Were Nibbāna to be one’s true self, it would have the power to control and dictate things according to one’s desires. And the only things it would be able to direct and control are conditioned phenomena or the

five aggregates. Nibbāna would thus pass over the threshold of the Unconditioned and get caught up in conditioned phenomena. Were this to be true, Nibbāna would utterly lose its status as the Unconditioned; it would no longer correspond with Nibbāna as described by the Buddha. It would no longer be Nibbāna, at least not the Nibbāna of the Buddha.

Third, the claim that Nibbāna is the self is necessarily connected to grasping and clinging.<sup>93</sup> For Nibbāna to be self, there must be grasping (*upādāna*). Yet this is in conflict with reality, because the realization of Nibbāna only occurs with the end of grasping (*upādāna*). The end of grasping constitutes the realization of Nibbāna. The arahants who have realized Nibbāna harbour no conception of ‘my Nibbāna’, let alone ‘Nibbāna is the self’. The belief in Nibbāna as the self is completely incompatible with Nibbāna. {503}

Fourth, if Nibbāna were to exist as a separate, supreme self, it would act as the master and principal agent, controlling and dictating all things. In this sense it would be similar to Paramātman (‘Supreme Self’; ‘Primordial Self’), Brahmā, or God, who in theistic religions is claimed to have created the world, rules over all human beings, and is Lord of the universe. Yet Nibbāna is a state of purity, happiness, and independence; it is the Unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*); it does not engage in any way with conditioned things (*saṅkhata-dhammā*). It pertains to a completely different matter, to a completely different reality, which one may describe as diametrically opposed to the conditioned world. It is thus impossible for Nibbāna to exist as a self.

Fifth, the Buddhist teachings clearly state that the belief in or attachment to self is a form of mental defilement (*kilesa*) – a form of ‘grasping’ (*upādāna*; ‘clinging’, ‘incorrect adherence’). In this context the specific term *attavādupādāna* is used, translated as ‘grasping to the belief in self’.

The craving (for the self) to endure and exist eternally – *bhavaṭaṇhā* – is the cause for this form of grasping. If this craving manifests by itself, one has not yet reached the full-blown problem. But if one steps beyond

<sup>93</sup>The customary claim ‘this is my self’ (*eso me attā*) is usually stated in reference to conditioned phenomena or to the five aggregates; here it is stated in reference to Nibbāna.

craving, one arrives at grasping (*upādāna*), which lies at the crux of the matter being discussed here.

Note that the specific term for this grasping does not merely refer to a grasping to the ‘self’ (*attā*), but also includes the term *vāda*. Here, there is not grasping to the self, but rather grasping to the belief in self.

In fact, no self (as a permanent, stable entity) exists. For this reason, strictly speaking, it is impossible to grasp onto a self, for essentially no such self exists. The term *vāda* (‘belief’, ‘idea’, ‘doctrine’, ‘assertion’) is added here for the sake of clarity. Any attachment to the belief in self, including attachment to language indicating a mistaken identification with self, is a form of mental impurity.

(Note that in some scriptural passages this grasping is described in a non-specific, general sense, for example in the statement: ‘abandon the self’. Here, it should be understood that what is meant is ‘abandon any attachment to the belief in self’.)

The grasping to a belief in self (*attavādupādāna*) is a crucial mental defilement, listed among the four kinds of grasping (*upādāna*) completely relinquished by fully awakened beings (*arahants*). Those who are free from any attachment to the belief in self, who do not identify with anything as a self, are, by definition, *arahants*. Those who realize *Nibbāna* – the fully awakened *arahants* – do not appropriate anything as self. Even in regard to *Nibbāna* itself, they do not consider it to be a self.

Those who still grasp onto a belief in self, or who still recognize something to exist as ‘self’, are still tainted by defilement; they lack ‘true vision’; they have not yet realized *Nibbāna*, the Unconditioned. No matter what these people believe to be ‘self’, even if it is *Nibbāna*, because they have not directly realized *Nibbāna*, their knowledge and vision is still confined to the conditioned world. Therefore, whatever concept of self they create, even if they identify *Nibbāna* with the self, is still bound to and comprised of conditioned phenomena; they still spin around in the realm of the five aggregates. If they claim that *Nibbāna* is the self, they are grasping onto a mental image or concept of *Nibbāna*, and such concepts are ‘mental formations’ (*saṅkhāra*), which are part of the five aggregates.

To sum up with the Buddha's words:

I do not see any doctrine of self that would not arouse sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who clings to it.<sup>94</sup> {504}

M. I. 137.

## B. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN ARAHANT'S DEATH?

An inevitable question that arises in the discussion of Nibbāna is: 'What happens to an arahant after death?' or: 'Does a person who has realized Nibbāna exist after death or not?' In truth, this question is centred around self-view: the devotion to self is acting as a catalyst in posing the question. This attachment to self or to the label of self (*attavādupādāna*) – a doctrine of self – is firmly embedded in the hearts of unenlightened people, supported by the thirst for being (*bhava-taṇhā*) and based on ignorance (*avijjā*). The Buddha did not encourage debating this question if one has not eliminated ignorance and craving. He encouraged knowledge through application rather than conjecture.

No matter how one responds to these inquiries, the latent root attachment to self will inevitably lead to a biased understanding. The questioner will incline towards a wrong view of Nibbāna as either an enduring self or an eradication of self. It is easy for annihilationists to view Nibbāna as extinction, because Buddhism emphasizes disentangling from the widespread belief in eternalism.<sup>95</sup> As for eternalists, when their idea of self is invalidated, they search for a substitute to compensate for the sense of void or to restore the idea of a stable self. When they encounter a teaching that advocates uprooting the fixed belief in self, it can seem to them that the self vanishes. They may then seize Nibbāna as a haven for the self or equate Nibbāna as eternal life or the Promised Land.

Many esteemed and wise individuals who are free from almost all forms of attachment get caught up in these views. The escape from this net leads

<sup>94</sup>Here, the 'doctrine of self' is precisely an attachment to the belief in self (*attavādupādāna*).

<sup>95</sup>Note the Buddha's remark that despite annihilationism (*vibhava-diṭṭhi*) being wrong view, it is closer to Buddhism than other views (A. V. 63).

to complete liberation. The Buddhist teachings admit that such freedom is extremely difficult to achieve and refer to this subtle attachment to views as ‘the Brahma-ensnaring web’ (*brahma-jāla*): an entanglement for the virtuous and wise.

As mentioned in the chapter on the Three Characteristics, an arahant may be referred to as one who has ‘abandoned the self’ (*attañjaha*). This expression is used for the sake of convenience, say in poetic verses, yet it would have been expected that the listener understood this in the sense of ‘abandoning an attachment to the concept of self’. {505}

This is also the case with such expressions as ‘boost the ego’, ‘self-preservation’, or similar references to self, which are used for the sake of simplicity. The term ‘self’ here should be understood as ‘self-image’ or an ‘attachment to the concept of self’.

Nibbāna and the practice for Nibbāna have nothing to do with destroying the self because there is no self to destroy.<sup>96</sup> It is the attachment to concepts of self that must be destroyed. One must remove the attachment to self-assertions, self-views and self-perceptions. Nibbāna is the end of these misunderstandings and the end of the suffering caused by attachment. When the yearning for self ceases, all theories of self automatically lose their significance. When the attachment to self is uprooted, things will be seen as they truly are; there is no need for further speculation about self. When the craving and grasping which gives rise to self ceases, the matter of self vanishes of its own accord. Nibbāna is the cessation of suffering, not the cessation of self, since there is no self that ceases. Reflect on the Buddha’s words: *I teach only suffering and the end of suffering*.<sup>97</sup> In order to shift the emphasis from the preoccupation with Nibbāna and philosophical debate, the Buddha usually referred to Nibbāna in the context of practical application or to the related benefits for everyday life, as demonstrated in passages of the Tipiṭaka.

<sup>96</sup>Westerners with an inadequate study on the subject of Nibbāna tend to conclude that Nibbāna is self-extinction, which is an annihilationist perspective.

<sup>97</sup>S. III. 119 = S. IV. 384.

Rather than give lengthy explanations on the subject of what happens to arahants after they die, some teachings of the Buddha are included below for consideration.

This teaching offers a basic understanding on the subject of self, presenting the two extreme views of eternalism and extinction. It also elucidates the meaning of *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*:

Bhikkhus, both devas and humans are subjected to the hold of two views. Some are bogged down, some overreach, while those with vision see. And how, monks, are some bogged down?

Devas and humans delight in becoming (*bhava*), rejoice in becoming, take pleasure in becoming. When the Dhamma is being taught for the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), the hearts of those devas and humans do not leap forward, do not gain confidence, do not become settled, do not yield. Thus are some bogged down.

And how, monks, do some overreach?

Some devas and humans are afflicted, depressed, and disgusted by becoming. They delight in non-becoming (*vibhava*: extinction), saying: ‘My good sir, with the breaking up of the body at death, this self is annihilated, destroyed, and no longer exists. This state is supreme, excellent and true.’ Thus do some overreach.

And how, monks, do those with vision see?

In this case, a monk sees becoming as becoming.<sup>98</sup> When he sees becoming as becoming, he practises for disenchantment (*nibbidā*), dispassion (*virāga*), and cessation (*nirodha*) in regard to becoming. Thus do those with vision see. {506}

*Whoever sees becoming as becoming,  
And sees the state beyond becoming,  
Surrenders to the Truth,  
Through the exhaustion of lust for existence.  
With full understanding of becoming,  
One is free from craving,*



*For both existence and extinction (abhava).  
With the end of what has come to be,  
A monk comes not to further birth.*<sup>99</sup>

*It. 43-4; Ps. 1. 159.*

The Buddha's repudiation of the view that consciousness leaves the body and takes a new birth is of particular interest in the study of rebirth. Although the subject of rebirth is not directly linked to *Nibbāna*, examining the teachings on rebirth may add to an understanding of *Nibbāna*.

On that occasion a wrong view had arisen in a bhikkhu named Sāti, son of a fisherman, thus: 'As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another....'

The bhikkhus were unable to detach him from that pernicious view, so they went to the Buddha and told him all that had occurred....

(The Buddha then called the bhikkhu Sāti) and asked him: 'Sāti, is it true that the following pernicious view has arisen in you: "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another?"'

'Exactly so, venerable sir....'

'What is that consciousness, Sāti?'

<sup>98</sup>That is, he sees its true nature. The term for 'becoming' here is *bhūta*, meaning 'what has become', 'what exists', or 'what has come into being'. It shares the same root as *bhava* ('becoming', 'being'). The commentaries define it as the five aggregates (ItA. I. 179).

<sup>99</sup>Although the closing verses seem to complement the main passage, the commentaries render them as follows: *Noble disciples, who see the true nature of the five aggregates and see the Path transcending the aggregates, find release in Nibbāna, the Absolute, through the exhaustion of lust for existence. By fully understanding the aggregates, they are free from lust for planes of existence, both high and low. Free of the aggregates, they come to no further birth.* (ItA. I. 180); compare the Buddha's words on the two extremes at Ud. 71-72.

‘Venerable sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions.’

‘Misguided man, to whom have you ever known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? In many discourses have I not stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness? But you, misguided man, have misrepresented us by your wrong grasp and injured yourself and stored up much demerit; for this will lead to your harm and suffering for a long time.’

Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: ‘Bhikkhus, consciousness is reckoned by the particular condition dependent upon which it arises. When consciousness arises dependent on the eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sounds, it is reckoned as ear-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the nose and odours, it is reckoned as nose-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the tongue and flavours, it is reckoned as tongue-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the body and tangibles, it is reckoned as body-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the mind and mind-objects, it is reckoned as mind-consciousness. Just as fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns ... it is reckoned as a log fire ... a woodchip fire ... a grass fire ... a cowdung fire ... a chaff fire ... a rubbish fire.... {507}

*Mahātanhāsaṅkhaya Sutta: M. I. 256-60.*

This teaching corrects the misguided view that arahants are annihilated after death:

On one occasion the following wrong view had arisen in a bhikkhu named Yamaka: ‘As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed is annihilated and perishes with the breakup of the body and does not exist after death.’

A number of bhikkhus unsuccessfully tried to rid him of this wrong view. They therefore asked the Ven. Sāriputta for assistance. Sāriputta approached Yamaka and conducted the following conversation:

‘Is it true, friend Yamaka, that such a pernicious view as this has arisen in you: “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed is annihilated and perishes with the breakup of the body and does not exist after death”?’

‘Exactly so, friend.’

‘What do you think, friend Yamaka, is form permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, friend.’

‘Is feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, friend.’

‘Therefore, any kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near ... should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” Seeing thus, [one’s mind] is liberated....

‘What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard form as the Tathāgata?’<sup>100</sup> ‘No, friend.’

‘Do you regard feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as the Tathāgata?’ ‘No, friend.’

‘What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard the Tathāgata as in form?’ ‘No, friend.’

‘Do you regard the Tathāgata as apart from form?’ ‘No, friend.’

‘Do you regard the Tathāgata as in feeling ... apart from feeling ... as in perception ... apart from perception ... as in volitional formations ... as apart from volitional formations ... as in consciousness ... as apart from consciousness?’ ‘No, friend.’

‘What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness [taken together] as the Tathāgata?’ ‘No, friend.’

‘What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard the Tathāgata as one who is without form, without feeling, without perception, without volitional formations, without consciousness?’ {508}

‘No, friend.’

‘But friend, when the Tathāgata is not apprehended by you as real and actual here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare: “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed is annihilated and perishes with the breakup of the body and does not exist after death”?’

‘Formerly, friend Sāriputta, when I was ignorant, I did hold that pernicious view, but now that I have heard this Dhamma teaching of the Venerable Sāriputta I have abandoned that pernicious view and have made the breakthrough to the Dhamma.’

‘If, friend Yamaka, people were to ask you: “Friend Yamaka, when a bhikkhu is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed, what happens to him with the breakup of the body, after death?” – being asked thus, what would you answer?’

‘If they were to ask me this, friend, I would answer thus: “Friends, form is impermanent; what is impermanent is dukkha; what is dukkha has ceased and passed away. Feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is impermanent; what is impermanent is dukkha; what is dukkha has ceased and passed away.” Being asked thus, friend, I would answer in such a way.’

‘Good, good, friend Yamaka.’<sup>101</sup>

In this teaching the Buddha, while conversing with the wanderer Vacchagotta, compares the death of an arahant with the extinguishing of a fire:

‘When a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated thus, Master Gotama, where does he reappear [after death]?’

‘The term “reappears” does not apply,<sup>102</sup> Vaccha.’

‘Then he does not reappear, Master Gotama?’

‘The term “does not reappear” does not apply, Vaccha.’

‘Then he both reappears and does not reappear, Master Gotama?’

‘The term “both reappears and does not reappear” does not apply, Vaccha.’

‘Then he neither reappears nor does not reappear, Master Gotama?’

‘The term “neither reappears nor does not reappear” does not apply, Vaccha.’

‘Here I have fallen into bewilderment, Master Gotama, here I have fallen into confusion, and the measure of confidence I had gained through previous conversation with Master Gotama has now disappeared.’ {509}

‘It is enough to cause you bewilderment, Vaccha, enough to cause you confusion. For this Dhamma, Vaccha, is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. It is hard for you to understand it when you hold another view, accept another teaching, approve of another teaching, pursue a different training, and follow a different teacher. So I shall question you about this in return, Vaccha. Answer as you choose.

<sup>100</sup>The commentaries interpret the term *tathāgata* here as meaning a being or person (SA. II. 310).

<sup>101</sup>This dialogue is followed by a lengthy simile.

‘What do you think, Vaccha? Suppose a fire were burning before you. Would you know: “This fire is burning before me?”’

‘I would, Master Gotama.’

If someone were to ask you, Vaccha: “What does this fire burning before you burn in dependence on?” – being asked thus, what would you answer?”

‘Being asked thus, Master Gotama, I would answer: “This fire burning before me burns in dependence on grass and sticks.”’

‘If that fire before you were to be extinguished, would you know: “This fire before me has been extinguished?”’

‘I would, Master Gotama.’

If someone were to ask you, Vaccha: “When that fire before you was extinguished, to which direction did it go: to the east, the west, the north, or the south?” – being asked thus, what would you answer?

‘That does not apply, Master Gotama. The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is reckoned as extinguished.

‘So too, Vaccha, the Tathāgata has abandoned that material form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata might describe him; he has cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, done away with it so that it is no longer subject to future arising. The Tathāgata is liberated from reckoning in terms of material form ... feelings ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, Vaccha, he is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean. The term “reappears” does not apply, the term “does not reappear” does not apply, the term “both reappears and does not reappear” does not apply, the term “neither reappears nor does not reappear” does not apply.

Following this conversation faith arose in the wanderer Vacchagotta and he declared himself a lay follower.<sup>103</sup> {510}

*Aggīvacchagotta Sutta, especially the concluding sections (M. I. 486-9)*

The Ratana Sutta describes arahants as follows:

*With previous [birth] exhausted,  
and no new birth arising,  
the mind disengaged from future birth,  
the seeds of existence destroyed,  
with no impulse to grow again.  
Those wise ones are extinguished even as this lamp.*

*Sn. 41-42.*

At the final passing away (*parinibbāna*) of Ven. Dabba-Mallaputta, the Buddha uttered this verse:

*Broken is the body, all perception has ceased,  
Feelings are stilled, volitional formations calmed,  
And consciousness has reached its end.*

*Ud. 93.*

The Buddha recounted the events of this passing away to the monks and uttered this verse:

*Just as the destination of a blazing spark of fire  
Struck from the anvil, gradually fading,  
Cannot be known – so in the case of those  
Who have rightly won release and crossed the flood  
Of binding lusts, and reached unshakeable bliss,  
Their destination cannot be defined.*

*Ud. 93.*

<sup>102</sup>*Na upeti* (the commentaries use *na yujjati*): ‘does not “go with” or is “incongruent” with this subject.’

<sup>103</sup>Later, the wanderer Vacchagotta was ordained as a bhikkhu and became one of the arahants (M. I. 497); the Buddha and Vacchagotta have another interesting discussion in which the Buddha says: *Just as a fire burns with fuel, but not without fuel, so I declare rebirth for one with fuel, not for one without fuel.... Craving is [the] fuel* (S. IV. 398-400).

## 6.10 APPENDIX 1: SA-UPĀDISESA AND ANUPĀDISESA

{420} Some scholars interpret the passages in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya,<sup>104</sup> which classify enlightened beings into two kinds, i.e. *sa-upādisesa-puggala* (*sekha* – stream-enterers, once-returners and non-returners – who are still subject to grasping and defilement), and *anupādisesa-puggala* (*asekha* – arahants – who are freed from grasping and defilement), by translating *upādi* as *upādāna* ('grasping'), and thus define the two kinds of Nibbāna this way:

1. *Sa-upādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna with grasping remaining, or Nibbāna of those with latent defilement, i.e. Nibbāna of stream-enterers, once-returners, and non-returners.
2. *Anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*: Nibbāna with no grasping remaining, or Nibbāna of those freed from grasping, i.e. Nibbāna of arahants.

Translating this way springs from a confusion between 'states' (*bhava*), i.e. *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* and *anupādisesa-nibbāna*, and 'persons' (*puggala*), i.e. *sa-upādisesa-puggala* and *anupādisesa-puggala*. The two kinds of Nibbāna describe the relationship between Nibbāna and awakened beings. The two persons describe the attributes of those in contact with Nibbāna. To avoid confusion these two pairs should be clearly distinguished. The distinguishing word in this case is *upādi*, which has a different meaning when referring to either Nibbāna or to enlightened beings. Note, however, that some commentarial passages reinforce this misunderstanding that *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* is the Nibbāna of *sa-upādisesa-puggala*.<sup>105</sup>

A clear development of the meanings of the two terms *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* and *anupādisesa-nibbāna*, stressing an activity or event, is the establishment of the terms *kilesa-parinibbāna* and *khandha-parinibbāna*. The former corresponds to *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna*, while the latter corresponds to *anupādisesa-nibbāna*. Despite the frequent use of these terms in this way, the commentators and sub-commentators were well aware of

<sup>104</sup> A. IV. 75, 380.

<sup>105</sup> See: ItA. I. 166.



the meaning of *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* as denoting the quality of a state, as can be seen by these examples:

The Buddha abided in the Nibbāna element with remainder, conducting his life for the benefit of all beings, faring well in this world until he attained the Nibbāna element without remainder.

*VismṬ.: Dutiyo Bhāgo, Paññābhuminiddesavaṇṇanā,  
Avijjāpaccayāsankhārapadavittārahakathāvaṇṇanā.*

With the fruit of arahantship, [the arahants] are completely dispassionate, abiding in the Nibbāna element with remainder, wise, diligent all day and night. With the end of their final mind, they attain the Nibbāna element without remainder with their final passing.

*ItA. II. 119.*

## 6.11 APPENDIX 2: DIṬṬHADHAMMIKA AND SAMPARĀYIKA

As noun forms, *diṭṭhadhammika* and *samparāyika* exist as *diṭṭhadhamma* and *samparāya*, respectively. These four words are used extensively, both in the Pali Canon and in the commentaries, and generally have the meaning of ‘present’ or ‘this life’ on the one hand, and ‘future’, ‘next life’, or ‘next world’, on the other.<sup>106</sup> The compounds with *attha* – *diṭṭhadhammikattha* (‘present welfare’) and *samparāyikattha* (‘future welfare’) – are especially familiar to scholars. Later, in the commentaries, one occasionally finds *paramattha* (‘supreme welfare’) included to form a triad.<sup>107</sup> In the original scriptures, however, one only finds the pair of *diṭṭhadhammikattha* and *samparāyikattha*.<sup>108</sup> In this context *samparāyikattha* refers to the welfare that surpasses or transcends that of *diṭṭhadhammikattha*, and includes the definition of *paramattha*. *Paramattha* was originally used on its own

<sup>106</sup>E.g.: M. I. 87; Sn. 24.

<sup>107</sup>Nd2. 57, 66.

<sup>108</sup>See: Vin. I. 181; D. II. 240; M. II. 144; S. I. 82, 87; A. III. 49, 364; It. 16-17.

as a synonym for Nibbāna.<sup>109</sup> In later contexts the definition of *sam-parāyikattha* was narrowed to mean ‘future welfare’, ‘of the next world’, or ‘heavenly’, which was a welfare below the supreme, that is, not yet of Nibbāna.

An example of *sam-parāyikattha* being used in its original context is the story of the old brahmin Brahmāyu, who visited the Buddha:

Then the brahmin Brahmāyu thought: ‘Permission has been granted me by the recluse Gotama. Which should I ask him about: good in this life or the supreme good?’ Then he thought: ‘I am skilled in the good of this life, and others too ask me about good in this life. {421} Why shouldn’t I ask him only about the supreme good?’ Then he addressed the Blessed One in stanzas:

*‘How does one become a brahmin?  
And how does one attain to knowledge?  
How has one the triple knowledge?  
And how does one become a holy scholar?  
How does one become an arahant?  
And how does one attain completeness?  
How is one a silent sage?  
And how can one be called a Buddha?’*

M. II. 144.

In its original sense, *sam-parāyika* too encompasses the meaning of *para-mattha*, as seen in the Kaṇṇakathala Sutta, where King Pasenadi asks the Buddha about the distinction between members of the four castes.<sup>110</sup> The Buddha replied that, concerning the present life, nobles and brahmins are held to be superior since people pay homage to them, but concerning a person’s spiritual attainments caste plays no role; here only the quality of a person’s effort is important. As for deliverance, the Buddha claimed there is no difference between that achieved by members of various social classes.

<sup>109</sup> E.g.: Sn. 11, 38; M. II. 173.

<sup>110</sup> M. II. 128-30.

Similarly, in the *Mahāniddeśa*:

One sees two benefits, mundane and transcendent, from personal beliefs. What is the mundane benefit stemming from belief? Here, whatever is the doctrine of the teacher, the disciples share this doctrine. They honour, respect, worship and hold in awe the teacher of this doctrine, and as a consequence they receive robes, almsfood, lodgings and medicine. And what is the transcendent benefit stemming from belief? Those disciples wish for the future: ‘May this doctrine lead to birth as a *nāga*, *garuḍa* ... as *Indra*, *Brahma* or as a god. This doctrine is sufficient for purity and deliverance. This view leads to purity and deliverance.’

*Nd1. 73-4.*

The commentators tended to restrict the definitions, *diṭṭhadhammika* referring to this existence and life, and *samparāyika* referring to the next life or world.<sup>111</sup> Some commentaries on the two elements of *Nibbāna* use these same restricted definitions, i.e. *diṭṭhadhammika* meaning ‘in this life’, and *samparāyika* meaning ‘in the future’ or ‘after death’.<sup>112</sup>

### 6.12 APPENDIX 3: FINAL MIND

*Carima-citta*, *carimaka-citta*, *carima-viññāṇa* and *carimaka-viññāṇa* all mean the same thing, that is ‘last mind’, ‘final consciousness’, or more explicitly, ‘last mind in existence’. It refers to the passing away (*cuti*) of an arahant’s mind. Also called *parinibbāna-citta*, it is the mind of an arahant at death, or the mind at the moment of final passing.<sup>113</sup>

The term *carima-viññāṇa* is first used in the *Cūḷaniddeśa*, a secondary text of the *Tipiṭaka*, for example:

<sup>111</sup>E.g.: AA. II. 88; ItA. I. 79.

<sup>112</sup>ItA. I. 167.

<sup>113</sup>See VinT.: *Dutiyo Bhāgo, Pārājikakaṇḍam, Paṭhamapārājikam, Sudinnabhāṇavāraṇṇanā*, and the Burmese sub-commentary on the *Dīgha-Nikāya* [1/364; 2/161, 419]; the Thai edition is not yet in print.

At the final passing of an arahant, attaining the Nibbāna element without remainder, due to the cessation of final consciousness, right here wisdom and mindfulness, materiality and mentality, also cease; they are stilled, made tranquil and no longer established.

*Nd2. 8, explaining Sn. 198-9, and referred to at DhSA. 236.*

In the commentaries, the terms *carima-viññāṇa* and *carima-citta* are frequently used; they sometimes associate *carima-citta* with attainment of the Nibbāna element without remainder. Equally, they associate the attainment of or initial abiding in *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* with the fruit of arahantship.<sup>114</sup> Note that in many Thai editions *carima-citta* and *carima-viññāṇa* are printed as *purima-citta* and *purima-viññāṇa* ('preceding mind/consciousness').<sup>115</sup> Examples of such inconsistency include canonical texts that use *purima* and the explanatory commentarial text that uses *carima*, or a passage in one volume using one term and the identical passage in another volume using the other. The evidence, however, confirms that the correct term is *carima*.

#### 6.13 APPENDIX 4: 'ATTAINING' NIBBĀNA

{481} I have occasionally used the expression 'attaining Nibbāna' because it is familiar and easy to understand, although the term that is more accurate or specific to this context is *sacchikiriya* (its verb form is *sacchikaroti*; later texts sometimes use *sacchikaraṇa*), which literally means 'realization'. The commentaries explain it as 'to experience or see clearly for oneself'. Although 'attaining Nibbāna' may be more convenient, using 'realizing Nibbāna' probably has less risk of misunderstanding. 'Attainment' is closer to the Pali words *adhigama* (verb: *adhigacchati*) and *patti*

<sup>114</sup>See: DhA. II. 163; ItA. II. 119; SnA. I. 257; related material at: NdA. 5; VinA. I. 203; DA. I. 180 = MA. III. 289 = SA. II. 179 = AA. III. 187 = UdA. 308 = PañcA. 235 = VinT.: Tatiyo Bhāgo, Cammakkhandaṇṇa, Soṇakūṭikaṇṇavathukathāvaṇṇana; AA. II. 352; AA. IV. 1; DA. I. 226 = UdA. 175 = MA. I. 128 = AA. II. 264 = VinT.: Tatiyo Bhāgo, Mahāvaggaṭikā, Anattalakkhaṇasuttavaṇṇana; SnA. II. 518; KhA. 195 = SnA. I. 277; PsA. I. 172; DA. II. 394; NdA. 6; SA. II. 81; UdA. 216; Vism. 509, 688-9; some Thai editions are not yet available, but Burmese and Roman alphabet editions are.

<sup>115</sup>E.g.: Nd2. 8; SA. II. 81; KhA. 195.

(past participle used with *Nibbāna*: *patta*). Both of these words are frequently used with *Nibbāna*, but in secondary contexts and usually in verses.<sup>116</sup>

The following words used with *Nibbāna* are scattered throughout the scriptures and are mainly used in verse: *ārādheti* ('attain', 'accomplish'), *phusati* ('reach', 'touch'), *gacchati* ('arrive at'), and *labhati* ('obtain').

#### 6.14 APPENDIX 5: ANUPĀDA-PARINIBBĀNA

MA. II. 155 states that *anupādā-parinibbāna* equals *appaccaya-parinibbāna* ('complete unconditioned *Nibbāna*'), and the *Majjhima Nikāya* Ṭīkā<sup>117</sup> states that *appaccaya-parinibbāna* equals *anupādisesa-parinibbāna*.<sup>118</sup> It follows therefore that *anupādisesa-parinibbāna* is identical to both *anupādā-parinibbāna* and *appaccaya-parinibbāna*, i.e. identical to the essential nature of *Nibbāna* as discussed earlier in this chapter. DhA. I. 286, ItA. I. 170, and BvA. 227 substitute the term *anupādā-parinibbāna* for *anupādisesa-parinibbāna*.

*Anupādā-parinibbāna* is an important term denoting *Nibbāna*; it always stands on its own and is often used to express the goal of Buddhism, e.g.:

'Bhikkhu, the Dhamma is taught by me for the sake of final *Nibbāna* without fuel',<sup>119</sup> and: 'It is for the sake of final *Nibbāna* without fuel that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One.'<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup>*Sacchikiriyā* and *sacchikaroti*, e.g.: M. I. 56, 63; M. II. 242; M. III. 136; S. IV. 252, 262; S. V. 11, 49, 141, 167, 185; A. I. 8, 221; A. II. 196; A. III. 314, 326, 423; A. IV. 427; D. II. 290, 315; Kh. 3; Sn. 47; Ps. 200; *sacchikaraṇa*, e.g.: AA. II. 333; AA. IV. 67; KhA. 151; SnA. I. 299; DA. III. 1044; MA. II. 234; MA. IV. 60; VbhA. 510.

*Adhigacchati*, e.g.: in prose: M. I. 173; in verse, S. I. 22; S. II. 279; A. I. 163; A. III. 214; It. 104; Thag. verse 1165; Vv. verse 841; Thīg. verse 113.

*Patta* in verse, e.g.: D. III. 272; M. I. 227; S. I. 189, 214; Dh. verse 134; Sn. 33, 79; Thag. verse 1230; Thīg. verses 21, 45, 477.

<sup>117</sup>Referred to in Maṅgal.2, Rathavinītasuttavaṇṇanā, Sattavisuddhipaṇḥavaṇṇanā.

<sup>118</sup>[Trans.: the material in this appendix is part of a footnote on page 390 of the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*.]

<sup>119</sup>S. IV. 48.

<sup>120</sup>M. I. 148; S. V. 29. See also: Vin. V. 164; A. I. 44; A. IV. 74; A. V. 65.

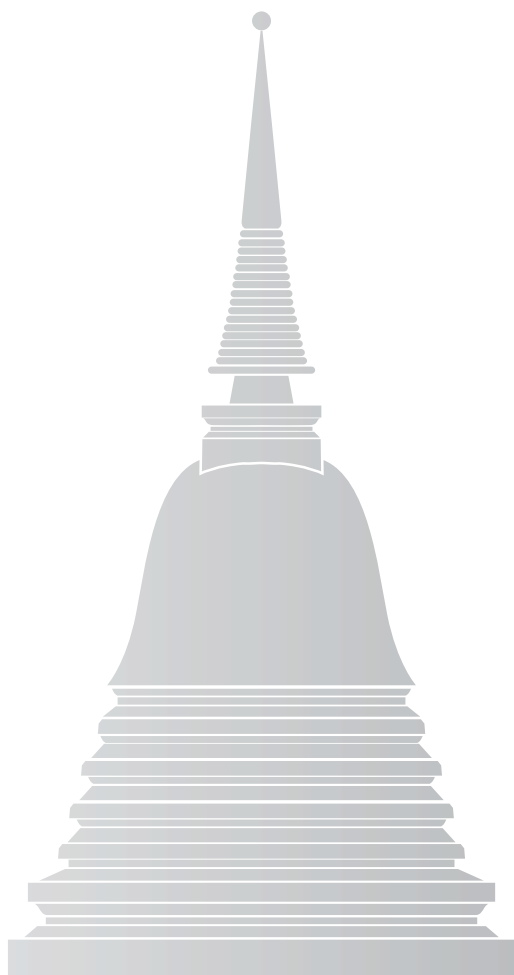
The commentaries generally define *anupādā-parinibbāna* as *appaccaya-parinibbāna* – the Unconditioned – i.e. not conditioned by any ‘fuel’,<sup>121</sup> which can be realized in this very life. Some teachers claim that *anupādā-parinibbāna* translates as ‘final Nibbāna without clinging (*upādāna*)’, referring to the fruit of arahantship, but the commentators reject this opinion.<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, the *Vimuttimagga*, composed by Upatissa before Buddhaghosa composed the *Visuddhimagga*, explains *nissaraṇa-vimutti* as *anupādisesa-parinibbāna*.<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, this opinion conforms to the meaning expressed above. See the following discussion on deliverance.

<sup>121</sup>SA. II. 335; SA. III. 133; AA. II. 80; AA IV. 38; AA. V. 27; ItA. II. 106.

<sup>122</sup>Discussed at MA. II. 156.

<sup>123</sup>English version, translated from the Chinese, p. 2.





14th century BE  
(7-8th century CE)  
Bronze Buddha Image,  
Sukhothai Period  
Wat Benchamabophit  
Dusitvanaram  
or Marble Temple  
Rama 5 Road, Dusit,  
Bangkok, Thailand



# CHAPTER 7

## AWAKENED BEINGS

### *Awakened Beings*

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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There is a well-known teaching in the Buddhist scriptures describing the stages of enlightenment – the stages of realizing Nibbāna. This comprises the four paths (*magga*) and four fruits (*phala*):

1. The path and fruit of stream-entry  
(*sotāpatti-magga* and *sotāpatti-phala*).
2. The path and fruit of once-returning  
(*sakadāgāmi-magga* and *sakadāgāmi-phala*).
3. The path and fruit of non-returning  
(*anāgāmi-magga* and *anāgāmi-phala*).
4. The path and fruit of arahantship  
(*arahatta-magga* and *arahatta-phala*).

The first ‘path’ of stream-entry is also called ‘vision’ (*dassana*), because it refers to the first glimpse of Nibbāna. The following three ‘paths’, of once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship, are collectively known

as ‘cultivation’ (*bhāvanā*), since they involve a development in the Dhamma initially realized at the moment of stream-entry.<sup>1</sup> {403}

Those who have reached complete realization of Nibbāna, as well as those who obtain a first glimpse of the goal and are thus guaranteed to reach it, are classified as true disciples of the Buddha. They are known as the ‘community of disciples’ (*sāvaka-saṅgha*), as seen for example in the verse praising the attributes of the Sangha: ‘They are the Blessed One’s disciples who have practised well.’

There are many special terms used to describe these true disciples. The most frequently used term is *ariya-puggala* (or *ariya*), translated as ‘cultivated’, ‘noble’, or ‘far from the foe’ (i.e. far from mental defilement). The term *ariya-puggala* was originally used in a general sense; only later was it used specifically in relation to the stages of enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> The original term used in the Pali Canon when distinguishing the stages of enlightenment is *dakkhiṇeyya* (or *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*). In any case, the terms *ariya-puggala* and *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* were adopted from Brahmanism. The Buddha altered their meanings, as he did with many other words, for example: *brahmā*, *brāhmaṇa* (‘brahmin’), *nahātaka* (‘washed clean’), and *vedaḡū* (‘sage’).

The Buddha gave the term *ariya* a new definition, different from that prescribed by the brahmins. The word *ariya* (Sanskrit: *ārya*; English: Aryan) originally referred to a race of people who migrated from the northwest regions and invaded the Indian subcontinent several thousand years ago. As a result of this invasion, the native inhabitants retreated either south or into the forests and mountains. The Aryans considered themselves cultivated; they disdained the native people, marking them as savages and enslaving them. Later, when the Aryans had consolidated their rule and established the caste system, the native peoples were accorded the lowest tier as *sudda* (Śūdra; labourers). The term *ariya* (‘noble’) designated the three upper castes of *khattiya* (Kṣatriyaḥ; warriors, kings,

<sup>1</sup>MA. I. 73; DhsA. 356; Vism. 697; VismT: Ñāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Pariññādiṭṭhapabbhedakathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>2</sup>The first example of using *ariya-puggala* as a term specific to stages of enlightenment occurs in the Puggala Paññatti of the Abhidhamma (Pug. 11-12, 14). See related material at: Vin. V. 117; Nd. I. 232; Ps. I. 167.

administrators), *brāhmaṇa* (brahmins; scholars, priests, teachers), and *vessa* (Vaishya; merchants). Suddas and all others were labelled *anariya* ('ignoble', 'base').<sup>3</sup> A person's caste was determined at birth; there was no way to choose or alter one's position.

When the Buddha began teaching, he declared that nobility does not depend on birth, but rather on righteousness (Dhamma), which stems from spiritual practice and training. Whoever acts in line with noble principles (*ariya-dhamma*) is 'noble' (*ariya*) irrespective of birth or caste. Whoever does not is *anariya*. Truth is not restricted to the dictates of brahmins and the Vedas,<sup>4</sup> but is objective and universal. A person who has realized these universal truths is noble, despite having never studied the Vedas. Because knowledge of these truths makes one noble, they are called the 'noble truths'.<sup>5</sup> {404} Technically, those who understand the noble truths are stream-enterers and above. Therefore, the scriptures generally use the term *ariya* as synonymous with *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* ('those worthy of offerings'), a term which will be discussed shortly.

The Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*) are sometimes referred to as the *ariya-dhamma*.<sup>6</sup> The term *ariya-dhamma*, however, does not have a fixed definition and is used in other contexts.<sup>7</sup> It can refer to the ten 'whole-some ways of action' (*kusala-kammaṭṭha*)<sup>8</sup> and to the five precepts.<sup>9</sup> Such definitions are not contradictory, since those householders who truly keep the five precepts their entire lives, without blind adherence (*śīlabbata-parāmāsa*) and without blemish, are stream-enterers and above. The standard commentarial definition of *ariya* in reference to 'noble'

<sup>3</sup>See *ārya* in 'A Sanskrit-English Dictionary' by Sir Monier Monier-Williams (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 152. See also 'The Laws of Manu' (Manava Dharma Shastra).

<sup>4</sup>Trans.: Vedas: body of ancient Brahmanistic sacred texts.

<sup>5</sup>S. V. 433 (referred to at Vism. 495; in the Pali Canon the word *ariyoti* has vanished. See also ItA. I. 85; PsA. I. 62). Cf.: S. V. 435.

<sup>6</sup>Alternatively: *ārya-dhamma*. Sn. 62; SnA. I. 350.

<sup>7</sup>See, e.g.: DA. II. 643; A. V. 241; Nd2A. 77.

<sup>8</sup>A. V. 274.

<sup>9</sup>A. II. 69; AA. III. 213, 300; AA. III. 303.

people encompasses the Buddha, Pacceka-Buddhas<sup>10</sup> and disciples of the Buddha,<sup>11</sup> although in some places the definition refers to the Buddha alone.<sup>12</sup> When qualifying a spiritual practice or factor, *ariya* is equivalent to ‘transcendent’ (*lokuttara*),<sup>13</sup> although this is not always strictly the case.<sup>14</sup>

Although the definition of *ariya* is rather broad, one can summarize that when the term is used in reference to people it is identical to *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*, meaning those who have gone beyond the state of ordinary persons and become members of the *sāvaka-saṅgha* (today, more often called the *ariya-saṅgha*). (See also Note 7.1). In the commentaries and sub-commentaries this definition is almost fixed, with very few exceptions. In the scriptures, the term *ariya* tends to be used in a general sense, not specifying the level of awakening. *Dakkhiṇeyya* is the more specific technical term and is used less often than *ariya*.

The Buddha extended the meaning of the term *ariya*, referring to members of a new community, i.e. Buddhist disciples who are ennobled by practising the Middle Way. These disciples live ethically, non-violently and in harmony. They are dedicated to promoting wellbeing for all. {405} Their actions are not ruled by the enticements and threats of religious officials, who often cater to people’s selfish needs. Moral principles may be perverted due to the decisions of such religious authorities. An example of this is the sacrifice of animals performed by brahmins.

*Dakkhiṇeyya* translates as ‘one worthy of offerings’.<sup>15</sup> The original Brahmanic meaning of this word referred to the payment received for

<sup>10</sup>Trans.: ‘Silent Buddhas’; those who have reached the supreme awakening by themselves, but do not proclaim this truth to the world.

<sup>11</sup>VinA. I. 165; DA. III. 1009; Nd1A. II. 379; NdA. [2/200]; Vism. 425. The Vibhaṅga of the Abhi-dhamma defines *ariya* as comprising Buddhas and disciples of Buddhas (Vbh. 259). [Trans.: although *ariya* usually refers to ‘enlightened’ disciples, there are some exceptions. See below.]

<sup>12</sup>E.g.: MA. I. 60; SA. III. 208; Nd1A. II. 272; DhsA. 349.

<sup>13</sup>E.g.: M. III. 72; AA. III. 416; Nd1A. II. 336.

<sup>14</sup>The term *ariya* can sometimes designate the mundane (*lokiya*), e.g.: SA. I. 35; SA. III. 303.

<sup>15</sup>Offerings = *dakkhiṇā* (Sanskrit: *dakṣiṇā*). *Dakkhiṇā* + *neyya* (*taddhita* suffix; ‘secondary derivative’) = *dakkhiṇeyya*.

## NOTE 7.1: COMMENTARIAL CATEGORIES OF ARIYAS

Some exceptions include passages at: J. II. 42; 280; J. III. 81; J. IV. 293. The commentaries explain these exceptions by classifying *ariya* into four categories:

1. *ācāra-ariya* – noble by behaviour; those grounded in virtue;
2. *dassana-ariya* – noble in appearance; those possessing features that instil confidence;
3. *liṅga-ariya* – noble by ‘gender’, i.e. those living the life of a spiritual renunciant (*samaṇa*);
4. *paṭivedha-ariya* – noble through realization, i.e. the Buddha, Pacceka-Buddhas and enlightened disciples of the Buddha.

J. II. 42, 280; J. III. 354; J. IV. 291.

performing ceremonies, particularly sacrifices (*yañña*; Sanskrit: *yajña*). The Vedas describe the forms of payment, including: gold, silver, household goods, furniture, vehicles, grain, livestock, young women, and land. The more prestigious the ceremony the greater the reward. For example, in the *Ashvamedha* (‘royal horse sacrifice’) the king shared the spoils of war with the priests. The recipients of these gifts were invariably the brahmins, because they were the only ones entitled to perform the rituals.

When the Buddha began teaching he spoke in favour of abolishing animal sacrifice, and he transformed the meanings of the words *yañña* and *dakkhinā*. He developed the meaning of *yañña* into cruelty-free alms-giving, while *dakkhinā* in the Buddhist teachings refers to suitable gifts and faithful donations, not a fee or recompense.<sup>16</sup> If it is a reward then it is a reward for virtue, but it is more aptly called an offering in honour of

<sup>16</sup>The commentaries mention those things given with the belief in action (*kamma*) and the fruits of action (*kamma-vipāka*), not given with the expectation of medical assistance or other favours; see: [KhA. 200]. Some places mention things offered by those who believe in the ‘world beyond’ (*paraloka*); e.g.: Vism. 220; ItA. I. 88; VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍaṃ, Sikkhāpaccakkhānavibhaṅgavaṇṇanā.

virtue. In addition, these gifts are not excessively lavish, but simple and basic requisites essential for life.<sup>17</sup>

Persons worthy of these offerings have trained themselves and are full of goodness. They embody a virtuous and joyful life. Their very existence in the world is a blessing to others. When they go out into the wider society and impart these virtuous principles, living as an example and instructing others, they offer a priceless service to the world. And these individuals do not demand or wish for recompense. They rely on the offerings of the four requisites merely to sustain life. Offerings made to such people bear great fruit because the offerings permit goodness to manifest and increase in the world. These people are called ‘worthy of offerings’ (*dakkhiṇeyya*) because offerings made to them yield valuable results. They are also referred to as the ‘incomparable field of merit’,<sup>18</sup> because they are a source of virtue to blossom and spread in the world.<sup>19</sup>

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People give suitable remuneration to ordinary teachers; is it not appropriate for people to give simple gifts to those who teach virtue and the ways of truth? In today’s society people whose business causes destruction – harming the economy, the environment, or even human goodness – receive all sorts of lavish rewards.<sup>20</sup> Is it not right that those who protect the world and protect virtue by being moderate in consumption should receive support? Those who consume only what is necessary have minimal impact on the world’s resources; they take little and give much in return.

The making of offerings differs from ordinary giving; one does not give out of personal affection, obligation, or an expectation to get something in return. One gives with faith in the power of goodness, appreciating

<sup>17</sup>Trans.: four basic requisites: food, clothing, lodging, and medicine.

<sup>18</sup>*Anuttaraṃ puñṇakkhettaṃ lokassa.*

<sup>19</sup>See, e.g.: DA. III. 996; AA. IV. 29; VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍaṃ, Sikkhāpaccakkhānavibhaṅgavaṇṇanā.

<sup>20</sup>What we call ‘production’ or ‘industry’ invariably involves some degree of destruction. Sometimes the costs or harmful effects outweigh the value of the manufactured product. It is time that people review the true meaning of ‘industry’, ‘labour’, and ‘production’, by using a broader perspective of economics.

that the recipient is a member of the Buddhist monastic community (*saṅgha*), or that he or she upholds virtue. In any case, the recipient must possess the necessary qualities to be entitled to these offerings. For example, an unenlightened monk or novice who eats the almsfood of lay-supporters is ‘indebted’, despite having moral conduct and making effort in Dhamma practice. He should hasten to free himself from this debt by achieving the state of a *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*. Ven. Mahā Kassapa, for example, claimed that he was in debt to the laypeople for seven days, between being ordained and realizing arahantship.<sup>21</sup> After his ordination he made effort in Dhamma practice as an unawakened person for seven days, before reaching the fruit of arahantship and becoming one worthy of the offerings by the faithful laypeople.

The commentaries categorize monks and novices who receive offerings in four ways:

1. Those who behave immorally. They do not have the inner qualities fitting for a mendicant and merely wear the outward signs of a monk. They are undeserving of offerings; their use of offerings is called *theyya-paribhoga*: ‘to consume as a thief’.
2. Those who have moral conduct but do not reflect with wisdom when using the four requisites. For example, when eating almsfood they neglect to consider: ‘I eat not for pleasure or beautification. I use almsfood only for the maintenance and nourishment of this body, to keep it healthy, to sustain the holy life.’ Such use of offerings is called *ina-paribhoga*: ‘to consume as a debtor’.<sup>22</sup> {407}
3. *Sekha*, or the first seven of the eight *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* (see below). Their use of offerings is called *dāyajja-paribhoga*: ‘to consume as heirs’. They have the right to use these offerings as heirs to the Buddha, who was supreme among the *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*.

<sup>21</sup>S. II. 221.

<sup>22</sup>This is a more liberal definition than that found in the Pali Canon, which claims that all unawakened persons use offerings as debtors.

4. Arahants, who are freed from the enslavement of craving. Their virtue makes them truly worthy of offerings. Their use of offerings is called *sāmi-paribhoga*: ‘to consume as masters’.<sup>23</sup>

Here we can see that the term *dakkhiṇeyya* is used in both social and economic contexts. The principle of offerings (and to some extent the principle of generosity) fits into the wider principle of the Buddhist social structure, of having an independent group of individuals (the monastic sangha) within a wider society. These individuals gain their independence by not seeking benefits from society and not being directly involved in other social institutions. They have their own way of life based on spiritual freedom. They support society by transmitting the Dhamma, without seeking recompense for their work. They live on offerings by members of the wider society, who give out of devotion to the Dhamma in order to preserve the teachings and purify themselves of unwholesome qualities like greed. Offering this support has minimal financial impact on the supporters’ lives.

The recipients (the monastic sangha) are like bees who collect pollen from various flowers to make honey and build their hives, without damaging even the fragrance or complexion of the flowers.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, they fertilize the flowers. Because they depend on others to live, they have an obligation to act for the welfare and happiness of all. Although their life depends on others it does not depend on anyone in particular; they rely on the public and in a sense belong to the public, but are subject to no single individual.

In a well-organized society no one should be destitute and forced to beg.<sup>25</sup> In such a society religious mendicants live on the offerings of others but the receiving of alms has no resemblance to begging. This system of an independent community that is devoted to spiritual values

<sup>23</sup>VinT.: Nissaggiyakaṇḍam, Kosiyavaggo, Rūpiyasikkhāpadavaṇṇanā; MA. III. 343; SA. II. 199; AA. I. 72; Vism. 43; VismT.: Sīlaniddesavaṇṇanā, Catupārisuddhisampādanavidhivaṇṇanā.

<sup>24</sup>See: Dh. verse 49.

<sup>25</sup>See the Cakkavatti-Sutta: D. III. 61.



and provides a necessary balance to the wider society is unique among social systems in the world.

There are generally two ways to categorize *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* or *ariya-puggala*: into the eight levels of eradicating defilements (the eight levels of path and fruit mentioned above), and into the seven qualities or practices that enable the attainment of those eight levels. (The first of these classifications is presented below; the second classification is presented in a following section.)<sup>26</sup> {408}

## 7.2 EIGHT NOBLE BEINGS

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This division is associated with the ten ‘fetters’ (*saṃyojana*), which are abandoned at different levels of awakening, and with the development of the threefold training (*sikkhā*) of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom. The ten fetters are those defilements that bind beings to suffering in the round of rebirth, similar to yokes that bind an animal to a wagon:<sup>27</sup>

### A. Five lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṃyojana*):

1. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*: self-view; the firm belief in a ‘self’; the inability to see that beings are simply a collection of assorted aggregates. This view creates a coarse form of selfishness, as well as conflict and suffering.

The stock definition is: *One regards material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. One regards feeling as self.... One regards perception*

<sup>26</sup>Trans.: note that in the Thai version of *Buddhadhamma*, these two classifications are presented together.

<sup>27</sup>E.g.: S. V. 61; A. V. 17; Vbh. 377; DA. I. 312. In the Pali Canon the fourth and fifth fetters are *kāma-chanda* and *byāpāda* respectively, except for A. I. 242, where one finds *abhijjhā* and *byāpāda*. The familiar pair of *kāma-rāga* and *paṭigha* comes from secondary texts and sub-commentaries, e.g.: Ps2. 94; Vism. 683; Comp.: Samuccayaparicchedo, Akusalasaṅgaho.

*as self.... One regards volitional formations as self.... One regards consciousness as self ... or self as in consciousness.*<sup>28</sup>

2. *Vicikicchā*: doubt; hesitation; distrust. Doubts, for example, regarding the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the training, the direction of one's life, and Dependent Origination. This doubt generates a lack of confidence, courage, and discernment in walking the Noble Path.
3. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*: attachment to moral precepts and religious practices. Attachment to form and ceremony. The mistaken understanding that one will be purified and liberated merely by the act of keeping moral precepts, rules, traditions, and practices. The belief that these rules and practices are sacred in themselves. One follows them with the desire for reward or acquisition. Missing the true purpose of moral precepts and religious observances, one ends up astray or in an extreme form of practice (say of practising extreme asceticism – *tapā*), not on the Noble Path.<sup>29</sup>
4. *Kāma-rāga*: sensual lust; desire for pleasurable sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects.
5. *Paṭigha*: animosity; irritation; indignation.

B. Five higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya-saṃyojana*):

6. *Rūpa-rāga*: attachment to fine-material form, e.g. attachment to the four jhānas of the fine-material sphere; delighting in the bliss and peace of these jhānas; desiring the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-bhava*).
7. *Arūpa-rāga*: attachment to immateriality, e.g. attachment to the four immaterial jhānas; desire for the formless sphere (*arūpa-bhava*).
8. *Māna*: conceit; the view of oneself as superior, equal, or inferior to others.

<sup>28</sup>See: M. I. 300; S. IV. 287; Dh. 182-3; Vbh. 364.

<sup>29</sup>See Appendix 1 on *sīlabbata-parāmāsa*.

9. *Uddhacca*: restlessness; mental disturbance; agitation.
10. *Avijjā*: ignorance; not knowing the truth; not knowing the law of cause and effect; not knowing the Four Noble Truths. {409}

The eight *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* or *ariya-puggala* can be classified into four types or stages, which are related to the fetters in the following way:<sup>30</sup>

A. *Sekha* ('learners') or *sa-upādisesa-puggala* ('those who still have grasping'):

1. *Sotāpanna*: 'stream-enterers'; those who walk the noble path truly and correctly.<sup>31</sup> They have perfect moral conduct and an adequate level of concentration and wisdom. They have abandoned the first three fetters of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā* and *silabbata-parāmāsa*.<sup>32</sup>
2. *Sakadāgāmi*: 'once-returners'; those who will return to this world one more time and eliminate all suffering. They have perfect moral conduct and an adequate level of concentration and wisdom. Apart from abandoning the first three fetters, they have attenuated greed, hatred and delusion to a greater degree than stream-enterers.<sup>33</sup>
3. *Anāgāmi*: 'non-returners'; they reach final enlightenment from the realm where they appear after death – they do not return to this world. They have perfect moral conduct and

<sup>30</sup>The two *dakkhiṇeyya* of *sekha* and *asekha*: A. I. 63, 231-2. The four *dakkhiṇeyya* or *ariya-puggala* (in some places referred to by other names or by no name at all): e.g. D. I. 156; D. II. 251-2; D. III. 107, 132; M. III. 80-1; Pug. 63. At A. IV. 279-80 stream-enterers are divided into three types and non-returners into five types; combined with once-returners, this makes nine types of *sa-upādisesa-puggala*.

<sup>31</sup>See S. V. 347-8.

<sup>32</sup>A. III. 438 states that stream-enterers are also free from (acute) greed, hatred and delusion, which lead to states of woe (*apāya*).

<sup>33</sup>Ps. II. 94-5 states that once-returners have abandoned the fetters of coarse lust and animosity, and that non-returners have abandoned subtle lust and animosity. The Visuddhimagga states that once-returners have reduced lust and aversion (676-7). All of these interpretations are complementary.

concentration, and an adequate level of wisdom. They have abandoned two more fetters, of *kāma-rāga* and *paṭigha*, thus abandoning the first five fetters.

B. *Asekha* ('those who have finished training') or *anupādisesa-puggala* ('those with no grasping'):

4. *Arahant*: 'worthy ones'; those worthy of offerings and respect; those who have broken the spokes of the wheel of *saṃsāra*; those free from mental taints (*āśava*). They have perfect moral conduct, concentration and wisdom. They have abandoned the remaining five fetters, thus abandoning all ten fetters.

*Sekha*, translated as 'learners' or 'trainees', must apply themselves to sever the fetters and realize the gradual stages up to arahantship. *Asekha*, the arahants, are adepts; they have gone beyond training. They have finished their spiritual work and eradicated all defilements. They have reached the greatest good; there is no higher spiritual realization for which to strive.

*Sa-upādisesa-puggala* are equivalent to the first three *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* above. They still have *upādi* ('fuel'), that is, they still have *upādāna* ('grasping') – they still have mental impurities. *Anupādisesa-puggala*, the arahants, are free from grasping and impurity. Note that *upādi* here is translated as synonymous with *upādāna* ('grasping').<sup>34</sup> This differs from the *upādi* in *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna* and *anupādisesa-nibbāna*, which translates as 'that which is grasped', i.e. the five aggregates. {410} The equating of *upādi* with *upādāna* corresponds with the Buddha's teachings on essential spiritual factors, for example the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), the Four Ways of Success (*iddhi-pāda*), and the Five Faculties (*indriya*), which often end with the encouragement that one can expect one of two results from cultivating these factors: either arahantship in this very life, or if there is a residue of clinging, the state

<sup>34</sup>This translation follows the commentarial interpretation, e.g. AA. IV. 40, 174.

of non-returning.<sup>35</sup> The term *upādi* in these contexts refers to *upādāna* or generally to mental defilement (*kilesa*).

The eight noble beings are precisely these four *ariya-puggala* described above, but each level of awakening is subdivided as a pair:<sup>36</sup>

1. Stream-enterer (one who has realized the fruit of stream-entry).
2. One practising to realize stream-entry.
3. Once-returner (one who has realized the fruit of once-returning).
4. One practising to realize once-returning.
5. Non-returner (one who has realized the fruit of non-returning).
6. One practising to realize non-returning.
7. Arahant (one who has realized the fruit of arahantship).
8. One practising to realize arahantship. (See Note 7.2)

These four pairs of noble beings are known as the *sāvaka-saṅgha*, the disciples of the Buddha who are considered exemplary human beings and comprise one of the three ‘jewels’ (*ratana*) in Buddhism. The chant in praise of the Sangha includes: ‘The four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings; these are the Blessed One’s disciples’ (*yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho*).<sup>37</sup>

In the scriptures, these disciples of the Buddha are later referred to as the ‘noble sangha’ (*ariya-saṅgha*). In the older texts, the term *ariya-saṅgha* is used only once as a synonym for *sāvaka-saṅgha*, in a verse of the

<sup>35</sup>*Diṭṭheva dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā*. D. II. 314; M. I. 62, 481; S. V. 129, 237, 285; A. III. 81-2, 143; A. V. 108; It. 39; Sn. 140, 148. Explained in the commentaries: e.g. ItA. I. 169; SnA. II. 503.

<sup>36</sup>D. III. 255; A. IV. 292. The Abhidhamma divides these eight into two groups: *maggā-samaṅgī* (complete in the Path) and *phala-samaṅgī* (complete in the fruits of the Path) – Pug. 73.

<sup>37</sup>E.g. M. I. 37; A. III. 286.

## NOTE 7.2: TRANSLATIONS OF PAIRS

These days one finds the translation of these pairs as ‘fruition of stream-entry’ (*sotāpatti-phala*), ‘path of stream-entry’ (*sotāpatti-magga*), ‘fruition of once-returning’ (*sakadāgāmi-phala*), ‘path of once-returning’ (*sakadāgāmi-magga*), etc. This translation follows commentarial terminology: for *maggaṭṭha* and *phalaṭṭha* see Nd1A. II. 254; Nd2A. 15; KhA. 183; DhA. I. 334; VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍaṃ, Bhikkhupadabhājanīyavaṇṇanā; DA. II. 515 = AA. IV. 3 = PañcA. 191; MA. II. 120; UdA. 306. The terms *sotāpatti-magga*, *sakadāgāmi-magga* and *anāgāmi-magga* do not appear in the older texts of the Tipiṭaka; they first appear in the Niddesa, Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Abhidhamma. In the older texts, the term *arahatta-magga* is only found in the passages: *arahā vā assasi arahattamaggaṃ vā samāpanno* and *arahanto vā arahattamaggaṃ vā samāpannā*: Vin. I. 32, 39; D. I. 144; S. I. 78; A. II. 42; A. III. 391; Ud. 7, 65. In later texts, e.g. the Niddesa, Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Abhidhamma, it is extensively used.

Āṅguttara-Nikāya.<sup>38</sup> In the commentaries it is used frequently, especially in the Visuddhimagga.<sup>39</sup> When the term *ariya-saṅgha* gained popularity over *sāvaka-saṅgha*, the term *sammati-saṅgha* was used to refer to the *bhikkhu-saṅgha*. *Sammati-saṅgha* means the agreed-upon or authorized sangha, referring to any gathering of more than three bhikkhus. These terms are often paired: *sāvaka-saṅgha* with *bhikkhu-saṅgha*, and *ariya-saṅgha* with *sammati-saṅgha*. In any case the terms *ariya-saṅgha* and *sammati-saṅgha* do not contradict the older terms and offer a valuable perspective on the meaning of the word ‘saṅgha’. {411}

### 7.3 ATTRIBUTES OF AN ARAHANT

{343} The teaching of Buddhism is practical and emphasizes things that lead to insight and wellbeing.<sup>40</sup> Buddhism does not encourage conceptualizing and debating over things that should be realised through practical application, unless it is necessary for basic understanding. In relation to

<sup>38</sup> A. III. 373.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Vism. 218; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Ganthārambhakathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>40</sup> See some of the Buddha’s key principles at: A. II. 172-3; D. III. 134-5; M. I. 395.

Table 7.1: Eight Noble Beings

Noble Beings ( <i>dakkhiṇeyya-puggala</i> )	Training ( <i>sikkhā</i> )	Fetters Abandoned ( <i>saṃyojana</i> )
1. Stream-enterer	Perfect moral conduct; proficient level of concentration and wisdom.	1. <i>Sakkāya-diṭṭhi</i> 2. <i>Vicikicchā</i> 3. <i>Sīlabbata-parāmāsa</i>
2. Once-returner	Perfect moral conduct; proficient level of concentration and wisdom.	Attenuated greed, hatred and delusion.
3. Non-returner	Perfect moral conduct and concentration; proficient level of wisdom.	4. <i>Kāma-rāga</i> 5. <i>Paṭigha</i>
4. Arahant	Perfect moral conduct, concentration and wisdom.	6. <i>Rūpa-rāga</i> 7. <i>Arūpa-rāga</i> 8. <i>Māna</i> 9. <i>Uddhacca</i> 10. <i>Avijjā</i>

the study of Nibbāna, rather than discussing the state of Nibbāna directly, it may be of more value to study those persons who have realized Nibbāna, as well as the benefits of realization apparent in the life and character of such persons.<sup>41</sup>

We can gain some insight into the nature of arahants by looking at the epithets used for them in the scriptures. Here is a selection of these epithets, which express appreciation for their virtue, purity, excellence, and degree of spiritual attainment:

*Anuppatta-sadattha*: one who has attained wellbeing.

*Arahant*: ‘worthy one’; a person far from mental defilement.

*Asekha*: one who has finished training; a person not requiring training; a person possessing the qualities of an adept (*asekha-dhamma*).

<sup>41</sup>Trans.: in the Thai version of *Buddhadhamma* this passage immediately follows the initial section on Nibbāna.

*Kata-karaṇīya*: a person who has done what had to be done.

*Khīṇāsava*: a person free from mental taints (*āsava*).

*Mahāpurisa*: a person great in virtue; one who acts for the welfare of the manyfolk; one who has self-mastery.

*Ohitabhāra*: one who has laid down the burden.

*Parama-kusala*: a person possessing superior wholesome qualities.

*Parikkhīṇa-bhava-saṃyojana*: one who has destroyed the fetters (*saṃyojana*), which bind people to existence.

*Sammadaññā-vimutta*: a person released through consummate knowledge.

*Sampanna-kusala*: a person perfected in wholesomeness.

*Uttama-purisa*: a supreme person; a most excellent person.

*Vusitavāṇa* or *vusita brahmacariya*: a person who has fulfilled the holy life.  
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Many other terms were originally used by other religious traditions, but their meaning was altered to accord with the essential principles of Dhammavinaya, for example:

*Ariya* (or *ariya-puggala*): a noble person; an excellent person; a person who has developed non-violence towards all beings. Originally, this term referred to members of the first three castes or to those who are ‘noble’ (Aryan) by birth.

*Brāhmaṇa*: a ‘true brahmin’; a person who has passed beyond evil by abandoning all unwholesome qualities. Originally, this term referred to members of the highest caste.

*Dakkiṇeyya*: one worthy of offerings. Originally, this term referred to those brahmins who were worthy of a reward for conducting sacrifices.

*Kevalī* or *kebalī*: a ‘whole’ person; a ‘complete’ person. Originally, this term referred to the highest individual in the Jain religion.



*Nahātaka*: one who has been ‘ceremoniously bathed’; one who has ‘bathed in the Dhamma’; one who has purified his or her volitional actions (*kamma*); one who is a refuge for all beings. Originally, this term referred to a brahmin who passed through a ritual of bathing and was elevated in status.

*Samaṇa*: a tranquil person; one who has quelled the defilements. Originally, this term referred to renunciants in general.

*Vedaḡū*: a person who has arrived at knowledge; one who is well-versed in knowledge and who is released from attachment to feeling (*vedanā*). Originally, this term referred to a brahmin who had finished studying the three Vedas.<sup>42</sup>

To understand the nature of an arahant it is necessary to consider the epithets in the context of the teachings in which they are mentioned, for example: the Three Taints (*āśava*), the Three Trainings (*sikkhā*), the Ten Qualities of an Adept (*asekha-dhamma*), the Ten Fetters (*saṃyojana*), and the holy life (*brahmacariya*) as the Eightfold Path.

Many Buddhists tend to describe the attributes of an arahant and of other awakened beings from a perspective of negation, by determining those defilements that have been abandoned or dispelled. For example, a stream-enterer has eliminated the first three fetters (*saṃyojana*); a once-returner has eliminated these three fetters and further attenuated greed, hatred, and delusion; a non-returner has eliminated the first five fetters; and an arahant has eliminated all ten fetters. Alternatively, they define an arahant briefly as ‘one who is without greed, hatred and delusion’ or ‘one who is free from defilement’. Such definitions are useful in that they are clear and provide simple standards of evaluation. But they are limited; they do not clearly demonstrate the exceptional characteristics

<sup>42</sup>Some of these words are frequently used, while others occur infrequently. See, e.g.: M. I. 235, 280, 446-7; M. II. 29; S. III. 61-2; A. V. 16, 221-22; Nd. II. 10. The last few words in particular were adopted from ancient Brahmanistic expressions, although given a new meaning to accord with Buddhist principles. For example, *brāhmaṇa* originally referred to someone who has transcended evil by bathing in holy rivers, e.g. the Ganges. In Buddhism, however, this term refers to being free from evil as a consequence of practising in accord with the Eightfold Path, or is used as a metaphor, in reference to one who has ‘bathed in the Dhamma’.

and prominent features of awakened beings, nor do they describe how such beings live virtuous lives and benefit the world at large.

In fact, there are many terms and passages describing the characteristics of an arahant in affirmative ways. Many descriptions or explanations of arahants, however, cover a wide range of subject material, making it difficult to summarize the positive attributes in a clearly defined, well-ordered way. Otherwise, they recount specific incidents and individuals, but do not describe attributes common to all arahants.

An important term in this context is *bhāvitatta*, which is literally translated as ‘one who has developed himself’ or ‘one who is self-developed’.<sup>43</sup> This term is used for all arahants: the Buddha, the Silent Buddhas (*pacceka-buddhā*), and all arahant disciples of the Buddha. For example, in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, while the Buddha is travelling to the place of his final passing away, he is referred to as the ‘Developed One’. {345}

Surrounded by and amidst the group of monks, the Buddha travelled to the river Kakutthā,<sup>44</sup> and bathed in and drank from its clear, bright, clean waters.... He travelled to the Mango Grove and said to the bhikkhu Cundaka: ‘Lay out an outer robe folded into four layers for me to lie upon.’ And thus prompted by the great Adept (*bhāvitatta*), Cundaka quickly laid out an outer robe folded into four layers.

D. II. 135.

A similar expression is found in the question by the brahmin student Mettagū:

Blessed One, I wish to make an inquiry. Please tell me the meaning; I will thus consider the venerable sir to be a master of knowledge (*vedagū*), a fully developed one (*bhāvitatta*). From where does all this abundant and diverse suffering in the world come?

Sn. 202, in the ‘sixteen questions’ – soḷasa-pañhā.

<sup>43</sup>These translations are of the Pali word *bhāvitatto*, which is equivalent in meaning to the phrase: *attānaṃ bhāvetvā vaḍḍhetvā t̥hito*. A *bhāvitatta* refers to one who has developed him- or herself and is established in such cultivation; SA. I. 207.

<sup>44</sup>Trans.: the author spells this river Kakudhā.

The Buddha compared a ‘fully developed one’ – an arahant who is well-versed in the Dhamma (*bahussuta*) – to a clever ship captain, who is able to guide many people across the seas and reach their destination in safety, as is illustrated in the Nāvā Sutta:

Just as one who boards a sturdy boat, fully equipped with oars and barge-pole, who is experienced and skilful, knowing the methods of helmsmanship, is able to assist many others to cross over the waters, so too, one who is a master of knowledge (*vedagū*), a fully developed one (*bhāvitatta*), a highly learned one (*bahussuta*), stable and unshaken by worldly things, endowed with wisdom, is able to help those who are prepared to listen, in order to investigate the Dhamma and to reach fulfilment.

Sn. 56.

The Loka Sutta is similar to the previous sutta, but covers a broader subject matter, as is evident from the following passage:

Monks, these three kinds of persons appearing in the world, appear for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world – for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings. Which three?

Here, the Tathāgata appears in the world. He is the Noble One, the Fully Enlightened One, perfect in conduct and understanding, the Accomplished One, the Knower of the worlds, the Peerless Trainer of those to be trained, Teacher of gods and humans, the Awakened One, Bestower of the Dhamma. He teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the holy life of complete purity, both in spirit and in letter. Monks, this first kind of person, when appearing in the world, appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world – for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings. {346}

Furthermore, there is a disciple of that same Teacher who is an arahant, one whose mind is free from the taints ... liberated as a

consequence of thorough knowledge. That disciple teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the holy life of complete purity, both in spirit and in letter. Monks, this is the second kind of person, when appearing in the world, who appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world – for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings.

Furthermore, there is a disciple of that same Teacher who is still in training, still practising, erudite, engaged in virtuous conduct and practices (*sīla-vata*). That disciple also teaches the Dhamma, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end; he reveals the holy life of complete purity, both in spirit and in letter. Monks, this is the third kind of person, who when appearing in the world, appears for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the compassionate assistance of the world – for the welfare, the benefit, and the happiness of devas and human beings.

*The Teacher, the Supreme Seeker, is first in the world;  
Following him, the disciple, adept (bhāvitatta);  
And then the disciple in training (sekha-sāvaka), still practising,  
erudite, engaged in virtuous conduct and practices.  
These three kinds of people are supreme  
among devas and human beings.  
They radiate light, proclaim the truth,  
open the door to the Deathless,  
And help to liberate the manyfolk from bondage.  
Those who follow the noble Path,  
well-taught by the Teacher, the unsurpassed Leader –  
If they heed the teachings of the Well-Farer –  
Will put an end to suffering in this very life.<sup>45</sup>*

*It. 78-9. Bahujanahita Sutta*

<sup>45</sup>Note that the third type of person refers to awakened disciples who are still in training (*sekha*) – i.e. they not yet arahants; they are not yet ‘fully developed’ (*bhāvitatta*).

Note, however, that this term *bhāvitatta* is most often used in poetic verses, rather than in prose. This is most likely because it is concise and can be used easily in verse as a replacement for longer, more drawn-out terms and phrases. Another reason why this short term *bhāvitatta* tends not to be used in prose is because its meaning is not clearly defined. As there are not the same limitations in prose as there are in poetic composition, longer terms and phrases can be used for the sake of clarity.

At this point it is useful to ask what terms and phrases are used in prose instead of the term *bhāvitatta*. To answer this question let us look at an explanation found in the Tipiṭaka. The thirtieth volume of the Tipiṭaka – the Cūḷaniddesa – which is considered to be a collection of teachings by the ‘commander’ and chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta, elucidates some of the Buddha’s suttas contained in the Suttanipāta. One passage in the Cūḷaniddesa explains the term *bhāvitatta* as it appears in the question by the brahmin student Mettagū, cited above: {347}

How is the Blessed One an Adept (*bhāvitatta*)? Here, the Blessed One has developed the body (*bhāvita-kāya*), developed moral conduct (*bhāvita-sīla*), developed the mind (*bhāvita-citta*), developed wisdom (*bhāvita-paññā*).

(He has developed the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four paths to success, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Eightfold Path. He has abandoned the defilements, penetrated the unshakeable truth, realized cessation.)<sup>46</sup>

*Kathaṃ bhagavā bhāvitatto bhagavā bhāvitakāyo bhāvitasīlo  
bhāvitacitto bhāvitapañño (bhāvitasatipaṭṭhāno  
bhāvitasammappadhāno bhāvitaidhipādo bhāvitindriyo bhāvitabalo  
bhāvitabojjāṅgo bhāvitamaggo pahīnakilesa paṭividdhākuppo  
sacchikatanirodho.)*

Nd. II. 14.

<sup>46</sup>The section in parentheses is considered an elaboration on the main explanation.

Now let us look at a prose passage by the Buddha describing the four areas of self-mastery (*bhāvita*), which are considered an expansion on the concept of an ‘adept’ (*bhāvitatta*):

Monks, there are these five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them. What five?

In the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Despite being undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom, they will give full ordination to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct (*adhisila*), higher mind (*adhicitta*), and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā*).<sup>47</sup> These ordainees too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. They in turn will give full ordination to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These ordainees too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Thus, monks, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the discipline, and from corruption of the discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma. This is the first future danger as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize it and make an effort to prevent it.

Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Despite being undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom, they will give dependence<sup>48</sup> to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These pupils too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. {348} They in turn will give dependence to others but will not be able to guide them in higher virtuous conduct, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These pupils too will be undeveloped in body, morality, mind, and wisdom. Thus, monks, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the discipline, and from corruption of the discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma. This is the second future danger as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize it and make an effort to prevent it.

This aforementioned teaching by the Buddha is connected to some essential Dhamma principles:

*Bhāvitatta*<sup>49</sup> is a ‘word of praise’ (*guṇa-pada*), a term describing the virtue or superior quality of the Buddha and the arahants, as those who have developed themselves and completed their spiritual training. When one expands on the meaning of this term into the fourfold mastery of physical development (*bhāvita-kāya*), moral development (*bhāvita-sīla*), mental development (*bhāvita-citta*), and wisdom development (*bhāvita-paññā*), this pertains to the teaching on the four kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*): cultivation of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), virtuous conduct (*sīla-bhāvanā*), the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), and wisdom (*paññā-bhāvanā*).

Here, one needs to know some fundamentals of the Pali language. The term *bhāvita* is used either as an adjective or an adverb, describing the qualities of an individual. The term *bhāvanā*, on the other hand, is a noun, describing an action, a principle, or a form of practice. There is a compatibility between these terms in that *bhāvita* refers to someone who has fully engaged in *bhāvanā*. Therefore, one who is developed in body (*bhāvita-kāya*) has engaged in physical cultivation (*kāya-bhāvanā*), one who is developed in virtuous conduct (*bhāvita-sīla*) has engaged in moral cultivation (*sīla-bhāvanā*), one who is developed in mind (*bhāvita-citta*) has engaged in mental cultivation (*citta-bhāvanā*), and one who is developed in wisdom (*bhāvita-paññā*) has engaged in wisdom cultivation (*paññā-bhāvanā*).

This is equivalent to saying that an arahant is one who has completed the fourfold cultivation: he or she is accomplished in physical cultivation, moral cultivation, mental cultivation, and wisdom cultivation.

<sup>47</sup> I.e. in *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

<sup>48</sup> I.e. they will formally accept others as their students.

<sup>49</sup> Occasionally other terms with a similar meaning are used instead of *bhāvitatta*, in particular the term *atta-danta* (‘one who has trained himself’; ‘self-tamed’), as in the verse praising the Buddha: *manussabhūtaṃ sambuddhaṃ attadantaṃ samāhitaṃ ... devāpi taṃ namassanti* (‘Indeed, although a human being, The Perfectly Enlightened One has achieved self-mastery, whose heart is well-cultivated ... even the devas venerate him.’) – A. III. 345-6.

To clarify this matter, here is a brief description of the four kinds of cultivation (*bhāvanā*):

1. Physical cultivation (*kāya-bhāvanā*): physical development; to develop one's relationship to surrounding material things (including technology) or to the body itself. In particular, to cognize things by way of the five faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) skilfully, by relating to them in a way that is beneficial, does not cause harm, increases wholesome qualities, and dispels unwholesome qualities.
2. Moral cultivation (*sīla-bhāvanā*): development of virtuous conduct; to develop one's behaviour and one's social relationships, by keeping to a moral code, by not abusing or injuring others or causing conflict, and by living in harmony with others and supporting one another. {349}
3. Mental cultivation (*citta-bhāvanā*): to develop the mind; to strengthen and stabilize the mind; to cultivate wholesome qualities, like lovingkindness, compassion, enthusiasm, diligence, and patience; to make the mind concentrated, bright, joyous, and clear.
4. Wisdom cultivation (*paññā-bhāvanā*): to develop and increase wisdom until there arises a comprehensive understanding of truth, by knowing things as they are and by gaining a clear insight into the world and into phenomena. At this stage one is able to free the mind, purify oneself from mental defilement, and be liberated from suffering. One lives, acts, and solves problems with penetrative awareness.

When one understands the meaning of *bhāvanā* ('cultivation'), which lies at the heart of the aforementioned ways of practice, one also understands the term *bhāvita* ('adept'), which is an attribute of those who have completed their spiritual practice and fulfilled the four kinds of cultivation:

1. Physical mastery (*bhāvita-kāya*): this refers to those who have developed the body, that is, they have developed a relationship



to their physical environment and to their physical bodies; they have a healthy, contented, and respectful relationship to things and to nature; in particular, they experience things by way of the five senses, say by seeing or hearing, mindfully and in a way that fosters wisdom. They consume things with moderation, deriving their true benefit and value. They are not obsessed or led astray by the influence of preferences and aversions. They are not heedless; rather than allowing sense stimuli to cause harm, they use them for benefit; rather than being dominated by unwholesome states of mind, these individuals nurture wholesome states.

2. Moral mastery (*bhāṇita-sīla*): this refers to those who have developed virtuous conduct and developed their behaviour. They act virtuously in regard to society, by keeping to a moral code and living harmoniously with others. They do not use physical actions, speech, or their livelihood to oppress others or to create conflict, but instead they use these activities for self-development, for assisting others, and for building a healthy society.
3. Mental mastery (*bhāṇita-citta*): this refers to those who have developed their minds. As a result, their minds are lucid, bright, spacious, joyous and happy. Their minds are full of virtuous qualities, like goodwill, compassion, confidence, gratitude, generosity, perseverance, fortitude, patient endurance, tranquillity, stability, mindfulness, and concentration.
4. Wisdom mastery (*bhāṇita-paññā*): this refers to those who have trained in and developed wisdom, resulting in an understanding of the truth and a clear discernment of things according to how they really are. They apply wisdom to solve problems, to dispel suffering, and to purify themselves from mental impurities. Their hearts are liberated and free from affliction.

A noteworthy passage in this sutta is where the Buddha states that those monks who have failed to fully develop their body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom, will become preceptors and teachers, but will be unable to guide their pupils in higher virtue, higher mind, and higher

wisdom (i.e. in moral conduct – *sīla*, concentration – *samādhi*, and wisdom – *paññā*).

It is interesting that, when describing the qualities of a teacher, the Buddha mentions the four kinds of self-mastery (*bhāṇita*), but when he describes the subject of study – the teaching or the principles of practice – he mentions the threefold training, of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom. (In full, these are referred to as the ‘training in higher virtue’ – *adhisīla-sikkhā*, the ‘training in higher mind’ – *adhicitta-sikkhā*, and the ‘training in higher wisdom’ – *adhipaññā-sikkhā*.)

This distinction may raise several doubts. First, why doesn’t the Buddha use complementary or corresponding terms here? Wouldn’t it have made more sense for him to say that one who is not fully developed (*bhāṇita*) in the four ways is unable to guide someone else in the fourfold cultivation (*bhāvanā*), or conversely, one who has not completed the threefold training is unable to guide someone else in moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom? {350}

Moreover, the factors in these teachings are nearly identical. The dual teaching on cultivation (*bhāvanā*) and self-mastery (*bhāṇita*) contains the four factors of body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. The Threefold Training, on the other hand, contains the factors of virtuous conduct, concentration (i.e. ‘mind’ – *citta*), and wisdom. Therefore, wouldn’t it have been less confusing if the Buddha had stuck to one or the other of these two teachings, rather than combine them?

Many Buddhists are familiar with the sequence of practice of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, and this threefold practice is considered to be complete in itself. They are generally unfamiliar, however, with this extra factor of ‘body’ (*kāya*), and may wonder why it is added and what it means.

Here, let us simply conclude that the Buddha presented these two distinct teachings in the same context: in reference to the attributes of a teacher he mentioned the fourfold self-mastery (*bhāṇita*), while in reference to the subject of teaching he mentioned the threefold training (*sikkhā*).

A simple, short answer for why the Buddha used these two distinct teachings in the same context is that they have different objectives or goals. The teaching on the attributes of a teacher aims to describe the discernible characteristics of a teacher, in the manner of evaluating whether someone has completed spiritual training and is ready to teach others. The teaching on the subject of study on the other hand aims to describe the content and system of practice – to describe what and how to train in order to obtain desirable results.

Most importantly, a true study or training entails a natural process of developing one's life; this process accords with laws of nature and therefore the system of training must be established correctly in harmony with causes and conditions found in nature.

Let us first examine the subject of study, i.e. the threefold training. Why is this training composed of only three factors? Again, one can answer this simply by saying that this training pertains to the life of human beings which has three facets or three spheres of activity. These three factors combine to make up a person's life, and they proceed and are developed in unison.

These three factors are as follows:

1. *Communication and interaction with the world*: perceptions, relationships, association, behaviour, and responses vis-à-vis other people and external objects by way of the *dvāra* – the doorways or channels – which can be described in two ways:
  - A. *Doorways of cognition (phassa-dvāra)*: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (combined with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise six doorways).<sup>50</sup>
  - B. *Doorways of volitional action (kamma-dvāra)*: body and speech (combined with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise three doorways).

<sup>50</sup>When referring to their function or benefit for practical application these six doorways of cognition are generally called the six 'sense spheres' (*āyatana*); when referring to them while they are functioning or operative they are generally called the six 'sense faculties' (*indriya*).

This factor can be simply called ‘interaction with the world’ and represented by the word *sīla* (‘conduct’).

2. *The mind*: the activity of the mind, which has numerous attendant factors and properties. To begin with, one must have intention, also referred to as volition, deliberation, determination, or motivation. Moreover, people’s minds usually contain positive and negative qualities, strengths and weaknesses. The mind experiences feelings of pleasure and discomfort, ease and dis-ease, and feelings of indifference and complacency. There are reactions to these sensations, like pleasure and aversion, and desires to acquire, obtain, flee, or get rid of, which influence how one experiences things and how one acts, for example whether one looks at something or not, what one chooses to say, and to whom one speaks. This factor is simply called the ‘mind’ (*citta*) or the domain of concentration (*samādhi*). {351}
3. *Wisdom*: knowledge and understanding, beginning with *suta* – knowledge acquired through formal education or by way of the news media – up to and including all forms of development in the domain of thought (*cintā-visaya*) and the domain of knowledge (*ñāṇa-visaya*), including: ideas, views, beliefs, attitudes, values, attachments to various ideas and forms of understanding, and specific perspectives and points of view. This factor is called ‘wisdom’ (*paññā*).

These three factors operate in unison; they are interconnected and interdependent. A person’s interaction with the world by way of the sense faculties – by way of the doorways of cognition – and through physical and verbal behaviour (factor #1) is dependent on intention, feelings, and various other conditions in the mind (factor #2). And this entire process is dependent on the guidance by wisdom and intelligence (factor #3). The extent of one’s knowledge determines the range of one’s thoughts and actions.

Similarly, the mental factors of say determination and desire (factor #2) rely on an interaction by way of the sense faculties and physical and verbal behaviour (factor #1) in order to be fulfilled and satisfied. And

this process is determined and regulated by one's beliefs, thoughts, and understanding (factor #3), which are subject to change and adjustment.

Again, the operation and development of wisdom (factor #3) depends on the sense faculties, say of seeing or hearing, depends on the movement of the body, say of walking, organizing, seeking, seizing, etc., and applies speech to communicate and inquire (factor #1). And this process relies on mental properties, for example: interest, desire, fortitude, perseverance, circumspection, mindfulness, tranquillity, and concentration (factor #2).

The nature of human life is comprised of these three interrelated, inter-dependent factors. They comprise an integrated whole, which cannot be added to or subtracted from. As life is comprised of these three factors, any training designed to help people to live their lives well must address the development of these three areas of life.

Spiritual training is thus divided into three sections, known as the threefold training. This training is designed to develop these three areas of life to be complete and in harmony with nature. These three factors are developed simultaneously and in unison, resulting in an integrated system of practice.

From a rough perspective one may see these three factors in a similar way as to how they are sometimes outlined in the scriptures, of representing three major stages in practice, of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom. This perspective gives the appearance that one practices these factors as distinct steps and in an ordered sequence, that is, after training in moral conduct one develops concentration, which is then followed by wisdom development.

By viewing the threefold training in this way one sees a system of practice in which three factors are prominent at different stages, beginning with a coarse factor and leading to more refined factors as one progresses through the stages:

- The first stage (moral conduct) gives prominence to the relationship to one's external environment, to the sense faculties, and to physical actions and speech.

- The second stage (concentration) gives prominence to a person's inner life, to the mind.
- The third stage (wisdom) gives prominence to knowledge and understanding.

Note, however, that at each stage the other two remaining factors always function and participate. {352}

This perspective provides an overview, in which one focuses on the chief activity at each stage of the process. One gives prominence to each of the three factors respectively, so that coarser factors are ready to support the growth and promote success of more refined factors.

Take for example the task of cutting down a large tree. First, one must prepare the surrounding area so that one is able to move about easily, safely, and securely (= *sīla*). Second, one must prepare one's strength, courage, mindfulness, resolve, non-distractedness, and skill in handling an axe (= *samādhi*). Third, one must have a proper tool, like a good quality sharpened axe of the correct size (= *paññā*). If one fulfils these three requirements one succeeds in cutting down the tree.

In regard to one's regular, daily life, however, a closer analysis reveals that these three factors are constantly functioning in an interrelated, interdependent way. Therefore, in order for people to truly engage in effective spiritual practice, one should encourage them to be aware of these three factors. They should develop these factors in unison, by including skilful reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which helps to increase understanding, and mindfulness (*sati*), which helps to bring about true success.

In terms of one's spiritual practice, no matter what activity one is involved in, one is able to inspect and train oneself according to the principles of the threefold training. One thus aims to engage in all three of these factors – virtuous conduct, concentration, and wisdom – simultaneously and in all situations. When involved in an activity, one considers whether one's actions result in the affliction or distress of others, whether they cause harm, or whether they are conducive to assistance, support, encouragement, and development of others (= *sīla*).

During such activities, what is the state of one's mind? Is one acting out of selfishness, malice, greed, hatred, or delusion, or is one acting with kindness, well-wishing, faith, mindfulness, effort, and a sense of responsibility? While engaged in an activity, is the mind agitated, anxious, confused, and depressed, or is it calm, happy, joyous, content, and bright? (= *samādhī*). When engaged in an activity, does one act with clear understanding? Does one discern its purpose, objective and related principles? Does one recognize its potential benefits and drawbacks, and fully understand the way to adjust and improve the activity? (= *paññā*).

In this way skilled persons are able to train and inspect themselves, and evaluate their practice, at all times and in all situations. They cultivate all three factors of the threefold training in a single activity.

Meanwhile, the development of the threefold training from the perspective of three distinct stages unfolds automatically. From one perspective a person develops the threefold training in an ordered sequence. But from another perspective the simultaneous, unified practice of these three factors is taking place and assisting in the successful advancement of the so-called 'three-stage' training.

In this context, someone who delves deeply into the details of spiritual practice will know that at the moment of awakening – at the moment of realizing Path, Fruit, and Nibbāna – all eight factors of the Noble Path, which are classified into the three groups of *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā*, are completed and operate as one, acting to eliminate the defilements and to bring about fulfilment. {353}

To sum up, the system of Buddhist spiritual training – the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*) – is based on a relationship between requisite factors and accords with specific laws of nature. Human life is comprised of three factors – of conduct with the outside world (*sīla*), mental activities (*citta*), and understanding (*paññā*) – which act in unison and are interdependent in bringing about spiritual development.

When describing the principles of spiritual practice, the Buddha referred to these three aspects of training (*sikkhā*). We now arrive back at the question: 'Why did the Buddha adopt a new model of the fourfold self-mastery (*bhāvitā*) when he described the attributes of a teacher?'

As mentioned earlier, this question can be answered easily by saying that these two models have different aims and objectives. The threefold training is to be applied in real life – to be practised in accord with a system in harmony with nature. The four factors of self-mastery are intended for self-examination. Here, one need not be concerned with the order of nature. The emphasis here is on getting a clear picture of one's personal qualities. If one discerns these clearly, they will by their very nature be connected to the three factors of training.

This is obvious by inspecting the first factor of *sīla*, which refers to one's interaction and communication with the world, one's apprehension of the world, and one's actions in relation to the world.

As mentioned above, we interact with the world by way of two sets of 'doorways' (*dvāra*): the first set entails the doorways of cognition (*phassa-dvāra*), usually referred to as the sense faculties (*indriya*) – our awareness of the world by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The second set entails the doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*), through which we act towards and respond to the world (towards people, towards society, and towards other objects in our external environment) by physical and verbal gestures.

Here lies the distinction. In regard to interacting with the world, at any one moment (or to speak at a more refined level, at any one mind-moment) we only communicate with the world through one of the specific doorways, and one can examine this process by applying either of the two sets of doorways.

In respect to the threefold training, in which *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are part of an integrated system, the interaction with the world by way of any one of the various doorways comprises the training in 'conduct' (*sīla*); the factors of the mind (*samādhi*) and understanding (*paññā*) constitute distinct factors. The entire interaction with the world through the various doorways – both the doorways of cognition and the doorways of volitional action – is included here in the factor of *sīla*. For this reason the threefold training is comprised of three factors.

In respect to the attributes of a teacher, one need not consider the integrated functioning of the three factors contained in the threefold



training. Here, one is distinguishing between different factors for the purpose of investigation. It is precisely here at the factor of conduct (*sīla*) where a separation is made, that is, one distinguishes a person's interaction with the world according to one or the other of the two sets of doorways:

1. Doorways of cognition (*phassa-dvāra*; usually referred to as the sense faculties – *indriya*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise six doorways); these doorways enable seeing/looking, hearing/listening, smelling, tasting, and tangible contact (culminating at the mind as cognition of mental objects – *dharmārammaṇa*).
2. Doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*): body and speech (along with the meeting point of the mind, these comprise three doorways); these enable physical actions and speech (and by designating the starting point of volitional action – the mind – this also includes thinking).

The Buddha separated these two subsidiary factors of conduct (*sīla*), determining them as the first two factors in the fourfold self-mastery (*bhāṇvita*). He distinguished the first factor, of interaction with the world by way of the doorways of cognition or the sense faculties, and labeled it as 'mastery of the body' (*bhāṇvita-kāya*). (The term 'body' – *kāya* – here refers to the 'collection of five doorways' – *pañcadvārika-kāya*). The Buddha thus gave great emphasis to one's interaction with the world, in particular to cognition by way of the five senses. {354} People tend to overlook this first factor, but in relation to spiritual practice it is considered of paramount importance in Buddhism, especially in regard to measuring a person's development.

This is particularly relevant to the present era, which is referred to as the Age of Information or the IT Age. The development of people in regard to this factor determines the fork in the road between direct wisdom cultivation and getting bogged down in delusion. This principle of 'physical development' can be used as a sign warning people from

losing their way, and encouraging them to use information technology to advance civilization in a proper direction.

In terms of measuring people's spiritual development, the second subsidiary factor, of interacting with the world by way of the doorways of volitional action (*kamma-dvāra*), constitutes 'moral self-mastery' (*bhāvita-sīla*), and is equivalent to the second part of the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*). 'Mental mastery' (*bhāvita-citta*) and 'wisdom mastery' (*bhāvita-paññā*) correspond to the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*) and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*), respectively.

Note that this concept of 'physical mastery' (*bhāvita-kāya*), which here has been defined as a development of one's interaction with the world by way of the five sense faculties, is sometimes explained differently, by defining the term *kāya* literally as the 'body' or as referring to material objects.

If one expands the meaning of *bhāvita-kāya* in this alternative way, then the definition of the second factor of 'moral self-mastery' (*bhāvita-sīla*) is adjusted accordingly, as follows: 'moral mastery' refers to the cultivation of one's relationship to other human beings or to one's engagement with society, to promoting peaceful coexistence, cooperation, harmony, and mutual support.

These alternative definitions of these two factors are connected to the teaching on fourfold virtuous conduct – on the four kinds of 'pure conduct classified as virtue' (*pārisuddhi-sīla*):

1. *Pāṭimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*: virtue as restraint in regard to the Pāṭimokkha, the chief disciplinary code of the monastic sangha.
2. *Indriyasaṃvara-sīla*: virtue as sense restraint; to receive sense impressions, like sights and sounds, mindfully, in a way conducive to wisdom and true benefit, and not to be dominated by unwholesome mind states.
3. *Ājīvapārisuddhi-sīla*: virtue as purity of livelihood: to earn one's living righteously and in a pure manner.

4. *Paccayapaṭisevana-sīla* (or *paccayasannissita-sīla*): to use the four requisites wisely, benefiting from them by understanding their true purpose and value; to live and consume in moderation; not to consume with craving.

Those aspects pertaining to one's relationship to the world by way of the body, or to one's engagement with material objects and with nature, are part of the factor on 'physical mastery' (*bhāvita-kāya*). Those aspects pertaining to one's relationship to society or to one's community are part of the factor on 'moral mastery' (*bhāvita-sīla*).<sup>51</sup>

Having introduced these principles, the following description of the attributes of arahants corresponds to the teaching on the fourfold self-mastery (*bhāvita*): being fully developed in body, moral conduct, mind, and wisdom.

Be aware, however, that, although these four kinds of attributes are distinguished from one another, they are not completely separate. Their main features are highlighted for the purpose of understanding, but in the actual process of development they are interconnected and are cultivated in an integrated way. In particular, they are never independent from wisdom. {355}

#### A. PHYSICAL SELF-MASTERY (BHĀVITA-KĀYA)

Although there are many passages in the Tipiṭaka in which the Buddha mentions the term *bhāvita-kāya*, there are no explicit explanations of this term, as if the listeners always understood its meaning. There were occasions, however, when non-Buddhists, especially members of the Nigaṇṭhā order, spoke about this subject according to their own understanding, and the Buddha duly responded.

The Mahāsaccaka Sutta, for example, contains an account of such a conversation, in which the terms *bhāvita-kāya* and *bhāvita-citta* are discussed:

One morning, the famous Nigaṇṭhā named Saccaka (he was a teacher of the Licchavi princes in Vajji) travelled to where the Buddha was staying,

<sup>51</sup>For more on this subject, see Appendix 2.

and engaged him in conversation. He began by speaking about physical cultivation (*kāya-bhāvanā*) and mental cultivation (*citta-bhāvanā*). He told the Buddha that according to his opinion the Buddha's disciples only strive in the area of mental cultivation, but they do not engage in physical cultivation. The commentaries state that the reason Saccaka held this view is that he observed the bhikkhus going off in search of seclusion, but that they did not practise severe austerities.

After he had stated his opinion, the Buddha replied by asking him what, according to his learning, is the meaning of 'physical cultivation' (*kāya-bhāvanā*). Saccaka answered by defining it as the practice of severe austerities and self-mortification (*atta-kilamathānuyoga*).

The Buddha went on to ask him about his understanding of 'mental cultivation' (*citta-bhāvanā*), yet Saccaka was unable to provide an explanation. The Buddha continued by saying that Saccaka's understanding of physical cultivation is incompatible with the cultivation as found in the noble ones' discipline (*ariya-vinaya*). Failing to understand the meaning of physical cultivation, how could one possibly understand mental cultivation? He then bid Saccaka to listen to his explanation on what is not physical and mental cultivation, and conversely, what is truly physical and mental cultivation:

How, Aggivessana,<sup>52</sup> has one gained mastery in body and mastery in mind? Here, pleasant feeling arises in a well-taught noble disciple. Although touched by that pleasant feeling, he does not lust after pleasure, he does not become one who lusts after pleasant feeling. That pleasant feeling of his ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not sorrow, snivel, and lament; he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught.

In this way, Aggivessana, although that pleasant feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain, because the body is developed. And although that painful feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain, because the mind is developed.

Look here, Aggivessana, any noble disciple in whom, in this double manner, arisen pleasant feeling does not invade his mind and remain because the body is developed, and arisen painful feeling does not invade his mind and remain because the mind is developed, has gained mastery in body and in mind.<sup>53</sup> {356}

M. I. 237.

As mentioned above, the principal meaning of ‘physical cultivation’ (*kāya-bhāvanā*) is the development of the ‘collection of five doorways’ (*pañcadvārika-kāya*), that is, of the five faculties (*indriya*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Therefore, ‘physical cultivation’ (*kāya-bhāvanā*) is essentially identical to the cultivation of the sense faculties (*indriya-bhāvanā*).

The development of the sense faculties begins with sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*), to which the Buddha gave great emphasis in the training for those who have ‘gone forth’ in the Dhammavinaya. Sense restraint is a fundamental practice, linked with the training in virtuous conduct (*sīla*). (In the commentaries, sense restraint is often classified as a form of virtuous conduct, as ‘virtue as sense restraint’ – *indriyasaṁvara-sīla*.) Let us have a look at this basic principle:

And how, Sire, is a monk called a guardian of the sense doors? Here a monk, on seeing a visible object with the eye, does not grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics. Because the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and indignation (*domanassa*) would overwhelm him if he dwelt leaving this eye-faculty unrestrained, so he practises guarding it, he protects the eye-faculty, develops restraint of the eye-faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear ... on smelling an odour with the nose ... on tasting a flavour with the tongue ... on feeling a tangible with the body ... on knowing a mind object with the mind, he does not

<sup>52</sup> Aggivessana is Saccaka’s clan- or surname.

<sup>53</sup> The commentaries explain that *kāya-bhāvanā* here refers to insight meditation (*vipassanā*), while *citta-bhāvanā* refers to concentration (*saṁādhi*), i.e. tranquillity meditation (*saṁatha*) – MA. II. 285.

grasp at its major signs or secondary characteristics ... he develops restraint of the mind-faculty. That monk endowed with this noble sense restraint experiences within himself pure, unadulterated happiness. In this way, Sire, a monk is a guardian of the sense doors.

*D. I. 70.*

Sense restraint still belongs to the practice of a ‘trainee’, or is a rudimentary stage of practice. It is not a necessary practice for an arahant, who has ‘gained mastery over the sense faculties’ (*bhāvitindriya*, which is classified as part of *bhāvita-kāya*). It is included in the discussion here, however, to demonstrate the various stages of practice.

There is a more profound form of sense restraint, or another way of explaining this term, as is evident from a discussion the Buddha had with the wanderer Kuṇḍaliya at Añjanavana in Sāketa. (The cultivation of this form of sense restraint fulfils the three kinds of good conduct – *sucarita*; the cultivation of the three kinds of good conduct fulfils the Four Foundations of Mindfulness; the cultivation of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness fulfils the seven factors of enlightenment; the cultivation of the seven factors of enlightenment fulfils true knowledge and deliverance, the highest blessing):

And how, Kuṇḍaliya, is restraint of the sense faculties developed and cultivated so that it fulfils the three kinds of good conduct? Here, Kuṇḍaliya, having seen an agreeable form with the eye, a monk does not long for it, or become excited by it, or generate lust for it. His body is steady and his mind is steady, inwardly well-composed and well-liberated. Moreover, having seen a disagreeable form with the eye, he is not dismayed by it, not resistant, not afflicted, not resentful. His body is steady and his mind is steady, inwardly well-composed and well-liberated. Further, having heard an agreeable sound with the ear ... having smelt an agreeable odour with the nose ... having savoured an agreeable taste with the tongue ... having felt an agreeable tangible with the body ... having cognized an agreeable mental phenomenon with the mind, a monk does not long for it. ... his mind is steady, inwardly well-composed and well-liberated. In this way, Kuṇḍaliya, is restraint of the sense faculties

developed and cultivated so that it fulfils the three kinds of good conduct.<sup>54</sup>

S. V. 74.

Now let us examine a higher stage of practice – the cultivation of the sense faculties (*indriya-bhāvanā*) – which is described in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. After describing this form of practice, this sutta also distinguishes between the term *sekha-pāṭipada*, referring to an awakened person who is still a trainee, and the term *bhāvitindriya*, referring to an arahant, who has completed his or her spiritual training and is ‘fully developed in body’ (*bhāvita-kāya*): {357}

On one occasion the Buddha was staying at the bamboo grove in Kajaṅgala, and he was visited by Uttara, a disciple of the brahmin Pārāsariya.<sup>55</sup> The Buddha asked him whether Pārāsariya taught the cultivation of the sense faculties (*indriya-bhāvanā*) to his disciples. When Uttara replied that he did, the Buddha asked him in what manner does he teach on developing the sense faculties. Uttara replied that Pārāsariya teaches to avoid having the eye see material forms and having the ear hear sounds. The Buddha answered that following this line of reasoning a blind or deaf person has ‘mastered the sense faculties’ (*bhāvitindriya*).

The Buddha went on to say that the development of the senses as taught by Pārāsariya is different from the supreme cultivation of the senses in the discipline of the noble ones (*ariya-vinaya*). Ven. Ānanda then asked the Buddha to explain this supreme cultivation of the senses:

#### 1. *The cultivation of the sense faculties (indriya-bhāvanā):*

Now, Ānanda, how is there the supreme development of the faculties in the noble ones’ discipline? Here, Ānanda, when a bhikkhu sees a form with the eye, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. He clearly understands thus: ‘There has arisen in

<sup>54</sup>There are descriptions of how guarding the doorways of cognition are included in a practice leading to the stage of noble path and fruit, e.g.: S. IV. 120-21.

<sup>55</sup>Trans.: the author uses the spelling Pārāsiriya.

me what is agreeable, there has arisen what is disagreeable, there has arisen what is both agreeable and disagreeable. But that is conditioned, gross, dependently arisen. This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, equanimity.’ The agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease in him and equanimity is well established. Just as a man with good sight, having opened his eyes might shut them or having shut his eyes might open them, so too in a monk, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose ceases and equanimity is established just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily. This is called in the noble ones’ discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding forms cognizable by the eye.

Again, Ānanda, when a monk hears a sound with the ear ... smells an odour with the nose ... tastes a flavour with the tongue ... touches a tangible with the body ... cognizes a mind-object with the mind ... equanimity is well established. Just as if a man were to let two or three drops of water fall onto an iron frying pan heated for a whole day, the falling of the drops might be slow but they would quickly vaporize and vanish, so too in a monk, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose ceases and equanimity is established just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily. This is called in the noble ones’ discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding mind objects cognizable by the mind.

That is how there is the supreme development of the faculties in the noble ones’ discipline.

2. A) *One who is still in training (sekha-pātipada):*

And how, Ānanda, is one a disciple in higher training, one who is still engaged in practice? Here, Ānanda, when a bhikkhu sees a form with the eye, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable; he is discomforted, disquieted and disgusted by the agreeable that arose, by the disagreeable that arose, and by the both



agreeable and disagreeable that arose. When a monk hears a sound with the ear ... smells an odour with the nose ... tastes a flavour with the tongue ... touches a tangible with the body ... cognizes a mind-object with the mind ... he is discomforted, disquieted and disgusted by the agreeable that arose, by the disagreeable that arose, and by the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose. {358} That is how one is a disciple in higher training, one who is still engaged in practice.

2. B) *One who has completed the training (bhāvitindriya):*

And how, Ānanda, is one a noble one with fully developed faculties? Here, Ānanda, when a monk sees a form with the eye, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive', he abides perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive', he abides perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the unrepulsive in what is both repulsive and unrepulsive', he abides perceiving the unrepulsive in that. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the repulsive in what is both unrepulsive and repulsive', he abides perceiving the repulsive in that. If he should wish: 'May I avoiding both the repulsive and unrepulsive, abide in equanimity, mindful and fully aware', he abides in equanimity towards that, mindful and fully aware.

Again, Ānanda, when a monk hears a sound with the ear ... smells an odour with the nose ... tastes a flavour with the tongue ... touches a tangible with the body ... cognizes a mind-object with the mind, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable.... If he should wish: 'May I avoiding both the repulsive and unrepulsive, abide in equanimity, mindful and fully aware', he abides in equanimity towards that, mindful and fully aware.

That is how one is a noble one with fully developed faculties.<sup>56</sup>

As mentioned earlier, by expanding on their meanings or by changing the focus of investigation, there are alternative definitions for the terms *kāya-bhāvanā* and *bhāvita-kāya*. Instead of focusing on the doorways of cognition or on the sense faculties, the focus shifts to the world at large or to external objects which come into contact with the senses – the objects of cognition. One then distinguishes between these various sense objects. By doing this the definition of ‘physical development’ becomes the development of one’s relationship to one’s surroundings by way of one’s physical body, or the development of one’s relationship to material things (including other human beings in their capacity as objects of cognition).

One group of objects that people engage with to a great degree is the collection of the four requisites (*paccaya*): food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. By extension this group also includes all the other material things, consumable objects, tools and appliances used in work, etc., which comprise a large part of our interaction with the outside world. This area of a person’s life requires discipline and training, as one can see from the teaching on moral conduct comprised of a wise use of the four requisites (*paccayaapaṭisevana-sīla*). A wise use of material requisites, like sense restraint, may thus be included in the factor of physical development (*kāya-bhāvanā*).

In the Dhammavinaya, the relationship to material things that nourish and sustain life is considered an essential part of training. People are able to develop this relationship constantly in everyday life. This form of training is set down from the onset for those individuals ordained as monks and nuns, of reflecting wisely on the use of the four requisites, and by developing a sense of moderation, which leads to contentment and generates true blessings. This stands in contrast to consuming things

<sup>56</sup>Beware of interpreting the term *paṭikkūla* (‘repulsive’) in too narrow a sense, as ‘dirty’ or ‘disgusting’. Examples in the scriptures of perceiving the non-repulsive in the repulsive include looking at someone who is physically unattractive with lovingkindness, or looking at an unpleasant material object from the perspective of its constituent elements, thus seeing it as meritable or pleasing on the eye. Similarly, looking at a person or an object that is generally considered to be beautiful from the perspective of impermanence, or by analyzing his/her/its component elements, is an example of perceiving the repulsive in the non-repulsive. See further explanations at: Ps. II. 212.

with only a foggy understanding and seeking to gratify one's craving:  
{359}

Cunda, I do not teach you the Dhamma for restraining the taints that arise in the present alone. Nor do I teach the Dhamma merely for preventing taints from arising in the future. Rather, I teach the Dhamma to both restrain present taints and to prevent future taints from arising.

Therefore, Cunda, let the robe I have allowed you be simply for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with the wind and sun, from horseflies, mosquitoes, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of concealing the private parts and protecting your modesty.

Let the almsfood I have allowed you be just enough for the support and sustenance of the body, for avoiding [malnourishment leading to] distress, and for assisting the holy life, considering: 'Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.'

Let the lodging I have allowed you be simply for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with the wind and sun, from horseflies, mosquitoes, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of allaying the perils of climate and for the enjoyment of seclusion.

Let the medicinal requisites that I have allowed you be just for warding off feelings that have arisen resulting from illness, and for the benefit of being free from afflicting disease.<sup>57</sup>

*D. III. 129-30.*

<sup>57</sup>Occasionally this teaching is presented in the context of considering these requisites while one is actively using them; here, each passage begins with: 'Wisely reflecting...' – *paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*.... For example, the passage on almsfood begins: 'Wisely reflecting, I eat almsfood neither for amusement, nor for indulging in delicious flavours, nor for the sake of boasting and physical attractiveness, but only for the support and sustenance of this body....' E.g.: A. III. 388-9.

Of these four requisites, lodging (*senāsana*; literally ‘place for sitting and lying down’) is highly significant, both as a residence and as a place for storing the other requisites. Most human actions, whether it be the preparation, consumption, or storage of food, or the place for keeping one’s clothes and getting dressed, occur in one’s lodging or abode. In respect to offering gifts, the Buddha said:

*Giving food and drink, one gives strength;  
Giving clothes, one gives beauty;  
Giving a vehicle, one gives ease and comfort;  
Giving a lamp, one gives sight.  
The one who gives a residence is the giver of all.  
But the one who teaches the Dhamma  
Is the giver of the Deathless.*

S. I. 32.

For the monastic community, the ‘residence’ encompasses all buildings, from personal monastic huts (*kuṭī*) to communal buildings, which comprise individual monasteries, originally referred to by the Buddha as *ārāma* (‘park’, ‘grove’). These monasteries developed from forested areas: from woodlands (*vana*) and royal parks (*uyyāna*). The first Buddhist monastery, offered by King Bimbisāra to the Buddha, was Veḷuvanaṃ Uyyānaṃ – the ‘Bamboo Grove and Royal Park’, and the monastery in which the Buddha spent the most amount of time was Jetavana Royal Park, later called Jetavana Grove.<sup>58</sup> {360}

From monasteries in smaller woodlands on the outskirts of towns and villages, or those bordering larger forests, the meaning of monastic residences was expanded to incorporate places deep in the forest (*arañña*), including caves, steep ravines, and mountains. Eventually the concept of ‘residence’ (*senāsana*) for the monastic community came to encompass the entire range of forests, mountains, and inhabited areas, until it meant one’s entire environment – the whole world.

<sup>58</sup> *Jetassa rājakumārassa uyyānaṃ* became *jetavana anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme*. The Buddha’s words for allowing the creation of a monastery, in response to King Bimbisāra’s offering of the Veḷuvana Royal Park, is: *anujānāmi bhikkhave ārāmaṃ* (Vin. I. 38-9).

One's residence, region of habitation, and entire environment is equivalent to those things in one's surrounding with which one comes into contact, associates, engages, and relates by way of the five senses. Therefore the world around us is the domain for 'physical development' (*kāya-bhāvanā*) – for training the body, for training one's interaction with the outside world by way of the sense faculties.

A favourable relationship to one's residence, which is maintained continuously by accomplished practitioners, is evinced by the terms used to describe monastic residences above, and it is connected to a healthy relationship generally in spiritual practice to the world at large. This is evident from the first term used to describe a monastery: *ārāma*, which can be translated as 'park', and literally means 'place of delight'.

This term *ārāma* points to a fundamental aspect of a Dhamma practitioner's relationship to the world, beginning with a person's residence (in the case of monks and nuns this refers to a monastery), as being a place inspiring delight (for example, it is in a natural surrounding, with plants and animals). This term reveals the desirable mind state that a monastic or a Dhamma practitioner should maintain in relation to a suitable residence, which can then be extended to any place or region where one lives – making it a place of delight.

This is not all. The term *ārāma* connects people to their fundamental state of existence and way of practice. It connects us to the domain of sense experience – to the mind. Here, one's 'abode' or 'abiding' is one of delight, which we see revealed in various Dhamma principles, for example: solitude as a place of delight (*pavivekārāma*); seclusion as a place of delight (*paṭisallānārāma*); the relinquishment of unwholesome qualities as a delightful abiding (*pahānārāma*); and the cultivation of wholesome qualities as a delightful abiding (*bhāvanārāma*).<sup>59</sup>

*Ārāma* here refers to a favourable feeling or attitude towards a suitable object with which one comes into contact. It is as if Dhamma practitioners

<sup>59</sup>There are also places of delight that should be avoided, for example: sleep as a place of delight (*niddārāma*); busyness as a place of delight (*kammārāma*); talking and chatting as a place of delight (*bhassārāma*); socializing and mingling as a place of delight (*saṅgaṇīkārāma* or *saṅgaggārāma*); and visual images and sounds as a place of delight (*rūpārāma* and *saddārāma*).

have a responsibility to make those things they engage with a source of delight, beginning with one's lodging or residence (which for monks is already called an *ārāma*), and then extending this feeling outward into their general environment.

In reference to people's relationship to their abodes and surrounding environment, besides the term *ārāma*, another term (used probably more often than *ārāma*) that is often used in the context of the lives of monks, Dhamma practitioners, and arahants is *ramaṇīya*, translated as 'delightful', 'refreshing', 'pleasant'. This term points to an inspiring surrounding atmosphere, which is extremely favourable for practitioners and conducive to the development of wholesome mind states. For arahants, accessing this delightful atmosphere is easy or happens readily, because their contact with the world occurs without any hidden defilements. Moreover, arahants are able to make their surroundings delightful and refreshing, both for themselves and for those who dwell close to them.

The term *ramaṇīya* appears frequently in the Tipiṭaka, and it is as if this atmosphere of delight or refreshment is a feature of the Tipiṭaka itself. We see it expressed, for example, already in the story of the Buddha's life before he was awakened, when as a bodhisatta he went in search of a suitable place to practise meditation and finally found such a location at Uruvelā: {361}

'This is a truly delightful (*ramaṇīyo vata*) piece of ground with sheltered, pleasant groves and a clear-flowing river with smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This will indeed serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.' And I sat down there thinking: 'This will serve for striving.'

M. I. 167.

There are records of the Buddha and his disciples, when they stayed at or passed through various places, especially forests and mountains, describing these places as delightful. Sometimes these descriptions are detailed, like in the case of Ven. Ekavihāriya Thera, who described in verse his place of solitude:

*While a refreshing breeze blows,  
 Laden with the fragrance of flowers,  
 I'll burst asunder ignorance  
 While seated on the mountain top.  
 In the mountain heights carpeted with flowers,  
 A region cool and forested,  
 Gladdened by the joy of release,  
 I will delight in the great mountain caves.*

*Thag. verses 544-5.*

When Ven. Mahā Kassapa returned from collecting alms and climbed into the mountains, he uttered a long verse praising the beauty of the forested landscape, including these passages:

*Garlanded with sacred pear,  
 Echoing with the trumpet calls of elephants,  
 These uplifting crags are a place of delight;  
 These mountains do please me so!  
 Dark-hued like thunderheads, these marvellous mountains,  
 With cool, clear streams and covered by meadows,  
 The colour of gold-dust beetles –  
 These mountains do please me so!  
 These myrtle peaks majestic as clouds,  
 Appearing like palaces;  
 Resounding with the lovely bellows of tuskers –  
 These mountains do please me so!*

*Thag. verses 1062-64.*

To sum up, arahants have completely developed their sense faculties (*bhāvitindriya*). Besides being able to immediately savour a delightful environment, they are able to perceive or relate to an unpleasant physical surrounding as pleasant. They delight in pleasant places without hindrance, and they transform chaotic, troublesome places into an oasis. Those who come into contact with them share in this delight:

Whether in village or in forest,  
On hill or in dale,  
Wherever arahants dwell –  
Delightful, indeed, is that spot.

*Dh. verse 98.*

The cultivation of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) begins with initial stages of practice and truly reaches fulfilment when practice is complete – when a person realizes the fruit of wisdom cultivation. When practice is complete, the aspect of physical self-mastery (*bhāvita-kāya*) is conspicuous and easily apparent to others. Having said this, however, there are other similar results of awakening that can potentially be misleading to ordinary people, who have not developed themselves in body, virtue, mind, and wisdom.<sup>60</sup> {362}

#### **B. MORAL SELF-MASTERY (BHĀVITA-SĪLA)**

Moral conduct (*sīla*) is a beginning stage of spiritual practice and is perfected at the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*).<sup>61</sup> It is impossible for someone who has realized liberation to act immorally (*dussīla*) or to deliberately cause harm.<sup>62</sup> For this reason, there are few scriptural references to the moral conduct of awakened beings. The matter to be discussed here is thus restricted to how arahants conduct their lives and act within society.

Arahants have brought ‘kamma’ to cessation<sup>63</sup>; they have ended kamma.<sup>64</sup> Their actions are no longer referred to as kamma – the technical term for their actions is *kiriya* (‘doing’).<sup>65</sup> Ignorance, craving and clinging do not control their actions; they act with a free mind and with wisdom, clearly understanding cause and effect. They do not cling to ideas of right or wrong, which for other people are connected to a sense

<sup>60</sup>For examples, see below.

<sup>61</sup>E.g. A. IV. 380; Pug. 37.

<sup>62</sup>A. V. 139-40.

<sup>63</sup>For context: S. IV. 132-3 (compare with A. I. 263-4; A. III. 415-6).

<sup>64</sup>For context: D. III. 230; A. II. 231.

<sup>65</sup>E.g. Dhs. 180-1.



of personal identity and gain. They have no hidden personal desires; they have no conceit about 'my virtue' or 'my good deeds', for example. They act objectively, reasonably and correctly. They transcend bad kamma, since there is no more greed, hatred or delusion that could lead to harm or evil, and they also transcend good kamma.

One may pose the question that all actions require a motivating force and that the crucial motivation is desire (which is a form of craving – *taṇhā*). How is it possible for arahants to act when they have abandoned craving? Surely they remain passive and idle. Although they do no bad deeds, they also do no good deeds. An answer to this question is that desire is not the only motivating force for action. Reasoned consideration is also a motivating force.

The flow of human life is dependent upon dynamic forces. Unless other factors interfere, the way we live our lives is directed by knowledge. A lack of knowledge gives craving the opportunity to distort or dictate life's course. These two forces, of selfish desire and reasoned understanding, are often in conflict with one another. At times selfishness has the upper hand, at other times sound judgement prevails. When a person is released from the controlling power or 'furtive whispering' of craving, life progresses without restraint, in harmony with wisdom. Wisdom becomes the motivating force.

Craving does not just dictate action; it can also hinder action when knowledge encourages us to act. {363} Craving therefore can be a motivating force for action and for inaction. Inaction in such a case is a kind of action: an act of inaction. Craving can have many functions: it can direct, coerce, or impede. When a wholesome action is not performed, say a student is disinterested in lessons or people do not help one another, we should not merely consider the absence of a motivating force for action. We should also reflect on the motivation for inaction: to take into account the craving, which comes in the form of laziness, aversion, or pleasure directed towards other objects, and has a greater pull on attention. A habitual dependence on craving creates a secondary struggle, between the urge to act and the urge not to act. Whichever selfish motivation is stronger wins. When wisdom is the dominant motivation this struggle is absent.

Through a profound analysis, one recognizes another dynamic. As soon as wisdom understands according to reasoned judgement whether to act or to refrain from acting, an additional force arises in the mind which propels one to action or to restraint. This force can be referred to as a form of desire, or as a motivation, which will be discussed at more length below.<sup>66</sup>

Above, the concepts of craving as a motivation and of wisdom as a motivation were introduced. At first glance these two kinds of motivation seem to be at opposites. Although this subject is covered in another chapter, it is relevant to the current topic and thus deserves a basic explanation.

Simply speaking, human beings have two kinds of motivation. The first kind is driven by craving and is based on our feelings. It is comprised of desires, wishes, and needs that follow sensation. If something is pleasurable, one wants to acquire it; if something is delicious, one wants to savour it. This kind of desire requires no knowledge of whether the object of desire is correct or incorrect, beneficial or harmful.

The second kind of motivation springs from wisdom. This is comprised of desires, wishes, and needs that accord with reasoned understanding and a true comprehension of what is correct. For example, one sees a road that is cracking, filthy, obstructed, or slippery. One knows that according to its real purpose and value, such a thoroughfare should be clean, smooth, and safe. When one sees the road in such a damaged state, one wishes to repair and clear it. In contrast with the motivation of craving, this second kind is called the ‘motivation of wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*)’.

*Chanda* refers to desires, wishes, and needs that are in line with reality (*sabhāva*). One wishes for something to be as good, fine, complete, upright or fulfilled as it naturally should be. This is independent of one’s likes and dislikes, or of wanting to either acquire the object or wanting it to disappear, in order to satisfy one’s personal sentiments. {364} Indeed, the desire of wholesome enthusiasm is cultivated alongside the development of wisdom.

<sup>66</sup>See chapter 10 on desire.

When this form of desire, of wanting things to exist in an ideal, natural state, extends outwards in relation to other human beings, it manifests as a wish for others to be well, complete, strong, bright, respected, and happy. Moreover, one wants them to be established in righteousness, established in Dhamma, free from faults and shortcomings.

The Buddha gave great emphasis to human relationships. In this context, according to the circumstances, wholesome enthusiasm vis-à-vis others is expanded into four different kinds: lovingkindness (*mettā*) – the wish for others to be happy under normal circumstances; compassion (*karuṇā*) – the wish to help others in times of trouble and distress, to help them escape from suffering; appreciative joy (*muditā*) – well-wishing, the desire for others to increase in happiness and success; and equanimity (*upekkhā*) – the wish for others to be established in righteousness, in truth, in a freedom from defect and harm.

Compassion is especially prominent in those people who have reached Nibbāna, who are completely free and happy. Freedom of action based on wisdom, or a motivational force stemming from wisdom, allows for the strength of wholesome desire in the form of compassion to be expressed to the full. Compassion is a key quality of the Buddha and the arahants.

For a person endowed with general humanitarian qualities, compassion arises automatically when encountering someone else who is suffering. This compassion, however, is contingent on an inner freedom and an understanding of things as they are. In that moment one is not dominated by ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), and grasping (*upādāna*), for example: one is not acting out of personal gain; one is free of selfish concerns; and one does not find pleasure in others' misfortune which answers to a secret wish to inflate one's sense of self.

When the heart is not oppressed, it becomes expansive and is fully sensitive to the suffering of others. There is empathy, understanding, and a wish to free others from suffering. If craving does not interfere (as self-concern, a fear of losing an advantage, or laziness, for instance), life will be guided by wisdom and the wish to help others will transform into compassionate action.

*Chanda* is the desire of those whose minds are clear and free, who are ready to truly receive other people, responding to them with an understanding of their suffering. And their altruistic intentions, of wanting other people to be released from suffering, are readily extended outwards into active deeds of compassionate assistance.

This all-embracing compassion, of wanting to assist others and free them from suffering, is a potent force in the lives of those who have realized Nibbāna, for whom no lingering sense of a ‘self’ – no fixed identity – remains which needs to be protected and gratified. {365}

In sum, true compassion results from wisdom and liberation. The specific term for wisdom in this context is *vijjā* and the specific term for liberation is *vimutti*:

1. *Vijjā*: comprehensive knowledge of reality that allows no room for a belief in ‘self’ (*attā*).
2. *Vimutti*: liberation; freedom.
3. *Karuṇā*: compassion; expansiveness of the heart; responsiveness to the suffering of beings; the wish to console others and promote their liberation.

These three qualities are the opposite of:

1. *Avijjā*: ignorance of the truth, leading to the obstruction of ‘self’.
2. *Taṇhā*: craving; the desire to compensate for the inadequacy of the ‘self’ or to reinforce the idea of ‘self’.
3. *Upādāna*: tenacious clinging to things when it is judged that these things will profit the ‘self’ or will lead to personal prestige and power.

Arahants have abandoned ignorance, craving and clinging. They possess wisdom as a beacon for action and compassion as a motivating force. If the sole motivation for action were to be craving, then benevolent

assistance could never be true or pure. By the same token, as long as assistance to others is motivated by craving, it is not true compassion.

Craving (including ignorance and clinging) is a hazardous motivating force and causes us to be blind to our own and others' wellbeing. Even if we consider such wellbeing, our vision is distorted; we do not truly understand what is advantageous and disadvantageous. What is beneficial is seen as detrimental and what is detrimental is seen as beneficial. Craving in the form of lust, anger and delusion overwhelms the mind, or as the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)<sup>67</sup> it obstructs the functioning of the mind. When there are no such defilements, the mind is calm and bright; it is able to recognize true benefit.<sup>68</sup>

Arahants are able to assist others in a fully compassionate way because they have fulfilled their own state of wellbeing. They have 'attained personal wellbeing' (*anuppatta-sadattha*) and they have 'done what had to be done' (*kata-karaṇīya*). When personal matters (*attattha*) are finalized, personal wellbeing is complete (*attahita-sampatti*); one is inwardly complete and need no longer worry about oneself. A person is then able to fully attend to the wellbeing and concerns of others (*parattha*), and live life by benefiting others (*parahita-paṭipatti*).<sup>69</sup> With such fulfilment arahants have acquired the qualities of being a 'friend to all' (*sabba-mitta*), a 'companion to all' (*sabba-sakhi*), and 'kind-hearted toward all beings' (*sabba-bhūtānukampaka*).<sup>70</sup> {366}

The word *attha* (translated above as 'wellbeing') here does not refer to the usual meaning as an 'advantage'.<sup>71</sup> It refers instead to true benefit, to the most important aspect of a person's life, in particular to personal attributes that promote prosperity, maturity, resourcefulness, and self-reliance. (This stands in contrast to so-called personal benefits which often cause harm, for instance eating delicious food but to great excess.)

<sup>67</sup>Trans.: the five hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

<sup>68</sup>A. I. 9; 216; S. V. 121; A. III. 63-4, 230.

<sup>69</sup>Vin. I. 20-1; S. I. 105-106.

<sup>70</sup>Thag. verse 648.

<sup>71</sup>Trans.: *attha* can also be translated as 'benefit', 'welfare', 'gain', 'profit' or 'wealth'.

The main purpose of this ‘inner wealth’ is to develop virtue, specifically wisdom, and to lead to freedom from the controlling power of ignorance, craving and clinging.

The conduct of arahants can be divided into two categories: work and personal activities. In regard to work, arahants tend to be leaders. They fulfil their responsibilities as Buddhist disciples in an optimum way, since they have escaped from the constrictive ‘noose’ of defilements. The responsibility of Buddhist disciples is revealed clearly in the Buddha’s repeated instruction, which he gave when he sent disciples out to proclaim the teachings during the first year of his ministry: to act for the welfare and happiness of the many (*bahujaṇahitāya bahujaṇasukhāya*), for the compassionate assistance of the world (*lokānukampāya*), and for the wellbeing, support and happiness of gods and human beings (*atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ*).<sup>72</sup> These qualities are significant objectives of the holy life (*brahmacariya*);<sup>73</sup> they are the criteria of behaviour and practice for bhikkhus;<sup>74</sup> and they are the virtues present in persons who are considered supreme according to the Buddhist teachings.<sup>75</sup> They are therefore constant considerations for a Buddhist disciple when performing duties and work.

The principal work of arahants is to provide instruction to promote mindfulness, wisdom, and other spiritual qualities, and to act as a role model for a happy and virtuous life. Later generations can take these persons as examples to live up to (*diṭṭhānugati*: ‘following a clear example’). It is fair to say that teaching others is an arahant’s obligation.<sup>76</sup>

A similar standard – of seeking the welfare of all – holds true regarding arahants’ personal conduct. Although arahants have ‘finished their business’, and once they have realized Nibbāna they may abandon those

<sup>72</sup>Vin. I. 20-1; S. I. 105.

<sup>73</sup>D. II. 119-20; D. III. 211-12.

<sup>74</sup>A. III. 114-5, 355-6.

<sup>75</sup>The Buddha: D. II. 211-12, 222; M. I. 21, 83; S. II. 275; A. I. 22. The Buddha, arahants and ‘learners’ (*sekha*): It. 78-9. The Buddha and universal monarchs: A. I. 76. Monks and brahmins with moral conduct and virtuous qualities (*kalyāṇa-dhamma*): D. II. 331-2.

<sup>76</sup>D. I. 228-9.

practices that were undertaken for realization, they frequently conduct themselves as before. On a personal level this is for abiding at ease in the present (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*), and in relation to others it is for compassionate assistance to later generations (*pacchimā-janatānukampā*) by providing a good example. Illustrations of this latter motive include the Buddha's abiding in forest dwellings,<sup>77</sup> and Ven. Mahā Kassapa Thera's observance of the austere practices (*dhutaṅga*).<sup>78</sup> {367} Even those community elders who have not realized Nibbāna emphasize acting as an example for later generations.<sup>79</sup> For an arahant, the ideal human being, such responsibility in this area is exceptional. Note also that some of the rules of discipline (*vinaya*) were not prescribed as a result of grave offences, but rather due to actions being improper in consideration of future generations.<sup>80</sup>

To sum up, the conduct of arahants, both in regard to duties and to personal activities, aims for the welfare of the many and is done in consideration of later generations. They act for the welfare of others (*parattha*) and to benefit others (*parahita-paṭipatti*), consistent with the virtue of compassion, which acts as the motivation. It is difficult, however, to clearly picture the life of the arahants by drawing from stories passed down from the Buddha's time. These stories are dispersed throughout the suttas, the rules of discipline, and the later texts, and they stress essential teachings on Dhammavinaya rather than the arahants' personal activities.

The Buddha's record of foremost disciples (*etadagga*),<sup>81</sup> which the commentators claim is a bestowal of rank,<sup>82</sup> includes a long list of arahants' names, but it merely praises individual abilities or distinctions of particular disciples. The list mentions work only when the performance of this

<sup>77</sup> A. I. 60-61.

<sup>78</sup> S. II. 203.

<sup>79</sup> As an example for later generations: A. I. 71, 242-3; A. II. 147; A. III. 105-106, 178-9, 255-6; Vin. V. 132; as an example to others in general: A. I. 127, 239, 246-7; A. III. 114-5, 422.

<sup>80</sup> Vin. II. 108, 128-9; Vin. III. 42; A. III. 251; M. II. 92-3.

<sup>81</sup> A. I. 23.

<sup>82</sup> AA. I. 135.

work was outstanding, for example Ven. Dabba-Mallaputta was foremost as the assigner of lodgings (*senāsana-paññapaka*). There is no mention, for example, of those foremost as distributors of meal invitations (*bhattuddesaka*), distributors of robes (*cīvara-bhājaka*), or building managers (*nava-kammika*), who are similarly officials appointed by the monastic community. The arahants mentioned in this list may have had other regular duties. Moreover, there is a difficulty in that the meanings of some words describing distinction are obscure. {368} Therefore, this list of names (*etadagga*) is inadequate for portraying the extent of arahants' activities.<sup>83</sup>

Nonetheless, we can see in this list of foremost disciples that many of the outstanding qualities are matters related to teaching. One can say that teaching and training others are duties for all arahants, to be done according to their ability. Other activities vary, based on individual skill or disposition. Those arahants proficient in teaching, as preceptors and teachers (*ācariya*), were honoured and had many disciples. Besides their general teaching duties, they were also responsible for training these disciples; the suttas thus tell of many great monks who, on their travels, were accompanied by large numbers of bhikkhus.<sup>84</sup>

Teaching disciples includes educating novices (*sāmaṇera*). Ven. Sāriputta, for example, was adept at teaching children and probably had many novices under his care. When Ven. Rāhula was preparing to be ordained as a novice, the Buddha entrusted him to Sāriputta as his preceptor.<sup>85</sup> There are many famous young accomplished novices who were Sāriputta's pupils.<sup>86</sup> On one occasion Sāriputta, while walking for alms, met an impoverished orphan, who was wandering in search of food scraps, and out of compassion encouraged him to ordain as a novice and

<sup>83</sup> For a list of foremost bhikkhu disciples see Appendix 6.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: M. I. 456-7. Ven. Mahā Kassapa: D. II. 162. Ven. Yasoja: Ud. 24-5.

<sup>85</sup> Vin. I. 82. [Trans.: Ven. Rāhula was the Buddha's son.]

<sup>86</sup> E.g. the novices Saṅkicca, Paṇḍita, Sopāka and Revata: Thag. verses 480-6, 597-607, 645-58; DhA. II. 127, 239; DhA. IV. 186.



study the Dhammavinaya.<sup>87</sup> The Buddha reminded the monks to look after the children who came to be ordained.<sup>88</sup> {369}

With the influx of large numbers of people seeking training came the duty of supervision. The Buddha advocated a sense of responsibility around this supervision of the community.<sup>89</sup> The objective of community administration is to facilitate training, and to provide education to as many disciples or students as possible in an atmosphere of mutual support.

Apart from the responsibilities of teaching, training, and supervising, the Pali Canon shows that arahants honoured community activities. Buddhists hold the community (*saṅgha*) as the authority. The Buddha continually emphasized communal harmony, both in his Dhamma teachings (e.g. the ‘conditions of prosperity’ – *aparihāniya-dhamma*,<sup>90</sup> and the emphasis of holding the Dhamma as one’s teacher<sup>91</sup>), and in the rules of discipline, especially those concerning formal acts of the monastic community (*saṅgha-kamma*).<sup>92</sup>

Many stories demonstrate concern for communal activities and respect for the community. For example, when the Buddha encouraged the monks to perform the observance day (*uposatha*) each fortnight, by reciting the Pāṭimokkha and confirming their purity, Ven. Mahākappina wondered whether he should participate in the ceremony, since he was an arahant and completely pure. The Buddha knew what he was thinking and admonished him:

If you, a brahmin (an arahant), do not honour the observance day, who will honour it? You should go and perform the observance day ceremony.

*Vin. I. 105.*

<sup>87</sup>J. I. 234.

<sup>88</sup>J. I. 161.

<sup>89</sup>See M. I. 459.

<sup>90</sup>D. II. 76; A. IV. 21.

<sup>91</sup>M. III. 8-13; D. II. 154.

<sup>92</sup>See Vinaya Piṭaka, vol. 1 and 2.

Ven. Dabba-Mallaputta accomplished the fruit of arahantship while still young. He thought:

I realized arahantship at seven years of age. Whatever a disciple should attain, I have attained completely. There is nothing that must be done beyond this, nor is that which had to be done and is finished need to be added to. What service can I perform for the sangha?

Later, he thought:

I should assign dwellings and distribute food for the sangha.

He then went to inform the Buddha of his willingness. The Buddha consented and had the bhikkhus meet to consider and accept his appointment as the assigner of lodgings and distributor of food.<sup>93</sup>

When events take place that may disturb the monastic order, arahants earnestly exert themselves to resolve the issue, even though they usually prefer to abide in quiet and solitude. {370} Ven. Mahā Kassapa, for example, began the proceedings of the First Recitation,<sup>94</sup> and Venerables Yasa Kākaṇḍaputta, Sambhūta Sāṇavāsī and Revata initiated the Second Recitation.<sup>95</sup>

In the First Recitation, after the formal act of the sangha (*saṅgha-kamma*) was complete and the meeting was officially ended, some elders present at the meeting formally admonished Ven. Ānanda concerning offences or mistakes during his attendance on the Buddha. Although Ānanda had plenty of evidence showing that he did not fail in his duty, after clearly explaining his conduct he nonetheless acknowledged the criticism by these elders.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup>Vin. II, 74-6.

<sup>94</sup>Vin. II, 284-5. [Trans.: *saṅgāyanā* – also translated as ‘council’.]

<sup>95</sup>Vin. II, 297-300.

<sup>96</sup>Vin. II, 288-9.

When the bhikkhu sangha met to settle legal matters during the Second Recitation, two arahants failed to come to the meeting on time. The gathered elders imposed a penalty, presenting them with tasks to be performed.<sup>97</sup> At the time of King Milinda, a king of Greek ancestry who ruled in Northwest India and was erudite in religious doctrines and philosophy, the king challenged various religious sects to debate, causing a disturbance in Buddhist circles. The elder arahants met to consider a response to the situation. One arahant, named Rohaṇa, had entered the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*) in the Himalayas and being unaware of the meeting did not attend. The gathering sent a messenger to invite him and also required expiation, presenting him with the responsibility of ordaining the boy Nāgasena.<sup>98</sup>

Later texts contain similar stories. For example, when the bhikkhu sangha was helping King Asoka to preserve the teachings, an arahant named Upagutta had gone into seclusion enjoying the happiness of jhāna, unaware of the community’s activities. The sangha assembly sent a bhikkhu to fetch him and then imposed a penalty for seeking his own individual comfort and not staying in connection with the community. They gave him the duty of overseeing the celebration of Asoka’s stupa, which he performed out of respect for the community.<sup>99</sup> Whatever the authenticity of these stories, especially the later ones, they demonstrate clearly the Buddhist tradition of arahants being role models in honouring the community and being responsible for communal activities. The cause or motivation for these actions is the same as that mentioned earlier:

So that the leading of a sublime life (brahmacariya, i.e. the Buddha’s teaching) may endure and be established for a long time, and for the wellbeing and happiness of gods and human beings.{371}

*Cf.: D. III. 210-11.*

<sup>97</sup>VinA. I. 36; Mhvs. V. 101.

<sup>98</sup>Miln. 7-8.

<sup>99</sup>See: Paṭhamasambhodikathā, Mārabandhaparivatta, Pariccheda #28.

### C. MENTAL SELF-MASTERY (BHĀVITA-CITTA)

The principal characteristic of an enlightened person's mind is freedom, which is the result of wisdom. When a person sees things according to the truth, fully comprehending conditioned phenomena, the mind is released from the control of the defilements. The scriptures usually describe the perfection of freedom as follows:

The mind, which has been fully cultivated by wisdom, is released from the taints (*āśava*).

*D. II. 81, 91, 123.*

When one knows and sees in this way, the mind is released from the taint of sense desire, the taint of becoming, and the taint of ignorance.

*E.g.: Vin. III. 5; D. I. 84; M. I. 23, 183-4; A. I. 165; A. IV. 174-5.*

One aspect of freedom from defilement is the end of enslavement to alluring and provocative sense objects. The Buddha said that sense objects are the basis for greed, hatred and delusion.<sup>100</sup> Also, the absence of an impulse to act unjustly or harmfully guarantees moral rectitude.<sup>101</sup> Another aspect of freedom is the absence of fear, trepidation and terror.<sup>102</sup>

An arahant has mastery over sense objects and is thus described as 'one who has trained the sense bases' (i.e. he or she has completed the development of the sense faculties – *indriya-bhāvanā*). This means that when cognizing a sense object, for example a sight or a sound, and a natural recognition of agreeableness, disagreeableness or neutrality arises, arahants can control perception (*saññā*) as they wish. For example, they can perceive the repulsive as unrepulsive, or perceive the unrepulsive as repulsive, as well as abandon both the repulsive and the unrepulsive, dwelling equanimous and mindful.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> A. II. 120; It. 83.

<sup>101</sup> M. II. 172.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> M. III. 300-301.

Possessing mindfulness and self-mastery, an arahant is called ‘one who has been trained’,<sup>104</sup> and a ‘self-conqueror, the greatest of those victorious in battle’.<sup>105</sup> An arahant’s mind is stable, and does not tremble as a consequence of agreeable or disagreeable sense objects. It is like a mountain, which is not shaken by the wind,<sup>106</sup> or like the earth, which bears all things and is neither angered nor offended when filthy items are cast upon it.<sup>107</sup>

An additional aspect of freedom is non-clinging, which the Buddha often compared to a lotus leaf, which is not adhered to by water, or a lotus blossom, which grows in the mud but is pure, clean and beautiful.<sup>108</sup> A person begins by not clinging to sensuality, to merit, and to good and evil, as clinging to these things is the cause for brooding over the past and yearning for the future: {372}

[A bhikkhu who has realized the Dhamma] does not grieve over the past, and does not fantasize over the future; he is sustained by what is present, thus his complexion is bright. As for the ignorant, they fantasize over the future, and pine over the past; thus they are haggard, like a fresh reed that has been plucked and left in the sun.

S. I. 5.

In the Bhaddekaratta Sutta there is a similar passage:

One should not pursue the past, nor yearn for the future; the past has gone away, the future has not yet been reached.

M. III. 187.

Not brooding over the past and not yearning for the future are classified here as aspects of the *citta*, not of wisdom. They correspond to the domain of ‘emotion’. There are terms describing the attributes of an

<sup>104</sup>Sn. 65, 95; Dh. verses 321-3.

<sup>105</sup>Dh. verses 103-105.

<sup>106</sup>A. III. 378.

<sup>107</sup>Dh. verse 95; A. IV. 374-5; (on the level of training: M. I. 127, 423).

<sup>108</sup>Sn. 101, 160; Dh. verse 401; A. II. 39.

arahant in respect to the past and future that are matters of wisdom, for example: reminiscence of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*), knowledge of the past (*atītaṃsa-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of the future (*anāgataṃsa-ñāṇa*).<sup>109</sup> Arahants draw upon knowledge of the past and use wisdom to consider future activities. Indeed, because an arahant's heart is free from the past and future, knowledge concerning the past and future can be used by wisdom in the most beneficial way. In addition, an arahant's actions are generally performed to assist future generations, as was explained earlier.

Some of the aspects of an arahant's mind will be at odds with the views of ordinary people, since superficially these aspects are considered unpleasant or blameworthy. One such aspect that the Buddha mentioned often is *nirāsa* (or *nirāsā*), which can be translated as 'hopeless', 'wishless', or 'without expectation'.<sup>110</sup> This hopelessness, or absence of wishing, of an enlightened person has a more profound meaning, however, than that which most people usually consider. Ordinary human beings normally live with hope. This hope is based on desire, wanting various things or wanting to be a particular way, thus hoping to obtain or to become. This hope sustains life; when someone is disappointed or feels hopeless due to not getting what is wished for, or due to the unattainability of an object, then that person is considered to have misfortune. When someone is gratified by obtaining what is wanted or something desirable appears to be within reach, that person is considered to be fortunate.

A hopeful person, however, still has a concealed expectation or anticipation that is constantly present, even if he is not conscious of it, that is, the possibility of being disappointed or falling into despair. This aspect of hope is often referred to as 'apprehension', which is a form of fear – a form of suffering. Hope thus comes paired with apprehension; if hope remains, fear remains. {373}

<sup>109</sup>D. III. 275.

<sup>110</sup>S. I. 12, 23, 141; Sn. 201, 208; The Buddha preferred to use *nirāsa* in verses, in regard to wisdom, as a play on everyday words, the same as *assaddha* (faithless). In prose, another term is used – *vigatāsa* – meaning the departure of the wished for item, or the ending of hope, to contrast with hopelessness or disappointment (A. I. 107).

An arahant resembles the person who has lost hope, but there is an important distinction. An arahant's 'hopelessness' or absence of expectation is not a consequence of there being no way to obtain what is desired; instead, it results from an inner completeness and satiety. There is nothing lacking which must be wished for; there is no deficiency giving rise to desire and hope. In short, an arahant's freedom from hope stems from an absence of craving. When one does not yearn for things, and does not long to be some particular way, then there is nothing to be hoped for. When there is nothing to be hoped for then one lives without hope; one has given up or ended hope, along with the fear that springs from hope.

This implies that people can exist without depending on or entrusting their life and happiness to hope. Arahants have gone beyond both gratification and hopelessness as these terms are ordinarily defined. Being fulfilled and content, they surpass those who are gratified or hopeful. This is a level that is superior to or free from hope, because there is complete happiness in each present moment. There is no opportunity for further disappointment or despair (compare this with *assaddha* – 'faithlessness' – as a wisdom quality).

Many other heart qualities exist, which are related to those mentioned above, for example:<sup>111</sup>

- *Akiñcana*: no anxiety; nothing lingering in the mind.
- *Asoka*: happy; sorrowless.
- *Khema*: secure; safe.
- *Nicchāta*: 'hungerless'.
- *Santa*: no confusion, restlessness, worry, irritation, depression, boredom, or fear; peaceful.
- *Santutṭha*: satisfied; contented.
- *Sītibhūta*; *nibbuta*: tranquil; cooled.
- *Viraja*: free from mental impurity; immaculate.
- *Visatṭho gacchati ...*: 'Totally at ease while walking, standing, sitting and lying down.'

<sup>111</sup>E.g.: M. I. 174; S. I. 55; A. I. 137-8; A. II. 208; Ud. 19-20; Sn. 119-20, 185.

The Buddha emphasized happiness (*sukha*). There are terms describing the state of Nibbāna as happiness, terms describing those who have realized Nibbāna as happy, and statements by such realized ones themselves describing their own happiness. For example:

Nibbāna is the supreme happiness;	<i>M. I. 509; Dh. verses 202-204.</i>
Nibbāna is indeed great happiness;	<i>Ud. 15; Thag. verses 227, 263.</i>
There is no greater happiness than the happiness of Nibbāna;	<i>Thīg. verse 476.</i>
This is unsurpassed happiness;	<i>A. III. 354.</i>
Truly, the arahants are happy;	<i>S. III. 83.</i>
One perfectly awakened always sleeps happily;	<i>A. I. 138.</i>
One who is without anxiety is indeed happy;	<i>Ud. 14.</i>
I, without anxiety, am indeed truly happy;	<i>Dh. verses 200-204.</i>
Oh, what bliss!	<i>Vin. II. 183; Thīg. verse 24.</i>

Even for those who are training in the Dhamma it is necessary to view Nibbāna as happiness for the practice to be correct, as stated in the Buddha's words:

Monks, that someone who views Nibbāna as suffering will possess investigation conducive to the realization of truth (*anulomikā khanti*) is impossible. That someone who does not possess investigation conducive to the realization of truth will proceed to the righteous way (*sammatta-niyāma*) is impossible. {374} That someone who has not proceeded to the righteous way will realize the fruits of stream-entry, once-returner, non-returner, or arahantship is impossible.

Monks, that someone who views Nibbāna as happiness will possess investigation conducive to the realization of truth is possible.



That someone who possesses investigation conducive to the realization of truth will proceed to the righteous way is possible. That someone, who proceeds to the righteous way should realize the fruits of stream-entry, once-returner, non-returner, or arahantship is possible.<sup>112</sup>

A. III. 442-3.

Although Nibbāna is happiness, and those who have realized Nibbāna are happy, such realized ones do not cling to happiness of any kind, and do not become attached to or indulge in Nibbāna.<sup>113</sup> When cognizing external sense objects, for example by way of the eye or ear, an arahant still experiences feelings – pleasant, unpleasant and neutral – connected with those objects, just like an ordinary person. An exception exists, however, in that an arahant experiences feelings without being constricted by defilement. An arahant neither rejoices over nor is troubled by feelings; nor are those feelings a cause for craving. Feeling exists at only one level, which is called ‘experiencing feeling by way of the body but not the mind’. Feeling does not give rise to internal affliction or worry; such feeling is said to be ‘cooled’. An arahant experiences feelings without latent tendencies (*anusaya*), unlike unenlightened beings, who have the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*) when experiencing pleasure, the latent tendency of hostility (*paṭighānusaya*) when experiencing pain, and the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) when experiencing neutral feelings, perpetually increasing the habit and strength of these defilements.<sup>114</sup>

Pleasure and pain from external sources are unable to affect an arahant’s internal happiness. An arahant’s happiness is thus independent, not relying on external phenomena. It is an immaterial happiness (*nirāmisasukha*), or even surpasses immaterial happiness (ordinary

<sup>112</sup>Note that *anulomikā khanti* is translated here as ‘investigation conducive to the realisation of truth’. *Khanti* is used here as an aspect of wisdom, and does not merely refer to patience; compare this sense with: Ps. I. 123-4; Ps. II. 236, 238; Vbh. 324-5, 340. (VbhA. 411 states that *khanti* is a synonym of *paññā* and VbhA. 459 states that *anulomikā khanti* is *vipassanā-ñāṇa*; *khanti* in this sense is sometimes translated as *khanti-ñāṇa*.)

<sup>113</sup>M. I. 4-5.

<sup>114</sup>S. II. 82-3; S. IV. 205-210; M. III. 285-6; A. II. 198-9.

*nirāmisā-sukha* is the happiness of *jhāna*.)<sup>115</sup> As an arahant's happiness is independent of external conditions, the natural fluctuation of things is not a cause for suffering. Even if the six sense objects change and pass away, an arahant still abides in happiness;<sup>116</sup> even if the five aggregates change and become otherwise, there is no sorrow or suffering.<sup>117</sup> A thorough knowledge of impermanence brings about tranquillity and contentment. The Buddha described this happiness as one attribute of being a refuge onto oneself, or of having the Dhamma as a refuge.<sup>118</sup> {375}

Another important descriptive term for an arahant's mind, which covers many of the characteristics already mentioned, is *ārogya*, translated as 'without sickness' or 'freedom from illness'. It can also be rendered as 'health' or 'healthy'. *Ārogya* is an epithet for *Nibbāna*.<sup>119</sup> Being without illness or being healthy refers here to the absence of mental illness or to a healthy mind, as mentioned in the Buddha's teachings to an aged layman:

You should practise and train yourself thus: although the body is diseased, the mind will not be diseased.

S. III. 1.

The Buddha said that there are two kinds of illness: physical and mental:

Beings who can assert to be without illness of the mind are difficult to find in the world, with the exception of one who is free from the taints.

A. II. 143-4.

These words of the Buddha illustrate that an arahant is a person with perfect mental health.

<sup>115</sup> S. IV. 236-7.

<sup>116</sup> S. IV. 127.

<sup>117</sup> S. III. 7.

<sup>118</sup> S. III. 42.

<sup>119</sup> M. I. 509; Dh. verse 204; Sn. 146.

The description of an arahant as being free of illness or in good health reveals the value of realizing Nibbāna. One may wonder: if arahants do not seek the pleasures cherished by ordinary people, how can they be happy, and what worth does Nibbāna have?

An absence of illness is a condition of happiness that is complete in itself. It is far better than the happiness resulting from a temporary alleviation of pain, not to mention the discomfort of sickness and chronic ailments.

Obtaining medicine or treatment to allay symptoms of illness offers momentary happiness. The more severe the symptoms, the greater the happiness when the symptoms subside. From one perspective, a healthy person is denied this kind of pleasure. But no one in their right mind would desire a sick person's happiness, of waiting to savour the end of pain and discomfort.

In the case of an illness, happiness is experienced through the repeated or occasional alleviation of discomfort and agitation. Such occasional happiness can be compared to the pleasure sought by ordinary people. The happiness of being without illness, which is normally not recognized as happiness, is simply internal ease and relief. This can be compared to the state of an arahant or to the happiness of Nibbāna.

The Buddha applied the analogy of a leper with erupting sores. Due to irritation and itching, the leper scratches the lesions and heats his flesh over coals. The more he scratches and sears his body, the more itchy and inflamed do the sores become. The happiness and pleasant sensation he receives relies upon having a wound that can be scratched. {376} The leper will remain in this state until a skilled doctor prepares a medicine that cures him of the leprosy. Cured of leprosy, he becomes a person in good health (*aroga*), happy (*sukhī*), free (*serī*), with self-mastery (*sayamvasī*), and able to go where he pleases (*yena-kāmaṅgama*). Both the scratching of the sores and the heating by the fire, which used to provide him with pleasure and relief, are no longer considered by him as a form of happiness. He now regards such behaviour as painful and miserable.

This analogy can be applied to ordinary beings, who seek pleasure from the five ‘strands’ of sensuality. Although they experience pleasure through obtaining things and gratifying desire, they are inflamed by desire, experiencing increasing turmoil and agitation. When life is conducted in this manner, pleasure and delight only revolve around the arousal of craving, leading to increased passion. Gratification is sought to temporarily quell the agitation. With the realization of Nibbāna, no ‘fuel’ remains to provoke craving, and happiness is experienced without alleviating an inflammation.<sup>120</sup>

An unenlightened person is compared to someone who derives pleasure from scratching an itch. The greater the itch the more one scratches, and the more one scratches the greater the itch. And the greater the itch the greater the pleasure from scratching. An ordinary person thus likes to increase the degree of pleasure by seeking ways to increase the stimulation and excitement, and so increase the itch; as a result more pleasure is experienced from increased scratching. A realized being is like someone who is cured from an itch-inducing illness, whose normal physical state is healthy; happiness exists due to the absence of an itch and of a need to scratch. An ordinary person, however, may criticize such a person as lacking the pleasure derived from scratching an itch.

Similarly, an unenlightened person’s search for happiness is like building up and fanning a fire, and then receiving amusement and coolness by extinguishing it. The brighter and hotter the fire, the more effort needed for extinguishing, causing more spectacular crackling and flashing. Ordinary people conduct their lives in this way, despite greater risks of danger for themselves and others. Those who are liberated resemble persons who have extinguished the fire. They live in ease, coolness, and safety, with no need to be burnt, and with no need to be on guard against dangers from heat. They are not engaged in the thrill or anxiety of extinguishing a fire that they previously ignited.

Realization brings about changes in personality, as well as in attitudes towards the world. Such mental transformation can be compared to the development of a child into an adult. Adults no longer hold dear those

<sup>120</sup>See M. I. 506-509.

toys and games that were cherished during childhood. An adult may even be amused seeing a child fascinated with and possessive of such toys. Likewise, a person who has realized Nibbāna has reached a stage of development that surpasses ordinary beings. Attitudes towards life, towards things admired by ordinary people, and towards the way people conduct their lives, have changed.<sup>121</sup> {377}

#### D. WISDOM SELF-MASTERY (BHĀVITA-PAÑÑĀ)

The basis for an arahant's wisdom is the ability to see things as they truly are. This clear seeing starts at cognition of sense objects by way of the six senses, with a mind that is equanimous and mindful, not swayed by pleasure or aversion. Such a person is able to observe a sense impression from beginning to end without being distracted or disturbed by it. Ordinary people, on the other hand, tend to get stuck at the point where sense impressions produce a feeling of pleasure and aversion. As a result, they tend to elaborate on and create distorted ideas about the things they encounter. They have a false understanding: they see things clouded by defilement rather than as they truly are. Take for example a person who agrees with a statement when he has been flattered but disagrees without the flattery. Or a person may agree because he likes the speaker yet disagree when the identical subject is mentioned by someone he dislikes.<sup>122</sup>

Arahants are not deceived by the external appearances of things; they acknowledge all facets of the truth and do not attach to just one perspective. The wisdom of an arahant helps to dispel the claim that Buddhism is a pessimistic doctrine. For example, those who have realized the truth (*buddhadhamma*) know that the five aggregates are neither exclusively painful nor exclusively pleasant.<sup>123</sup> A person who is to be enlightened must understand the merits (*assāda*) and disadvantages (*ādinava*) of sense desire, as well as the deliverance (*nissaraṇa*) from it. The merits are seen as merits, the disadvantages as disadvantages, and the deliverance

<sup>121</sup>See A. V. 202.

<sup>122</sup>On this subject see: S. IV. 124-5, 120-21; M. III. 299-300.

<sup>123</sup>S. III. 69.

as deliverance. The abandonment of sense desire and the end of both hankering for the world and grasping the five aggregates is due to seeing the way of deliverance. A person will then be independent of such merits and disadvantages, abiding in happiness – a happiness that is subtler and greater than happiness conditioned by pleasant and unpleasant experiences.<sup>124</sup>

The exquisite things in the world are not referred to as sense desire (*kāma*); [only] a person's lustful intentions constitute sense desire.... The exquisite things in the world abide just as they are; therefore, the wise [only] remove the fascination for these things.

A. III. 411.

Another level of wisdom is the comprehension of the universal characteristics (impermanence – *anicca*, *dukkha*, and 'nonself' – *anattā*), and of language, in particular of 'conventions' (*sammatti*) and 'designations' (*paññatti*). {378} The comprehension of language includes understanding the nature of 'worldly speech' (*lokiya-vohāra*) and knowing how to use language to convey meaning without clinging to linguistic conventions:

A monk whose mind is liberated sides with no one and disputes with no one; he employs the speech currently used in the world without attaching to it.

M. I. 500.

An arahant with taints destroyed may say, 'I speak this way, and they speak to me this way.' Skilful, knowing the world's parlance, he uses such terms as mere expressions.

S. I. 14.

Monks, I do not contend with the world; rather, it is the world that contends with me. A speaker of the Dhamma (*dhmma-vādī*) does not dispute with anyone in the world. Whatever the learned ones agree upon as not existing in the world, I too say that it does not

<sup>124</sup>See: M. I. 85-90; S. III. 27-31; A. I. 259-60.

exist. Whatever the learned ones agree upon as existing, I too say that it exists.

S. III. 138.

These are worldly terms, expressions, manners of speech and designations. The Tathāgata uses these, but does not attach to them.

D. I. 202.

With the arising of wisdom, seeing how all conditioned things originate from interdependent causes, a person understands the world according to truth. This is the arising of a correct worldview. Metaphysical beliefs and theories, as well as doubts (*avyākata-pañhā*)<sup>125</sup> vanish automatically:

Monks, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, whichever conflicting, obstinate, and confounding views exist, such as: ‘What are mental formations? Who owns these mental formations? Mental formations are one thing, the owners of such formations are another thing; the life principle (*jīva*) and the body are the same; the life principle is one thing, the body is another’ – all of these views are abandoned.

S. II. 64.

A bhikkhu inquired: What is the cause, what is the condition, by which a learned noble disciple will not have doubt arise concerning the matters that the Lord has not explained?

The Buddha replied: With the cessation of ignorance, learned noble disciples will not have doubt arise concerning the matters that I have not explained.... An unlearned, unenlightened person does not clearly know views, the origin of views, the cessation of views, and the way leading to the cessation of views. Those views increase, and he will not be released from aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

A. IV. 67-8.

<sup>125</sup> Questions that the Buddha did not answer, for example whether the world is eternal or not eternal.

Another feature of an arahant's wisdom is that he or she does not rely on faith or belief, a quality which in Pali is called *assaddha* ('faithless'). {379} This quality is the opposite of disbelief or faithlessness in the ordinary sense, which means not believing due to lack of confidence in others or due to obstinacy. Here it means one does not need to believe because one knows and sees with clarity. One knows for oneself and is independent of the knowledge of others. Faith implies reliance on someone else's knowledge when we do not yet clearly know for ourselves. Once we have seen something as it truly is, there is no need to depend on others for knowledge. This is a knowledge that is greater than faith or belief:

Of things that are fully known by himself, evident to himself, he does not have faith in others – neither ascetics, nor brahmins, nor gods, nor Māra, nor Brahma; he does not believe others concerning things fully known by himself, evident to himself, that is: 'Formations are impermanent; formations are dukkha; formations are non-self; with ignorance as condition, there are mental formations....'<sup>126</sup>

Nd. I. 235.

Likewise, Ven. Sāriputta said to the Buddha:

In this matter I do not go with faith to the Blessed One ... this matter I have known, seen, experienced, realized and discerned with wisdom – therefore, I have no doubts or uncertainties.

S. V. 221.

At the time of the Buddha, people were very interested in the concept of a 'great man' (*mahāpurisa*), and therefore there are many passages in the Tipiṭaka in reference to this term. There are references to the 'characteristics of a great man' (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*), for example in the case of the brahmins' predictions about Prince Siddhattha, which were based on their ancient texts. But from the perspective of the teachings, more interesting passages pertain to the question posed to the Buddha after his awakening of who is worthy of the title 'great man'. This frequent

<sup>126</sup>See also Sn. 167 and Dh. Verse 97.



question shows that this concept was still important and a matter of debate.

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta went to see the Buddha and asked him this question:

Venerable sir, it is said, ‘a great man, a great man.’ In what way is one a great man?

[The Buddha replied:]

With a liberated mind, I say, Sāriputta, one is a great man. Without a liberated mind, I say, one is not a great man.

S. V. 158.

This reply indicates that the Buddha considered an arahant – one who has completed the four aspects of development – to be a great man. His reply is very brief and succinct, focusing on the final criteria: a completion of the four kinds of development, culminating in liberating wisdom. No matter how skilled or proficient a person may be, if he is still not fully liberated from mental defilement, he is not yet a great man.

To be worthy of this title, one must be free from suffering. For example, one’s thought processes are truly free from any restriction or impurity, which does not mean that one obtains everything that one wishes for or faces no obstruction or coercion from others. On the highest level, one’s wisdom is free from any domination or manipulation from a fabricated sense of ‘self’. {380} One’s thoughts do not simply follow one’s desires, propelled by craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*), and fixed views (*diṭṭhi*).

In any case, the reason for the Buddha’s brevity here is most likely because he was speaking to Ven. Sāriputta, the foremost disciple proficient in wisdom. The Buddha thus mentioned only the decisive criteria, along with tying in the concept of liberation with the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, presenting the supreme perspective on this subject.

A teaching by the Buddha which elaborates on this concept of a great man stems from a conversation he had with Vassakāra, the chief minister

of Magadha. On one occasion while the Buddha was staying in the Bamboo Grove at Rājagaha, he was approached by Vassakāra, who said that according to his own doctrine a person considered to be a great man with superior wisdom is endowed with four attributes: (1) he is highly learned, well-informed of various fields of learning, and understands the meaning of various statements, able to distinguish one from another; (2) he has a good memory; he remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago; (3) he is skilful and diligent in attending to the diverse chores of a householder; and (4) he possesses sound judgement, knowing how to carry out and arrange his affairs.

After presenting this explanation Vassakāra asked the Buddha whether he approves or rejects this statement. The Buddha replied, saying that he neither approves nor rejects the statement, but that he himself describes a great man with superior wisdom as possessing four other qualities:

1. A person practises for the welfare and happiness of the many-folk; he is one who has established people in the noble way, that is, to be endowed with beautiful and wholesome qualities.
2. He thinks whatever he wants to think and does not think what he does not want to think; he intends whatever he wants to intend and does not intend what he does not want to intend; thus he has attained to mental mastery over the ways of thought.
3. He gains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four jhānas that constitute the higher mind (*abhicitta*) and are pleasant abidings in this very life.
4. With the destruction of the taints, he has realized for himself with direct knowledge the taintless liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, and dwells in it here and now.

A. II. 35.

Although there are many teachings by the Buddha on this concept of a great man, they usually appear in verse form and are a reply to people's specific questions, so most are either brief or focused on one particular

aspect. The teaching presented to the chief minister above is in prose, and it contains clearly defined principles, which are relevant to everyone. The four aspects of self-mastery (*bhāṇvita*) are incorporated in the four attributes of a great man. Expressed in a different way, these four attributes reveal another aspect of the four kinds of development, highlighting the superior and exceptional capabilities of an arahant which are difficult for an ordinary person to attain.

The first attribute reveals how arahants – those who have fulfilled the holy life (*brahmacariya*) – are no longer burdened with any personal concerns, including any form of spiritual training. From the time of their full awakening, they devote themselves entirely to the welfare and happiness of the multitudes, which becomes the essence of their lives. {381} This corresponds to the goal of the holy life – to Buddhism in its entirety – which is encapsulated in the Buddha’s frequent exhortation: to act ‘for the benefit of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for people in the world.’

This compassionate, altruistic action also points to the connection between individual happiness and promoting the happiness of others.

In whichever way one describes the attributes of arahants, including the preceding description of the fourfold self-mastery, they always rest firmly on three essential qualities: wisdom (specifically called *vijjā*); liberation (*vimutti*); and compassion (*karuṇā*), which is the force radiating knowledge and wisdom outwards, resulting in others obtaining knowledge and arriving at deliverance.

If we identify an unawakened being as someone bound, wisdom is the knife that cuts the bonds, liberation is the release from the bonds into freedom, and compassion is, once a person is no longer agitated and anxious about his or her own concerns, the looking to others who are still bound and extricating them.

Technically, *vijjā* is the path (*magga*), whereas *vimutti* is generally considered fruit or result (*phala*). The authors of later texts, however, have divided *vimutti* into more detail as two parts, as both path and fruit. They say that the act or moment of release is the path; the state of having been

released and abiding in freedom is the fruit.<sup>127</sup> The realization of Nibbāna is completed at wisdom and liberation; compassion is the subsequent acting for others. In other words, personal concerns (*attattha*) are ended at wisdom and liberation; matters to be done for others (*parattha*) are deeds then taken up by compassion.

Note that of these three qualities – wisdom, liberation and compassion – liberation is a result; it is a finished condition and facilitates further action but is not the agent itself. Wisdom and compassion are agents. Wisdom is the factor bringing about the realization of Nibbāna, which is the accomplishment of personal concerns. Compassion is the factor that helps to settle the affairs of others. For this reason wisdom and compassion are professed to be primary attributes of the Buddha. Wisdom is the essential element for personal welfare (*attattha*) or for the completion of personal benefit (*attahita-sampatti*), while compassion is the essential element for others' wellbeing (*parattha*) or for the practice of benefiting others (*parahita-paṭipatti*).

In short, the Buddha's attributes are of two kinds: the completion of personal benefit, with wisdom as agent, and the practice of benefiting others, with compassion as agent.<sup>128</sup> Both the completion of personal benefit and the practice of benefiting others are meaningful and genuine because they are confirmed by liberation. {382} Liberation is proof of the arrival at Nibbāna; it is an essential characteristic of Nibbāna and is synonymous with Nibbāna.

<sup>127</sup> *Vijjā*, e.g.: MA. II. 348; MA. V. 100; SA. II. 270, 366; AA. I. 55; AA. II. 264; AA. III. 175; [2/580]; AA. IV. 90. *Vimutti*, e.g.: MA. II. 281; MA. V. 59; AA. II. 263; AA. III. 217, 227, 378, 416; ItA. I. 170. *Vijjā* and *vimutti*, e.g.: MA. V. 104; AA. I. 120; AA. II. 79, 154; AA. III. 220; AA. V. 43; VismṬ.: Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā, Ānāpānassatikathāvaṇṇanā. Some explanations are contradictory.

<sup>128</sup> VismṬ.: Cha-anussatiniddesavaṇṇanā, Buddhānussatikathāvaṇṇanā.

## 7.4 ADDITIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF ARAHANTS

### A. OUTWARD DEMEANOUR

{396} In the Dhammacetiya Sutta, King Pasenadi of Kosala told the Buddha the reasons for his faith in the Triple Gem. The Buddha endorsed these principles as *dhamma-cetiya* ('monuments' in honour of the Dhamma) and said they are fundamental to the holy life. He encouraged the members of the monastic sangha to remember them. One section of this sutta describes the bhikkhu disciples of the Buddha as follows:

Again, venerable sir, I have walked and wandered from park to park and from garden to garden. There I have seen some recluses and brahmins who are lean, wretched, unsightly, jaundiced, with veins standing out on their limbs, such that people would not want to look at them again.<sup>129</sup> I have thought: 'Surely these venerable ones are leading the holy life in discontent, or they have done some evil deed and are concealing it.... But here I see bhikkhus smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties fresh, living at ease, unruffled, subsisting on what others give,<sup>130</sup> abiding with a mind as a wild deer's.<sup>131</sup> I have thought: 'Surely these venerable ones perceive successive states of lofty distinction in the Blessed One's Dispensation.... This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way.'<sup>132</sup>

M. II. 121.

<sup>129</sup> Alternatively: 'seeming to neglect others'.

<sup>130</sup> Alternatively: 'acting appropriately with gifts' (*paradavuttā*).

<sup>131</sup> Gentle; not disturbing others or seeking personal gains; cherishing freedom; able to move about freely.

<sup>132</sup> Trans.: King Pasenadi mentions ten reasons; these include: the bhikkhus live in concord and mutual appreciation, without disputing; and the bhikkhu sangha is well-disciplined.

At the break of dawn those bhikkhus go out from their dwellings, from the forests, the base of trees, and hillsides.... The way they walk forward, step backward, look around, and bend and extend their arms, instils faith. With eyes cast down they are perfect in demeanour.

*Vin. II. 146.*

As long as the monks meet in harmony, redress problems in harmony, and carry on their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. {397}

*D. II. 76-7; A. IV. 21.*

## **B. HAPPINESS AND LIBERATION**

The elder bhikkhus dress in the morning and, taking bowl and robe, enter a village or town for alms. There they speak on the Dhamma, and the laypeople show their confidence in them. They use their gains without being tied to them, uninfatuated with them, not blindly absorbed in them, seeing the danger in them and understanding the escape. These gains increase their beauty and strength, and on that account they do not meet death or deadly suffering.

*S. II. 269.*

A wise one whose heart is undisturbed is free of mental proliferation. He has stopped brooding; everywhere he sees peace. He does not praise himself among his equals, superiors, or those of lower standing.

*Sn. 185.*

*One who is free of frustration,  
Who has gone beyond becoming or not becoming this or that,  
Is fearless, sorrowless, blissful.  
Even the devas cannot see into his heart.*

*Ud. 20.*

*One who has cut all bonds of attachment,  
Removed worry deep within the heart,  
The peaceful one sleeps happily,  
Attained to perfect peace of mind.*

A. I. 138.

### C. MASTERS OF THE HEART, RULERS OF THOUGHT

A great man is one of great wisdom ... to whatever train of thought he wishes to apply himself, to that train of thought he does apply himself; to whatever train of thought he desires not to apply himself, to that train of thought he does not apply himself. Whatever intention he wishes to intend, he does so or not if he so wishes. Thus is he master of the mind in the ways of thought.<sup>133</sup>

A. II. 36.

### D. LOVING ALL CREATURES; INTIMATE WITH DEATH AND SEPARATION

*In life, one is unafflicted;  
at death one grieves not.  
If he is a sage, a seer of the path,  
surrounded by grief he grieves not.*

Ud. 46.

*I do not rejoice in death;  
I am not attached to life.  
I will discard this body  
with established mindfulness and clear comprehension.*

*I do not rejoice in death;  
I am not attached to life.  
I wait for my time,  
as a servant who has finished work  
waits for his wages. {398}*

*Thag. verses 1002-1003; cf., e.g.: Thag. verses 654-5, 685-6.*

<sup>133</sup>This passage refers to the Buddha as a great being. Many passages, however, attest that this is an attribute of all those freed from the taints (*khīṇāsava*). See: M. I. 121-2, 214-15; AA. III. 5; [2/471].

At one time Ven. Upasena Thera was sitting in a cave in the Sītavana forest. Two venomous snakes were chasing each other when one of them fell on Upasena and bit him. The poison spread quickly. He knew that he was about to die but his behaviour did not change. He asked his fellow monks to place him on a bed and carry him so that he could enter *parinibbāna* outside.<sup>134</sup>

On another occasion Ven. Ānanda asked Ven. Sāriputta if he would grieve if the Buddha were to pass away. Sāriputta replied:

Even if the Teacher himself were to die, still sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would not arise in me. However, it would occur to me: ‘The Teacher, so influential, so powerful and mighty, has passed away. If the Blessed One had lived for a long time, that would have been for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, for the compassionate assistance to the world.’

S. II. 274.

The elder Ven. Adhimutta was captured by bandits but experienced no fear. The bandit leader was perplexed:

‘Those people in the past whom we have killed for a sacrifice or to obtain their money were always afraid; they trembled and wailed. But you experience no fear and your complexion is bright. How is it that you don’t cry out at a time of such grave danger?’

‘One who is not attached to life experiences no mental suffering, chieftain. One who has destroyed the fetters has passed beyond all fear of pain.... I do not fear death, just like someone would not fear laying down a burden.... One who has reached the Ultimate needs nothing in the world. He is not aggrieved by death; he is like one who has escaped a burning house. The Lord Buddha has said that all things in this world and all realms attainable by beings are dependent.... I have no thought of “I have been”, “I will be”, or “I will not be”, or the thought: “My formations will vanish.” Why

<sup>134</sup>S. IV. 40–41.



should I cry out over these formations? Chieftain, one who sees according to truth that there is only the arising of phenomena, only the succession of formations, experiences no fear. When a person sees the world with wisdom as similar to wood and grass, then he will have no need to seize anything as “mine”; he does not grieve: “Mine is lost.”

‘I have no more requirement for this body; I wish for no realm of existence; this body will disintegrate and there will not be another. Whatever you must do with my body, do as you wish. I will experience no anger or delight as a consequence of your actions.’

Listening to the elder’s words, the bandits’ hair stood on end and they dropped their weapons. After further questioning, they asked to become disciples. Some of them even requested ordination as Buddhist monks. {399}

*Thag. verses 705-719.*

Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching.

*M. I. 186.*

As long as they live the arahants have abandoned the slaying of creatures ... they abide friendly and compassionate to all creatures, to all beings.

*A. I. 211; A. IV. 248-9, 255-6, 388-90.*

*Wishing: in gladness and in safety, may all beings be at ease...  
Even as a mother protects with her life, her child, her only child,  
So with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings.*<sup>135</sup>

*Kh. 8; Sn. 26.*

<sup>135</sup>These passages and M. I. 185-6 are instructions for those aspiring to Nibbāna. Arahants have perfected this loving kindness.

*Even those with an arrow stuck in the breast...*

*Even these here, stricken, get to sleep;*

*So why should I not get to sleep*

*When my arrow has been drawn out?*

*Going to wild places I dread not,*

*Nor am I afraid to sleep.*

*During the nights and days nothing afflicts me,*

*I see for myself no loss in the world.*

*Therefore I can sleep in peace,*

*Full of compassion for all beings.*

S. I. 110-11.

[The first attribute of a great man with great wisdom is]: he is dedicated to the welfare of many people, to the happiness of many people. He has established many people in the way of the noble ones, that is, in possessing beautiful qualities, in possessing wholesome qualities.<sup>136</sup>

A. II. 35-6.

When encountering these canonical records of the inner life of arahants, ordinary people may brand arahants as eccentric, wrongly imagining that they have no concern for others and heartlessly let things take their own course. Therefore, it is important to remind people of arahants' outward behaviour, that they conduct their lives responsibly and justly. What is the nature of a person's life when there are no unresolved experiences congesting the mind or defilements ruling the heart? Eccentric or strange behaviour can be found in some persons who have attained certain levels of concentrative release (*cetovimutti*). Arahants, however, have attained release through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*); they do not hold even to the thought: 'I am one who is free from grasping.' No impurities are there to form an identity as someone who is unattached. No new attachments are made (e.g. to spiritual attainments) which could bring about a dismissive attitude towards the thing they left behind. Nor are

<sup>136</sup>This is a quality of the Buddha. Arahants, however, follow this practice and the term *mahāpurisa* is a common epithet for arahants. E.g.: Dh. verse 352; Sn. 199.

there any defilements that cause disgust or disinterest. Arahants thus act reasonably, appropriately and wisely, out of wholesome service to the world. {400}

An absence of fear (even of being startled) is a key mental attribute of an arahant.<sup>137</sup> As mentioned earlier in the section on qualities of the heart (*citta*), arahants are free of any greed, hatred or delusion, which are the causes for fear and anxiety. Fear stems from defilements buried deeply in the subconscious. It is an immediate reaction when confronted by frightening objects, a process that happens so quickly a person is not fully aware of it. Because the reaction occurs before mindfulness is established, fear is very difficult to conceal. It is thus a good indication that subtle mental impurities still lie dormant. When fear is present, it is not easy to deceive others or to delude oneself.

In special circumstances, when outward behaviour suggests the realization of arahantship, or someone mistakenly believes to have reached such realization, Dhamma practitioners have used fear as a test. An example from the scriptures is the story of an elder monk proficient at the eight ‘attainments’ (*samāpatti*). As the mental defilements were suppressed by the power of these attainments, for sixty years he believed himself to be an arahant. One day when he saw a trumpeting, ferocious elephant he was startled, and thus knew that he was still unawakened.<sup>138</sup>

## 7.5 SEVEN NOBLE BEINGS

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This division of noble beings focuses on the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and is also connected to the eight liberations (*vimokkha*).

The *indriya* (literally: ‘ruling principles’) act as sources of empowerment in spiritual practice. They control or combat unfavourable mental qualities like lack of confidence, laziness, negligence, distraction, and ignorance. There are five such faculties: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*satī*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Dhamma

<sup>137</sup>E.g.: M. II. 138; S. I. 219–20.

<sup>138</sup>Vism. 634–5; VbhA. 489.

practitioners possess varying degrees of these faculties. Three of these faculties have an effect on the kind of realization of noble beings (*ariya-puggala*): faith (*saddhindriya*), concentration (*samādhindriya*) and wisdom (*paññindriya*).

*Vimokkha* is the liberation from unfavourable mental qualities, resulting from the delight of being absorbed in an object of attention. This liberation, however, is dependent on the power of concentration in the state of *jhāna*, and exists only as long as one abides in *jhāna*.<sup>139</sup> It is not the complete liberation from defilements and suffering which is synonymous with *Nibbāna*.<sup>140</sup> {412}

There are eight kinds of *vimokkha*.<sup>141</sup>

1. ‘Dwelling in form, one perceives form.’ This refers to the four fine-material *jhānas* of someone who practises *kasiṇa*<sup>142</sup> meditation and uses an attribute of the body, e.g. the colour of hair, as the meditation object.
2. ‘Not perceiving internal form, one perceives external form.’ This refers to the four fine-material *jhānas* of someone who uses an external object for *kasiṇa* meditation.
3. ‘Absorbed in beauty.’ This refers to the *jhāna* of someone practising colour *kasiṇa* meditation. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* also includes the *jhāna* of a person cultivating the four divine abidings (*brahma-vihāra* or *appamaññā*): loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Meditation on the four divine abidings leads a person to see all beings as beautiful, with no feelings of disgust.

<sup>139</sup>Except for the last (eighth) *vimokkha* (*saññāvedayita-nirodha* or *nirodha-samāpatti*), which is the exclusive province of non-returners and arahants.

<sup>140</sup>*Vimokkha* corresponds with *vimutti* only in the term *cetovimutti*: liberation through the power of *samādhi*.

<sup>141</sup>E.g.: D. III. 262; A. IV. 306-307. Explained at: Ps. II. 38-40; DA. II. 513; MA. III. 255; AA. IV. 146.

<sup>142</sup>Trans.: *kasiṇa*: ten meditations on the colours blue, yellow, red, and white, and on the elements earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness (or light).

4. Abiding in the sphere of unbounded space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*). With the end of perception of repulsion (*paṭigha-saññā*) and perception of diversity (*nānatta-saññā*), one transcends the perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*). One meditates on the boundlessness of space.
5. Transcending the sphere of unbounded space, one attains the sphere of unbounded consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*). One meditates on the boundlessness of consciousness.
6. Transcending the sphere of unbounded consciousness, one attains the sphere of nothingness (*ākīñcaññāyatana*).
7. Transcending the sphere of nothingness, one attains the sphere of neither-perception-nor-nonperception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).
8. Transcending the sphere of neither-perception-nor-nonperception, one attains the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*), also known as the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*).

These eight liberations comprise all nine ‘gradual stages of meditative attainment’ (*anupubbavihāra-samāpatti*) as illustrated on Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Gradual Stages of Meditative Attainment

Liberation ( <i>vimokkha</i> )	Jhāna	Concentrative Attainment ( <i>samāpatti</i> )
<hr/>		
Vimokkha 1	4 Rūpa-jhāna	8 <i>Samāpatti</i>
Vimokkha 2		
Vimokkha 3		
Vimokkha 4		
Vimokkha 5	4 Arūpa-jhāna	
Vimokkha 6		
Vimokkha 7		
Vimokkha 8		
	= <i>Nirodha-samāpatti</i>	
		9 <i>Anupubbavīhāra-samāpatti</i>

The spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are linked to the liberations in the following way: when a person begins spiritual practice, he or she will possess a dominant faculty of either faith or wisdom. {413} If that person develops concentration to a level higher than the third liberation (i.e. attains formless *jhāna*), the faculty of concentration (*samādhindriya*) will become the dominant faculty. Those practitioners whose dominant faculty remains faith or wisdom may attain the four fine-material *jhānas* but they will not attain the formless *jhānas*. Conventionally speaking, they do not attain ‘*vimokkha*’. Concentration as a dominant faculty, however, in the end must give way to and act as a basis for wisdom. Up to that point, concentration will facilitate the attainment of the higher liberations (*vimokkha*).

At this point we can examine how the seven noble beings (*dakkhīṇeyya-puggala*) are connected to the faculties and liberations. Ordinarily, the seven noble beings are presented from the highest to the lowest, but to conform with the presentation of the eight noble beings presented earlier, they are listed here from the lowest to the highest:<sup>143</sup>

### **Learners (*sekha*; *sa-upādisesa-puggala*)**

1. *Saddhānusārī*: ‘faith-devotee’; a person striving for stream-entry and cultivating the noble path with faith as dominant faculty. If this person attains stream-entry, he becomes ‘one liberated by faith’ (*saddhā-vimutta*).
2. *Dhammānusārī*: ‘truth-devotee’; a person striving for stream-entry and cultivating the noble path with wisdom as dominant faculty. If this person attains stream-entry, he becomes ‘one attained to right view’ (*diṭṭhippatta*).
3. *Saddhā-vimutta*: ‘one liberated by faith’; a person who truly understands the noble truths, has righteous conduct, and has destroyed some of the taints (*āsava*) through wisdom, and has faith as the dominant faculty. This refers to all those who have attained stream-entry up to those who strive for arahantship with faith as dominant

<sup>143</sup>D. III. 105, 253-4; A. IV. 10-11, 76-7; Ps. II. 53-4. For a varying explanation see Appendix 7.

faculty. If they attain arahantship, they become ‘one liberated by wisdom’ (*paññā-vimutta*).

4. *Diṭṭhippatta*: ‘one attained to right view’; a person who truly understands the noble truths, has righteous conduct, and has destroyed some of the taints (*āśava*) through wisdom. This refers to all those who have attained stream-entry up to those who strive for arahantship with wisdom as dominant faculty. If they attain arahantship, they become a *paññā-vimutta*.
5. *Kāya-sakkhī*: ‘body witness’; a person who abides in and has ‘contacted with the body’ the eight liberations, and has destroyed some of the taints (*āśava*) through wisdom. This refers to all those who have attained stream-entry up to those who strive for arahantship with concentration as dominant faculty. If they attain arahantship, they become ‘one liberated in both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*).

### **Adepts (*asekha*; *anupādisesa-puggala*)**

6. *Paññā-vimutta*: ‘one liberated by wisdom’; a person who does not abide in and contact with the body the eight liberations (*vimokkha*), but whose taints have all been destroyed by understanding the noble truths with wisdom. This refers to the arahants who have practised insight (*vipassanā*) as the principal meditation up to the moment of full awakening.
7. *Ubhatobhāga-vimutta*: ‘one liberated in both ways’; one who contacts with the body and abides in the eight liberations (*vimokkha*), and destroys all of the taints by understanding the noble truths with wisdom. This refers to the arahants who have developed a high degree of *samatha* (tranquillity meditation; concentration) and used this tranquillity as a foundation for practising insight to reach full awakening. {414}

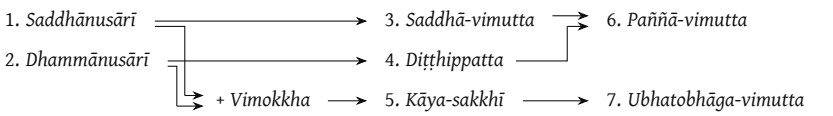
Figure 7.2 shows the connection between the 8 *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*, the 7 *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*, the five spiritual faculties, and the eight liberations.<sup>144</sup>

Figure 7.2: Noble Beings, Their Faculties and Liberations

Seven Noble Beings ( <i>dakkhiṇeyya-puggala</i> )	Dominant Faculty ( <i>indriya</i> )	Liberations 4-8 ( <i>vimokkha</i> )	Eight Noble Beings ( <i>dakkhiṇeyya-puggala</i> )
1. <i>Saddhānusārī</i>	Faith		1. One practising for stream-entry
2. <i>Dhammānusārī</i>	Wisdom		
3. <i>Saddhā-vimutta</i>	Faith		2. Stream-enterer
4. <i>Diṭṭhippatta</i>	Wisdom		3. One practising for once-returning
5. <i>Kāya-sakkhī</i>	Concentration	Yes	4. Once-returner
			5. One practising for non-returning
			6. Non-returner
			7. One practising for arahantship
6. <i>Paññā-vimutta</i>	Wisdom		
7. <i>Ubhatobhāga-vimutta</i>	Concentration	Yes	8. Arahant

A sequential diagram is shown at Figure 7.3. {415}

Figure 7.3: Noble Beings, Sequential Progression



<sup>144</sup>This diagram follows the outline in the Pali Canon (cf.: A. I. 120; Pug. 74), which the Paramatthamañjūsā claims is a straightforward presentation. The Paṭisambhidāmagga uses an outline it calls ‘indirect’ or ‘figurative’ which differs greatly (Ps. II. 53-5). I will not present this latter outline here as it may cause confusion. Later texts like the Visuddhimagga explain using this latter outline. See: Vism. 659-60; VismT.: Paṭipadāññāḍassanavisuddhiniddesaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārupekkhāññāḍakathāṇṇanā. Cf.: A. I. 120 and Pug. 72.



There are some noteworthy points here in relation to *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* and *ariya-puggala* as outlined in the two diagrams above:

- Note that despite the strength of any other faculties within a person, at the moment of full awakening wisdom predominates.<sup>145</sup>
- A simple definition for *kāya-sakkhī* is ‘one who first attains *jhāna* and later attains *Nibbāna*’.<sup>146</sup> Note also that only a ‘body witness’ who is a non-returner is able to attain the eighth liberation (*vimokkha*).
- The commentaries and sub-commentaries state that *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* are liberated in two ways: liberated from the corporeal body (*rūpa-kāya*) by the formless attainments, and from the mind-body (*nāma-kāya*) by the noble path. They are liberated on two occasions: when suppressing (*vikkhambhana*) the defilements by the power of concentration in *jhāna*, and when completely uprooting (*samuccheda*) the defilements.<sup>147</sup> If *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* attain the threefold knowledge (*vijjā*), they are called *tevijja*. If they attain the six *abhiññā* (‘supreme knowledge’), they are called *chaḷabhiññā*. If they attain the four penetrating insights (*paṭisambhidā*), they are called *paṭisambhidappatta*.
- *Paññā-vimutta* practise primarily *vipassanā* meditation; they practise *samatha* meditation only to have an adequate foundation for insight. They therefore do not experience the exceptional fruits of *samatha* beyond the first four *jhānas*; they do not attain the formless *jhānas*, the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*), the two *lokiya-vijjā* (‘mundane knowledge’ – recollection of past lives and knowledge of the rebirth of beings), nor do they attain the five mundane *abhiññā* (‘supreme knowledge’ – psychic powers, the ‘divine ear’, telepathy, recollection of past lives, and the ‘divine

<sup>145</sup> *Paṭivedhakāle paññandriyaṃ ādhipateyyaṃ hoti* (Ps. II. 50-51; and see S. V. 222).

<sup>146</sup> Ps. II. 52.

<sup>147</sup> E.g.: DA. II. 514; Vism. 660; VismT.:  
Paṭipadāññānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā,  
Saṅkhārupekkhāññākathāvaṇṇanā.

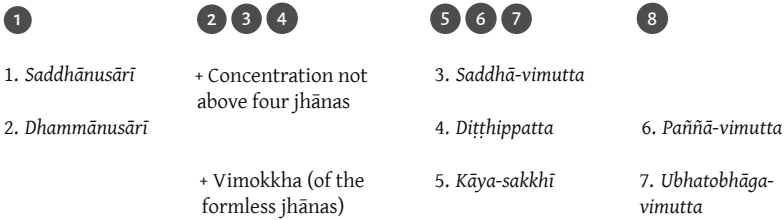
eye’.)<sup>148</sup> In principle, however, they can be *paṭisambhidappatta* (those who achieve the four penetrating insights).<sup>149</sup>

A summary of the subjects described so far can be outlined as follows.

An outline from the Pali Canon is illustrated on Figure 7.4 (here, the commentaries and sub-commentaries are referred to simply to link the material). {416}

Figure 7.4: Noble Beings, An Outline of Connections

- ➊ One practising for stream-entry
- ➋ Stream-enterer (abandoned first three fetters)
- ➌ One practising for once-returning
- ➍ Once-returner (weakened greed, hatred and delusion)
- ➎ One practising for non-returning
- ➏ Non-returner (abandoned first five fetters)
- ➐ One practising for arahantship
- ➑ Arahant (abandoned all ten fetters)



<sup>148</sup>See: S. II. 121-7.

<sup>149</sup>A comparison of *paññā-vimutta* and *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* is found at D. II. 68-71.

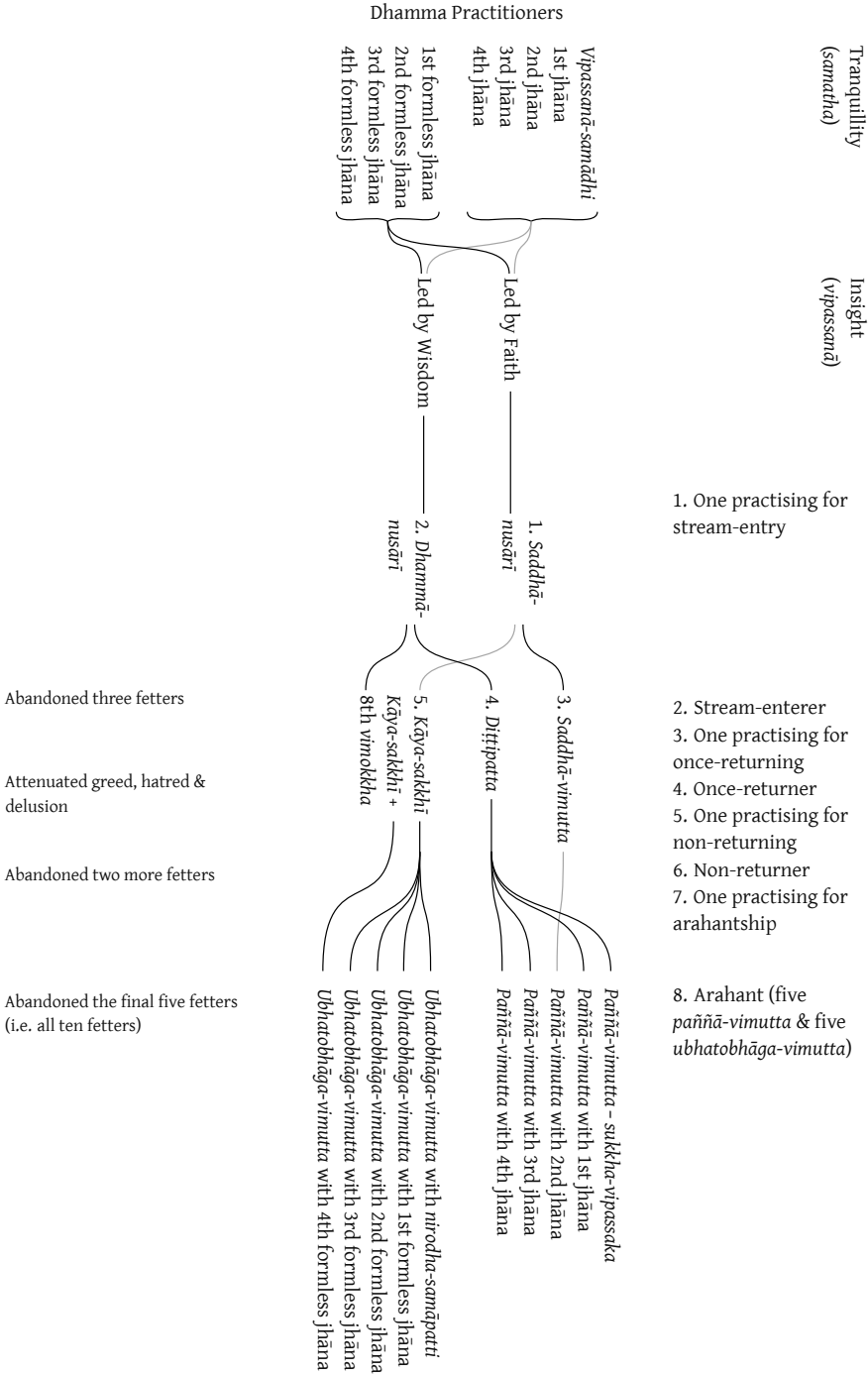
Figure 7.5 shows an outline From the Pali Canon, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries.<sup>150</sup>

{417} To avoid confusion it is important here to distinguish between two ways of teaching: (a) explaining indirectly or limiting one's examination to particular aspects (*pariyāya*); and (b) explaining directly, absolutely and comprehensively (*nippariyāya*). Of particular relevance is the discussion on the two types of arahants: *paññā-vimutta* and *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*. *Ubhatobhāga-vimutta* are liberated in both ways: they have attained arahantship and have also attained the formless jhānas. *Paññā-vimutta* have attained arahantship, but if they attain jhāna it is not higher than the fourth jhāna.

Although there are only these two types of arahants, people may get confused when encountering, for example, the description of an arahant as 'one liberated in mind' (*cetovimutta*). For clarification, *cetovimutta* is another name for *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*; the term *cetovimutta* simply emphasizes the preferred mode of practice (in this case *samatha*) before reaching arahantship. It does not imply that liberation was attained solely by concentration.

<sup>150</sup> Some secondary and later texts divide liberation into three kinds and expand them into categories, according to discernment into each of the three universal characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), and linked to the dominant faculties. These three liberations are *suññata-vimokkha*, *animitta-vimokkha* and *appaṇihita-vimokkha*. To avoid overburdening the reader I will not list these categories here. See: Ps. II. 35-71; Vism. 657-9; Comp.: Kammaṭṭhānaparicchedo, Vipassanākammaṭṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo. The Vinaya Piṭaka lists these three liberations, but the commentarial explanation is different; see: Vin. III. 92-3; Vin. IV. 25-6; VinA. II. 493. Moreover, the commentaries classify the five *paññā-vimutta* and the five *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* here according to the foundations of *samatha* meditation at, e.g.: DA. II. 512; DA. III. 889; MA. III. 188; PañcA. 191.

Figure 7.5: Noble Beings, An Extended Outline



In some places, arahants who have practised *samatha* and *vipassanā* in tandem are rather randomly assigned the names *cetovimutta* or *paññā-vimutta* depending on which faculty was stronger. For example, the commentaries call Ven. Sāriputta a *paññā-vimutta* and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna a *cetovimutta*.<sup>151</sup> On some occasions these two terms are used together to describe a single arahant who has achieved both of these ways to liberation.<sup>152</sup> Another example of how terms are used in different ways to describe arahants is in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which uses the fixed terms *saddhā-vimutta*, *diṭṭhippatta* and *kāya-sakkhī* for practitioners all the way till the moment of full awakening.<sup>153</sup> Failing to understand this indirect way of explaining can lead to confusion; all of a sudden there are multiple types of arahants.

A similar confusion can arise when explaining other terms related to Buddha-Dhamma. An example is the definition of right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) as equivalent to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).<sup>154</sup> The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are generally considered a comprehensive method of practice comprising all spiritual qualities, including effort (*ātapa*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). A doubt then arises as to how the *satipaṭṭhāna* can be confined to merely right mindfulness. In this case, *sammā-sati* is the mindfulness suitable to or applied in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. {418}

Another example is the development of concentration, of which there are four kinds.<sup>155</sup> The description of the fourth kind includes: *When developed and expanded, this meditation leads to the destruction of the taints*. One may wonder how concentration (*samādhi*), which is equivalent to ‘tranquillity’ (*samatha*), can lead to the destruction of the taints without ‘insight’ (*vipassanā*). Here, concentration must be understood as the core

<sup>151</sup>See: M. I. 437; MA. III. 191.

<sup>152</sup>A. III. 84. Essentially, all persons who have attained arahantship have completed these two kinds of liberation – see below.

<sup>153</sup>Ps. II. 53-5; cf.: A. IV. 451-3. See also A. I. 24 where Ven. Vakkali is praised as the foremost disciple of all *saddhā-vimutta* (or *saddhādhimutta*). The *Visuddhimagga* explains according to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Vism. 659-60).

<sup>154</sup>E.g.: D. II. 313.

<sup>155</sup>E.g.: D. III. 222-3.

of a person's meditation practice, like a field where various spiritual qualities gather to battle the defilements.<sup>156</sup> The development of concentration in this context is not isolated; it is used in conjunction with and as a support for other meditation techniques.<sup>157</sup>

## 7.6 KINDS OF ARAHANTS

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Of all the different kinds of noble beings (*ariya-puggala*) and those persons worthy of offerings (*dakkhiṇeyya-puggala*) outlined above, arahants are supreme. They have completed their training, developed expertise (*asekha*), finished their spiritual cultivation (*bhāvita*), and reached the goal. Nothing remains for them to do in respect to personal wellbeing; instead, they act for others' wellbeing, for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world.

There are two kinds of arahants, who can be further subdivided according to their special qualities:

**1. 'Those liberated through wisdom' (*paññā-vimutta*):** Arahants who emphasize insight meditation, relying on concentration only to the necessary degree for realizing the destruction of the taints. They do not attain jhānas above the fourth jhāna; they do not have the exceptional proficiency of the 'attainment of cessation' (*nirodha-samāpatti*) or the five mundane 'supreme knowledges' (*abhiññā*):

- A. 'Pure insight practitioners' (*sukkha-vipassaka*): arahants who exclusively practise *vipassanā*. They attain jhāna at the moment of realizing the Path.
- B. Those liberated through wisdom (*paññāvimutta*) who attain one of the first four jhānas before practising insight meditation leading to arahantship.

<sup>156</sup>Cf.: D. II. 216-7; M. III. 71; S. V. 21; A. IV. 40.

<sup>157</sup>Bhikkhunī Dhamminā claims concentration meditation includes the cultivation of those factors focused upon (*nimitta*) and of supporting spiritual qualities (M. I. 301).

C. *Paṭisambhidappatta*: arahants who attain the four penetrating insights (*paṭisambhidā*):<sup>158</sup>

1. *Attha-paṭisambhidā*: clear insight into meaning (*attha*).
2. *Dhamma-paṭisambhidā*: clear insight into principles (*dhamma*).
3. *Nirutti-paṭisambhidā*: clear insight into language.
4. *Paṭibhāṇa-paṭisambhidā*: discriminating knowledge; being perceptive and sharp-witted. {419}

**2. ‘Those liberated in both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*):** Arahants liberated from the body through the formless attainments and liberated by mind through the noble path. They have two moments of liberation: when suppressing the defilements by the power of concentration in *jhāna* (*vikkhambhana*) and when uprooting the defilements with wisdom (*samuccheda*):<sup>159</sup>

A. *Ubhatobhāga-vimutta*: arahants who have attained at least one of the formless *jhānas* but who have attained neither mundane direct knowledge (*vijjā*) – see below – nor mundane supreme knowledge (*abhiññā*).

B. *Tevijja*: arahants who have attained the three kinds of direct knowledge (*vijjā*):

1. *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: recollection of past lives.
2. *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings according to their kamma. Equivalent to the ‘divine eye’.

<sup>158</sup>See, e.g.: A. II. 160; Ps. I. 119-20; Vbh. 294-5. It is not necessary to be an *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* to attain the four *paṭisambhidā* (see: Vism. 277, 442; VbhA. 388).

<sup>159</sup>These definitions of *paññā-vimutta* and *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* follow the explanations of the commentaries and sub-commentaries, e.g.: DA. II. 514, 515; Vism. 659-60; VismT.: *Paṭipadāññānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Saṅkharupekkhāññānakathāvaṇṇanā*. Cf.: D. II. 70-1; S. II. 123-27. On the three *vijjā* see: D. III. 220, 275-6; A. V. 211. On the six *abhiññā* see, e.g.: D. III. 281; A. III. 280. [Trans.: note that the term *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* is used here as both a heading and a sub-heading.]

3. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowledge of the truth resulting in the destruction of the taints (*āśava*).

C. *Chalābhiñña*: arahants with the six supreme knowledges (*abhiññā*):

1. *Iddhividhā*: psychic powers.
2. *Dibbasota*: ‘divine ear’.
3. *Cetopariyañāṇa*: telepathy.
4. *Pubbenivāsānussati*: recollection of past lives.
5. *Dibbacakkhu*: ‘divine eye’.
6. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowledge resulting in the destruction of the taints (*āśava*).

D. *Paṭisambhidappatta*: *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* who have attained the four penetrating insights (*paṭisambhidā*).

After this subdivision a list of arahants looks like this:

1. *Sukkhavipassaka*: pure insight practitioners.
2. *Paññāvimutta*: those liberated by wisdom (apart from *sukkhavipassaka*).
3. *Ubhatobhāga-vimutta*: those liberated both ways.
4. *Tevijja*: those with the three kinds of direct knowledge.
5. *Chalābhiñña*: those with the six kinds of supreme knowledge.
6. *Paṭisambhidappatta*: those who have attained the four penetrating insights.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>160</sup>Of these six terms, *sukkhavipassaka* comes from the commentaries; the rest are found in the Pali Canon. These six kinds of arahants are listed at Vism. 710, but the first is *saddhāvimutta* rather than *sukkhavipassaka*. A *saddhāvimutta* is one with faith as dominant faculty up to the point of attaining stream-entry. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Ps. II. 53-4) retains the use of this term for that person all the way to arahantship (although written as *saddhādhimutta*); at Vism. 659, however, it is written as *saddhāvimutta*.



An arahant who is both a *chalabhiñña* and a *paṭisambhidappatta* is considered perfected in spiritual powers. {420}

## 7.7 DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF NOBLE BEINGS

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(See also the section on different levels of enlightenment presented earlier.)

### A. TRAINEES (SEKHA) AND ARAHANTS

The Venerable Sāriputta said to the Venerable Anuruddha:

‘Friend Anuruddha, it is said: “A trainee, a trainee.” In what way, friend, is one a trainee?’

‘It is, friend, because one has partly developed the Four Foundations of Mindfulness that one is a trainee....’

‘Friend Anuruddha, it is said: “One beyond training, one beyond training.” In what way, friend, is one beyond training?’

‘It is, friend, because one has completely developed the Four Foundations of Mindfulness that one is beyond training.’

S. V. 175.

Bhikkhus, I do not say of all bhikkhus that they still have work to do with diligence in regard to the six bases for contact, nor do I say of all bhikkhus that they do not have work to do with diligence in regard to the six bases for contact.

I do not say of those bhikkhus who are arahants, whose taints are destroyed ... and are completely liberated through final knowledge, that they still have work to do with diligence in regard to the six bases for contact. Why is that? They have done their work with diligence; they are incapable of being negligent.

But I say of those bhikkhus who are trainees, who have not attained arahantship, who dwell aspiring for the unsurpassed security from bondage,<sup>161</sup> that they still have work to do with diligence in regard to the six bases for contact. Why is that? There are, bhikkhus, forms (sounds, etc.) cognizable by the eye (ear, etc.) that are agreeable and those that are disagreeable. When these forms are experienced, they cannot obsess the mind of a bhikkhu [who is heedful]. When the mind is not obsessed, tireless energy is aroused, unmuddled mindfulness is established, the body becomes tranquil and untroubled, the mind becomes concentrated and one-pointed. Seeing this fruit of diligence, bhikkhus, I say that those bhikkhus still have work to do with diligence in regard to the six bases for contact.

*S. IV. 124-5.*

Bhikkhus, there is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is a trainee, standing on the plane of a trainee, might understand: ‘I am a trainee’, while a bhikkhu who is one beyond training, standing on the plane of one beyond training, might understand: ‘I am one beyond training.’

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is a trainee understands as it really is: ‘This is suffering’.... ‘This is the origin of suffering’.... ‘This is the cessation of suffering’.... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ This is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is a trainee, standing on the plane of a trainee, understands: ‘I am a trainee.’ {470}

Again bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is a trainee considers thus: ‘Is there outside the Buddha’s dispensation another ascetic or brahmin who teaches a Dhamma so real, so true, so certain (tatha) as the Blessed One does?’ He understands thus: ‘There is no other ascetic or brahmin outside the Buddha’s dispensation who teaches a Dhamma so real, so true, so certain as the Blessed One does.’ This too is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is a trainee, standing on the plane of a trainee, understands: ‘I am a trainee.’

Again bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is a trainee understands the five spiritual faculties – the faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. He does not yet dwell having contacted with the [mental] body their destination, their culmination, their fruit, their final goal; yet he sees with penetrative wisdom. This too is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is a trainee, standing on the plane of a trainee, understands: ‘I am a trainee’....

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is one beyond training understands the five spiritual faculties – the faculty of faith ... the faculty of wisdom. He dwells having contacted with the [mental] body their destination, their culmination, their fruit, their final goal; and he sees with penetrative wisdom. This is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is one beyond training, standing on the plane of one beyond training, understands: ‘I am one beyond training.’

Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is one beyond training understands the six faculties – the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, the body faculty, the mind faculty. He understands: ‘These faculties will cease completely and totally without remainder, and no other six faculties will arise anywhere in any way.’ This too is a method by means of which a bhikkhu who is one beyond training, standing on the plane of one beyond training, understands: ‘I am one beyond training.’

S. V. 229.

<sup>161</sup>*Yogakkhema*: freedom from the defilements, which bind beings to existence; equivalent to arahantship. In general parlance it can mean ‘safety’ or ‘security’.

Sāriputta! A person sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘This has come to be.’<sup>162</sup> Having seen thus, one is practising for the purpose of disenchantment and dispassion towards what has come to be, for its cessation. One sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘Its origination occurs with that as nutriment.’ Having seen thus, one is practising for the purpose of disenchantment and dispassion towards its origination through nutriment, for its cessation. One sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘With the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation.’ Having seen thus, one is practising for the purpose of disenchantment and dispassion towards what is subject to cessation, for its cessation. It is in such a way that one is a trainee.

Sāriputta! How has one fully examined the Dhamma?<sup>163</sup> A person sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘This has come to be.’ Having seen thus, through disenchantment and dispassion towards what has come to be, through its cessation, one is liberated by non-clinging. One sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘Its origination occurs with that as nutriment.’ Having seen thus, through disenchantment and dispassion towards what has come to be, through its cessation, one is liberated by non-clinging. One sees as it really is with correct wisdom: ‘With the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation.’ Having seen thus, through disenchantment and dispassion towards what has come to be, through its cessation, one is liberated by non-clinging. It is in such a way that one has fully examined the Dhamma. {471}

*S. II. 49-50.*

And what, Mahānāma, is the trainee’s wisdom? A monk in this Dhamma and Discipline understands as it truly is: ‘This is suffering’.... ‘This is the origin of suffering’..... ‘This is the cessation of suffering’... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ This is the trainee’s wisdom.

Now, Mahānāma, that noble disciple endowed with morality, concentration and wisdom, by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance

of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints.

A. I. 219-20 (a discourse by Ven. Ānanda)

Here are several more important passages distinguishing trainees from those beyond training:

He is under training, bhikkhu. That is why he is called a trainee. And what does he train in? He trains in the higher virtue, the higher mind, and the higher wisdom.

A. I. 231; and see: Nd. I. 493; Nd. II. 9.

Here, bhikkhu, one possesses a trainee's right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. It is in this way that one is a trainee.

S. V. 14.

Here, bhikkhu, one possesses the right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration of one beyond training. It is in this way that one is beyond training.

A. V. 221-2.

S. V. 327-8 describes the difference between a trainee's abiding and the Tathāgata's abiding: trainees dwell having (incompletely) abandoned the five hindrances; arahants have completely eliminated the five hindrances. The Abhidhamma makes this distinction: the four *magga-samaṅgī* and three *phala-samaṅgī* are *sekha*, arahants are *asekha*, and the remainder are neither trainees nor beyond training (Pug. 14).

<sup>162</sup>The commentaries define *bhūta* ('has come to be') here as the five aggregates. The commentators claim this is only one way of describing the way of practice for trainees and those beyond training. In fact, *bhūta* here can be defined in many ways, for example as the sense spheres, the elements (*dhātu*), or as the factors in Dependent Origination (SA. II. 61).

<sup>163</sup>*Saṅkhāta-dhamma*: one who has fully examined the Dhamma = an arahant; see: SA. II. 59; UdA. 116; SnA. I. 124; SnA. II. 587.

**B. THOSE PRACTISING FOR STREAM-ENTRY AND STREAM-ENTERERS**

Monks, the eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The ear... the nose... the mind... (the twelve sense spheres, the six forms of consciousness, the six contacts, the six feelings, the six perceptions, the six volitions, the six forms of craving, the six elements, the five aggregates) is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. One who places faith in these teachings and resolves on them thus is called a faithfollower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of the worldlings. He is incapable of doing any deed by reason of which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal realm, or in the domain of ghosts; he is incapable of passing away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry.

One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness.... He is incapable of passing away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry.

One who knows and sees these teachings thus is called a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as his destination.

*S. III. 225-8.*

**C. STREAM-ENTERERS AND ARAHANTS**

When, bhikkhus, a noble disciple understands as they really are the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, then he is called a noble disciple who is a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as his destination....

When, bhikkhus, having understood as they really are the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, a bhikkhu is liberated by non-clinging, then he is called a bhikkhu who is an

arahant, one whose taints are destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached his own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, one completely liberated through final knowledge.<sup>164</sup> {472}

*S. III. 160-161.*

Aggivessana: ‘In what way is a disciple of the recluse Gotama one who carries out his instruction, who responds to his advice, who has crossed beyond doubt, become free from perplexity, gained intrepidity, and become independent of others in the Teacher’s Dispensation?’<sup>165</sup>

The Buddha: ‘Here, Aggivessana, any kind of material form (feeling, perception, volitional formation, consciousness) whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external ... far or near, a disciple of mine sees all material form (feeling, etc.) as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” It is in this way that a disciple of mine is one who carries out my instruction, who responds to my advice, who has crossed beyond doubt, become free from perplexity, gained intrepidity, and become independent of others in the Teacher’s Dispensation.’

Aggivessana: ‘Master Gotama, in what way is a bhikkhu an arahant with taints destroyed ... and is completely liberated through final knowledge?’

The Buddha: ‘Here, Aggivessana, any kind of material form (feeling, etc.) whatever ... a bhikkhu has seen all material form (feeling, etc.) as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self”, and through not clinging he is liberated. It is in this way that a bhikkhu is an arahant with taints destroyed ... and is completely liberated through final knowledge.’

*M. I. 234-5.*

<sup>164</sup>There are two similar suttas in the Mahāvagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya: at S. V. 193 the five aggregates are replaced by the five spiritual faculties (5 *indriya*) and at S. V. 205 they are replaced by the six sense bases (6 *indriya*).

<sup>165</sup>I.e. a stream-enterer; see the section on stream-enterers below.

**D. NON-RETURNERS AND ARAHANTS**

*Venerable Nārada:* Friend Savitṭha, apart from faith, apart from personal preference, apart from oral tradition, apart from reasoned reflection, apart from conforming to a personal opinion, I know this, I see this: ‘With the cessation of birth comes cessation of aging-and-death ... with the cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations’ .... I know this, I see this: ‘Nibbāna is the cessation of existence.’

*Venerable Savitṭha:* Then the Venerable Nārada is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed.

*Nārada:* Friend, though I have clearly seen as it really is with correct wisdom, ‘Nibbāna is the cessation of existence’, I am not an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed. Suppose, friend, there was a well along a desert road, but it had neither a rope nor a bucket. Then a man would come along, oppressed and afflicted by the heat, tired, parched, and thirsty. He would look down into the well and the knowledge would occur to him, ‘There is water’, but he would not be able to make bodily contact with it. So too, friend, though I have clearly seen as it really is with correct wisdom, ‘Nibbāna is the cessation of existence’, I am not an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed.<sup>166</sup> {473}

*S. II. 117-18.*

*Venerable Khemaka:* Among these five aggregates subject to clinging, I do not regard anything as self or as belonging to self....

*Elder Bhikkhus:* If the Venerable Khemaka does not regard anything among these five aggregates subject to clinging as self or as belonging to self, then he is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed.

*Khemaka:* I do not regard anything among these five aggregates subject to clinging as self or as belonging to self, yet I am not an

<sup>166</sup>The commentaries explain that he was established in the path of non-returning (SA. II. 123).



arahant, one whose taints are destroyed. Friends, I still experience [the notion] ‘I am’ in me in relation to these five aggregates subject to clinging, but I do not regard [anything among them] as ‘This I am’.<sup>167</sup>

*Venerable Dāsaka:* When you speak of this ‘I am’ – what is it that you speak of as ‘I am’? Do you speak of form as ‘I am’, or do you speak of ‘I am’ apart from form? Do you speak of feeling ... of perception ... of volitional formations ... of consciousness as ‘I am’, or do you speak of ‘I am’ apart from consciousness? When you speak of this ‘I am’, friend Khemaka, what is it that you speak of as ‘I am’?

*Khemaka:* I do not speak of form as ‘I am’, nor do I speak of ‘I am’ apart from form. I do not speak of feeling as ‘I am’ ... nor of perception as ‘I am’ ... nor of volitional formations as ‘I am’ ... nor of consciousness as ‘I am’. Nor do I speak of ‘I am’ apart from consciousness. Friend, although I still experience [the notion] ‘I am’ in me in relation to these five aggregates subject to clinging, I do not regard [anything among them] as: ‘This I am’.

Suppose, friend, there is the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus. Would one be speaking rightly if one would say, ‘The scent belongs to the petals’, or, ‘The scent belongs to the colour’, or, ‘The scent belongs to the pistils’?

*Dāsaka:* No, friend.

*Khemaka:* And how, friends, should one answer if one is to answer rightly?

*Dāsaka:* Answering rightly, one should answer: ‘The scent belongs to the flower.’

*Khemaka:* So too, friends, I do not speak of form as ‘I am’, nor do I speak of ‘I am’ apart from form.... Nor do I speak of ‘I am’ apart from consciousness. Friend, although I still experience [the notion] ‘I am’ in me in relation to these five aggregates subject to clinging, I do not regard [anything among them] as ‘This I am’.

Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, still, in relation to the five aggregates subject to clinging, there lingers in him a residual conceit ‘I am’, a desire ‘I am’, an underlying tendency ‘I am’ that has not yet been uprooted.<sup>168</sup> Sometime later he dwells contemplating rise and fall in the five aggregates subject to clinging: ‘Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away; such is feeling ... such is perception ... such are volitional formations ... such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away.’ As he dwells thus contemplating rise and fall in the five aggregates subject to clinging, the residual conceit ‘I am’, the desire ‘I am’, the underlying tendency ‘I am’ that had not yet been uprooted – this comes to be uprooted.<sup>169</sup> {474}

Suppose, friends, a cloth has become soiled and stained, and its owners give it to a laundryman. The laundryman would scour it evenly with cleaning salt, lye, or cowdung, and rinse it in clean water. Even though that cloth would become pure and clean, it would still retain a residual smell of cleaning salt, lye, or cowdung that had not yet vanished. The laundryman would then give it back to the owners. The owners would put it in a sweet-scented casket and the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye, or cowdung that had not yet vanished would vanish. So, too, friends ... the residual conceit ... comes to be uprooted.

S. III. 127-30.

<sup>167</sup>The Pali for ‘I still experience [the notion] “I am”’ is *asmīti adhigataṃ*, and for ‘but I do not regard [anything among them] as “this I am”’ is *ayamaḥamasmīti ca na samanupassāmi*. The second phrase in the Burmese edition is: *ayamasmīti na ca na samanupassāmi*. Following the Burmese edition, this sentence is rendered: *I still experience [the notion] “I am” ... and I have not yet stopped regarding [them] as “this I am”*.

<sup>168</sup>From the beginning up to this point a non-returner is being discussed. The five fetters that have been abandoned are: fixed personality view, doubt, adherence to rules and vows, sensual lust, and aversion. The remaining five fetters are: attachment to the fine-material realms, attachment to the formless realms, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

<sup>169</sup>The realization of arahantship.

### E. ARAHANTS LIBERATED BY WISDOM AND ARAHANTS LIBERATED BOTH WAYS

Ānanda, insofar as a monk, having known as they really are these seven stations of consciousness and these two spheres (see Note 7.3), their origin and cessation, their gratification, their danger, and their escape, that monk, Ānanda, is liberated by non-clinging and is called one who is liberated by wisdom....

Ānanda, when a monk attains these eight liberations (*vimokkha*) in forward order, in reverse order, and in forward-and-reverse order, entering them and emerging from them as and when, and for as long as he wishes, and by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints, that monk is called 'one liberated both ways.'<sup>170</sup>

*D. II. 70-71.*

### F. THE BUDDHA AND THOSE LIBERATED BY WISDOM

Bhikkhus, the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is liberated by disenchantment, by dispassion, by cessation, by non-clinging towards form (feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness), and is therefore called a Perfectly Enlightened One. So too, a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom is liberated by disenchantment, by dispassion, by cessation, by non-clinging towards form (feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness), and is therefore called one liberated by wisdom.

Therein, bhikkhus, what is the distinction, what is the disparity, what is the difference between the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, and a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom?....

The Tathāgata, bhikkhus, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is the originator of the path as yet unarisen, the producer

<sup>170</sup>The eight liberations have been discussed earlier.

## NOTE 7.3: THE NINE ABODES OF BEINGS

Seven stations of consciousness (*viññāṇa-ṭhiti*):

1. beings different in both body and perception;
2. beings different in body, but equal in perception;
3. beings equal in body, but different in perception;
4. beings equal in body and in perception;
5. beings in the sphere of boundless space;
6. beings in the sphere of boundless consciousness;
7. beings in the sphere of nothingness.

The two spheres (*āyatana*):

1. realm of non-percipient beings (*asaññīsattāyatana*);
2. realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).

The seven stations of consciousness and two spheres are sometimes combined as the nine abodes of beings (*sattāvāsa*). The reference here to the stations of consciousness and two spheres is merely one way of teaching: it would be equally valid to substitute the five aggregates, which would cover the same subject.

of the path as yet unproduced, the declarer of the path as yet undeclared. He is the knower of the path, the one adept in the path, the one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become joined with it afterwards.

This, bhikkhus, is the difference between the Tathāgata, the Ara-hant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, and a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom.<sup>171</sup> {475}

S. III. 65-6.

<sup>171</sup>The commentaries translate *maggavidū* ('adept in the path') as a 'declarer of the path' SA. II. 308.

## 7.8 FACTORS OF STREAM-ENTRY

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So far the discussion has focused on those who have reached the highest stage, of complete realization of Nibbāna. It is worthy, however, to recognize the many individuals, especially householders, who have ‘entered the stream’ to Nibbāna or have caught a glimpse of Nibbāna. These individuals often have spouses and children, conducting their lives virtuously in the wider world.

In modern times, people’s understanding of and feeling for Nibbāna and enlightened beings has changed considerably. The view held by many people in the past of Nibbāna as a heavenly city of eternal bliss has changed into a view of extinction. Having less contact with Buddhist teachings and being influenced more by materialism has led people to see Nibbāna in a negative light, as something to be avoided. At the very least they see Nibbāna as something distant and without relevance to their lives. To address this problem, apart from instilling a correct understanding of Nibbāna, people should be encouraged to take special interest in the first stage of enlightenment – of stream-entry. The importance of stream-entry goes beyond an academic interest in Nibbāna and enlightened beings, but it often gets overlooked. The Buddha repeatedly taught:

Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and those who are receptive – whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen – these you should exhort, settle and establish in the four factors of stream-entry.<sup>172</sup>

S. V. 364-5.

The life of a stream-enterer does not appear alien or frightening to contemporary people; rather, it appears admirable. Many of the stream-enterers at the time of the Buddha were lay disciples and were exemplary people. They were virtuous, led contented family lives, and were

<sup>172</sup>The ‘four factors of stream-entry’ (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) refer in some cases to the factors that bring about stream-entry and in other cases to the qualities of a stream-enterer.

engaged in society, helping their community and the Buddhist religion. Although stream-enterers have reached a level of realization, they still possess a subtle degree of defilement. They still grieve and lament when encountering separation.<sup>173</sup> They still have preferences and aversions like unawakened people, although these are attenuated and do not lead to serious misconduct. Their suffering is minor compared to the suffering they have abandoned. They are firmly established and secure in a happy, wholesome and faultless life. {882}

Prominent stream-enterers from the Buddha's time include: Bimbisāra, King of Magadha, who offered Veḷuvana, the first Buddhist monastery, and who kept the weekly Observance Day precepts;<sup>174</sup> Anāthapiṇḍika, founder of the famous monastery of Jetavana and incomparable benefactor to the monastic community and to the poor;<sup>175</sup> Visākhā, foremost lay-woman supporter, who was renowned in the Kosala country – she was very active in promoting social welfare despite having twenty children of her own;<sup>176</sup> Jīvaka-Komārabhacca, celebrated physician of King Bimbisāra, of the Buddha, and of the monastic community, who is revered by traditional medicine practitioners to this day;<sup>177</sup> Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā, husband and wife who were utterly faithful to each other into old age and vowed to meet again in future lifetimes.<sup>178</sup>

The attribute of a stream-enterer that was mentioned earlier is the abandonment of the first three fetters (*samyojana*) – personality-view, doubt, and attachment to rules and religious practices. Freedom from these fetters focuses on the absence of certain qualities. There is, however, much emphasis in the scriptures on positive, active qualities. There are many of these active qualities, but essentially they can be incorporated

<sup>173</sup> For example, the story of Visākhā at: Ud. 91-2; UdA. 417; DhA. III. 278.

<sup>174</sup> Important sources at: Vin. I. 35-9; PvA. 209. [Trans.: the Observance Day precepts include celibacy and fasting after midday.]

<sup>175</sup> Important sources at: Vin. II. 154-9; A. I. 25-6; AA. I. 384.

<sup>176</sup> Important sources include: Vin. I. 290-4; A. I. 26; AA. I. 404; DhA. I. 384.

<sup>177</sup> Important sources at: Vin. I. 71-2, 267-82; Vin. II. 119; A. I. 25-6; AA. I. 398.

<sup>178</sup> Important sources at: A. I. 25-6; A. II. 61-2; A. III. 295-6; A. IV. 268-9; S. III. 1; S. IV. 116; AA. I. 399.

into a group of five qualities: faith (*saddhā*), moral conduct (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Below is a description of the attributes of stream-enterers, both in terms of active, present qualities and of abandoned qualities.<sup>179</sup>

#### A. ACTIVE QUALITIES

1. Faith: stream-enterers possess a firm trust in truth, goodness, and the law of cause and effect. They have confidence in wisdom, that it is possible for human beings to overcome suffering by realizing the conditioned nature of reality. They have faith in the virtuous people who follow this path of wisdom and have a profound respect for the Triple Gem (*ratanattaya*).<sup>180</sup> Their faith is secure and unshakeable because it is rooted in true understanding. {883}
2. Moral Conduct: their behaviour through body and speech is appropriate and their mode of livelihood is honest and upright. Their conduct is 'free'; it is not enslaved by craving (see Note 7.4). They act in accord with truth to promote virtue, simplicity, dispassion, peace, and concentration. Generally speaking, this means following the five precepts, which is considered perfect moral conduct.
3. Learning: 'those learned in spiritual knowledge' (*sutavant*); they have studied the 'noble teachings' (*ariya-dhamma*).<sup>181</sup>
4. Generosity: they delight in giving and sharing; they relinquish what they have for others; they are not stingy.
5. Wisdom: they possess the knowledge of a 'learner' (*sekha*); they see clearly into the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, and the three characteristics; they abandon all wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*);

<sup>179</sup>Unlike the Pali, which first lists the absent, abandoned qualities, I list here the positive, active qualities first, which is a more contemporary format. In any case, the absent and active qualities are directly linked with one another.

<sup>180</sup>The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

<sup>181</sup>The teachings of the noble ones; virtuous qualities. On 'learned ones' (*sutavant*), 'noble disciples' (*ariya-sāvaka*), and the 'noble Dhamma' (*ariya-dhamma*), see Appendix 3.

they have no doubt concerning the Four Noble Truths; they know the world as it truly is.

6. Social Action: stream-enterers abide by the ‘virtues conducive to communal life’ (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*), which engender social unity and concord. They do this perfectly because they maintain the last virtue (of right view, below), which connects all the others. These virtues are as follows:

- A. Physical acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-kāyakamma*); mutual assistance and respect.
- B. Verbal acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-vacīkamma*); well-intentioned advice and instruction; well-mannered speech.
- C. Thoughts of lovingkindness (*mettā-manokamma*); thinking well of others; wishing to assist others; cheerful demeanour.
- D. Distributing lawful gains with others (*sādhāraṇa-bhogitā*).<sup>182</sup>
- E. Possessing a similar virtuous conduct as one’s companions (*sīla-sāmaññatā*); acting in an agreeable manner.
- F. Sharing right, noble views with one’s companions (*diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā*), which lead to the end of suffering.

In the scriptural passages that describe ‘noble views’ (of virtue 6) there are two special characteristics mentioned of stream-enterers:

- A. If they have transgressed the discipline (*vinaya*), it is their nature to confess this transgression without delay to their teacher or wise companions and to show restraint in the future. This restraint is similar to that shown by a young child who has touched a burning coal and immediately retracts his hand. {884}
- B. Although stream-enterers endeavour to assist their companions with various activities, they have a keen interest for training in the higher virtue, the higher mind, and the higher

<sup>182</sup>Trans.: as this teaching was given to bhikkhus, this virtue refers to sharing alms and other donations, which can be a source of conflict and disharmony.



## NOTE 7.4: FREE CONDUCT

‘Free’ conduct is conduct from which one does not wish for personal gain, say worldly pleasure or a heavenly birth. Note that good conduct always includes right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) – see: VbhA. 88 = Vism. 511. Of the many Pali words describing the moral conduct of stream-enterers, there are two words in particular that have been introduced into the Thai language: *ariyakanta-sīla*: conduct cherished or praised by enlightened beings; and *aparāmaṭṭha-sīla*: conduct that has not been ‘grasped onto’; conduct untainted by craving and fixed views; conduct that springs naturally from virtue – one need not attach to this conduct since no impurities exist that would lead to its transgression.

wisdom. Just as a cow with a new calf, while she grazes watches her calf, so too does a stream-enterer look to both the collective good and to personal progress on the path.<sup>183</sup>

7. Happiness: stream-enterers have begun to experience transcendent happiness, which is profound and independent of material things. They have realized ‘noble liberation’ (*ariya-vimutti*).

## B. ABANDONED QUALITIES

### 1. Three Fetters:

- A. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*: the delusion in ‘self’; the mistaken belief in a ‘self’, which leads to selfishness, conflict, and suffering.
- B. *Vicikicchā*: doubts and uncertainties concerning, for example, the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, and the training.

<sup>183</sup>These special characteristics are attributes of right view, which fall under the heading of wisdom, but due to their detailed explanations I have created a separate heading. The Buddha gave this sermon (M. I. 320-25) in reference to bhikkhu stream-enterers, but it is applicable to lay stream-enterers as well. For transgressions of the Vinaya, see: A. I. 231-34. The Buddha said that even arahants are subject to minor transgressions. Enlightened beings of all stages of enlightenment, however, are incapable of transgressing fundamental rules of the holy life, and their minor transgressions are unintentional. See Vin. V. 117, and see examples of transgressions at AA. II. 348.

These doubts prevent the mind from rousing energy and advancing on the path.

- C. *Silabbata-parāmāsa*: the misapplication of moral precepts, rules, observances, and traditions; these rules are not used as they are intended, as tools for developing such qualities as tranquillity and concentration. Instead, they are tainted by craving and fixed views, by seeking personal reward, enhancing self-stature, or blindly following others.

## 2. Five Kinds of Selfishness (*macchariya*):<sup>184</sup>

- A. Possessiveness in regard to one's dwelling (*āvāsa-macchariya*).
- B. Possessiveness in regard to one's family, group, institution, etc.; partisanship (*kula-macchariya*).
- C. Possessiveness in regard to one's wealth and good fortune (*lābha-macchariya*); preventing others from sharing these gains.
- D. Jealousy about one's reputation and social standing (*vaṇṇa-macchariya*); displeasure when someone else competes for one's gain or beauty; intolerance when hearing praise for others.
- E. Possessiveness in regard to the truth (*dhamma-macchariya*): possessiveness of knowledge and attainments; a fear that others will gain knowledge or attain realizations that match or excel one's own.<sup>185</sup>

## 3. Four Biases (*agati*):<sup>186</sup>

- A. Bias caused by desire (*chandāgati*).
- B. Bias caused by aversion (*dosāgati*). {885}
- C. Bias caused by delusion or stupidity (*mohāgati*).

<sup>184</sup>Also translated as 'stinginess', 'narrow-mindedness', or 'envy'.

<sup>185</sup>A. III. 272-3 (while possessing these five kinds of selfishness, even the first jhāna is unreachable); Vism. 683, 685.

<sup>186</sup>Also translated as 'misconduct'.

D. Bias caused by fear (*bhayāgati*).<sup>187</sup>

4. Defilement: they have abandoned coarse or acute greed (*rāga*),<sup>188</sup> hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), which lead to an unhappy existence; stream-enterers do not commit any serious misdeeds which would lead to perdition; they are secure from rebirth in 'states of woe' (*apāya*).<sup>189</sup>
5. Suffering: they have quelled mental suffering and misfortune arising from transgressions of the five precepts; the suffering remaining for stream-enterers is minor.<sup>190</sup>

The active qualities and the abandoned qualities are two sides of the same coin. The abandonment of personality-view occurs with a profound understanding of the conditioned nature of reality. With the arising of this understanding, doubt vanishes and a solid confidence based on wisdom remains. At the same time, moral precepts are observed appropriately, leading to 'conduct pleasing to awakened beings' (*ariyakanta-sīla*). The attachment to rules and observances ends. When a person develops generosity, selfishness wanes. Wisdom weakens the force of greed, hatred and delusion, which in turn frees a person from bias and clinging. The reduction of clinging leads to a release from suffering and an experience of great joy.

Stream-enterers are endowed with virtue and happiness. There is adequate virtue to ensure that they will not cause danger, distress or harm to anyone; on the contrary, their behaviour will benefit both themselves and others. This virtue is secure because it stems from thorough knowledge, which leads to a new way of seeing the world. As for happiness, stream-enterers have encountered a profound inner happiness that is of tremendous value. Although they still experience sensual or mundane pleasure, they are not carried away by this coarser form of happiness;

<sup>187</sup>Vin. II. 285; Vism. 683, 685.

<sup>188</sup>Trans.: a synonym for *lobha*.

<sup>189</sup>S. III. 225; A. III. 438.

<sup>190</sup>S. II. 133-40; S. V. 388, 441-2, 457-65.

they will not sacrifice the refined happiness to increase mundane happiness. Mundane happiness is balanced by transcendent happiness. This transcendent happiness is both a consequence of and a supporting factor for virtue; it is confirmation that a person will not regress and it supports further spiritual growth.

Stream-entry is of great value to the person who has realized it and to society. The Buddha assigned stream-entry to the first stage of enlightenment; it is the point where life as an awakened being begins. Stream-enterers are ‘true disciples’; they are part of the ‘noble community’ (*ariya-saṅgha*), which is the ‘crucible’ in which humanity is refined. {886}

The Buddha greatly emphasized the importance of stream-entry and urged his disciples to set it as a goal for their lives. He said that the realization of stream-entry is better than going to heaven, being an emperor, or attaining jhāna. A teacher who is free from sensual lust due to the power of concentrative attainments and who leads his many disciples to ‘merge with Brahma’ in heaven is considered excellent, but he is surpassed by the stream-enterer who still has sensual lust.<sup>191</sup>

*Better than ruling the whole world,  
Better than going to heaven,  
Better than lordship over the universe,  
Is reaching the stream of awakening.*<sup>192</sup>

*Dh. verse 178.*

Those people who feel that Nibbāna is too distant to reach, too esoteric, too desolate or ethereal, should use the state of stream-entry as a bridge for understanding, because stream-entry is closer to their experience and easier to understand. At the same time, stream-entry is directly linked to Nibbāna, as it is an entry into the ‘stream leading to Nibbāna’ or is a ‘first glimpse’ (*paṭhama-dassana*) of Nibbāna.<sup>193</sup> This dual-benefited approach is appropriate for contemporary people and still accords with the Buddha’s

<sup>191</sup>A. III. 371-4; cf.: A. IV. 135-6.

<sup>192</sup>The fruit of stream-entry.

<sup>193</sup>E.g.: MA. I. 74; SA. III. 55; KhA. 188; SnA. I. 193; PsA. I. 282; DhA. 43; for *sotāpatti-magga* referred to as *dassana*, see, e.g.: M. I. 7-8; DhA. 182, 220.

## NOTE 7.5: FAITH- AND TRUTH-DEVOTEES

See the earlier section describing faith- and truth-devotees. Later, the term ‘small stream-enterer’ (*cūḷa-sotāpanna*) was coined, referring to those disciples who have great love for and faith in the Buddha but whose wisdom is not yet developed (see: M. I. 141-2). The commentaries say this refers to those practitioners who have developed insight and reached ‘knowledge of recognition’ (*ñāta-pariññā*) and the ‘purity of transcending doubts’ (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*), and who have attained an ease and sense of security. See: MA. II. 120; VbhA. 254; Vism. 606; VismṬ.: *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhiniddesa*vaṇṇanā, *Paccayaparigahakathāvaṇṇanā*. See also the discussion on ‘settled confidence’ (*okappanā-saddhā*) at: DA. II. 529; DA. III. 1029; MA. III. 326; AA. III. 257.

principles. Stream-entry should be the goal of individual practitioners and of the Buddhist community as a whole. In the meantime, one can reach an intermediate stage, as either a ‘faith-devotee’ (*saddhānusārī*) or a ‘truth-devotee’ (*dharmānusārī*, see Note 7.5), whose members are considered to ‘have approached stream-entry’, ‘dwell in the Path’, and ‘progress without falling back’, and are sometimes included as ‘noble’ (*ariya*) or ‘true disciples’ (*sāvaka-saṅgha*).

Those who hesitate or for some reason are delayed can dwell in the preparatory stages of ‘virtuous person’ (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*, see Note 7.6), ‘possessing beautiful qualities’,<sup>194</sup> or ‘learned noble disciple’ (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*).<sup>195</sup> {887} These individuals have studied the ‘noble teachings’ (*ariya-dhamma*); they have responded to the ‘call’ of the truth. They have escaped from the ‘jungle’ (of confusion) and recognized the starting point of the path. Although they may still falter, they possess the necessary factors to begin the journey. At the outset, these virtuous persons, whose faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom is not yet truly secure, can generate the quality of ‘learning’ (*suta*) – of having ‘listened’, of seeking knowledge – until they reach the stage of ‘great learning’ (*bahussuta*), of being steadfast in knowledge.

<sup>194</sup> A. I. 74.

<sup>195</sup> For learned noble disciples who are *kalyāṇa-puthujjana*, see: M. I. 8; MA. I. 72; for those who are stream-enterers or higher, see below.

## NOTE 7.6: VIRTUOUS PERSON

This term is used frequently in the commentaries and is paired (contrasted) with *andhabāla-puthujjana*. In the Pali Canon it is found at: Nd. I. 131, 138, 232, 313-4, 477-8. In some locations it is spelled *puthujjana-kalyāṇaka*, e.g.: Ps. I. 176; Ps. II. 190, 193. In the Pali Canon *andhabāla-puthujjana* is only found at: S. III. 140 and Thag. verse 575; more often the term *assutavā puthujjana* is used, meaning ‘unlearned, ordinary person’, e.g.: M. I. 1; Nd. II. 44; Ps. I. 149; Dhs. 182; Vbh. 364, 368, 375; this term is frequently used as a pair with *sutavā ariyasāvaka*. The commentaries include these ‘virtuous persons’ (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*) – especially those who make great effort in their spiritual practice and whose virtues indicate they will attain stream-entry imminently – as ‘trainees’ (*sekha*), along with the other seven kinds of (awakened) trainees; these virtuous persons are included in this classification from the level of faith-devotees and truth-devotees.

Compare with the ‘small stream-enterer’ mentioned at Note 7.5.

*VinA. I. 242; MA. I. 40; VbhA. 329; AA. II. 147; ItA. I. 60; VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍam, Bhikkhupadabhājanīyavaṇṇanā.*

It is precisely this learning (*suta*) that helps in the development of the noble path, beginning with a recognition of where the path begins.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, correct understanding leads to faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom, because faith springs from such an understanding, followed by the energy to cultivate other virtues. These five qualities – learning, faith, morality, generosity and wisdom – are called the five mundane ‘accomplishments’ (*sampadā*)<sup>197</sup> or the five mundane ‘treasures’ (*vaḍḍhi*).<sup>198</sup> With the attainment of stream-entry, these five accomplishments or treasures become transcendent qualities.

<sup>196</sup>In reference to the two factors for acquiring right view, learning (*suta*) is knowledge derived from others (*paratoghosa*) – it relies on wise and trustworthy companions. This learning consequently leads to faith and wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).

<sup>197</sup>A. III. 53.

<sup>198</sup>A. III. 53; these five treasures are also known as the five noble treasures (*ariya-vaḍḍhi*), although the more common group of noble treasures contains two more qualities, of moral shame (*hiri*) and fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*), e.g.: D. III. 251; A. IV. 5-6.

A notable feature of stream-enterers is that they are not possessive of their material wealth:

[Stream-enterers] dwell at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous ... delighting in giving and sharing.... Whatever there is in their family that is suitable for giving, all that they share unreservedly among those who are virtuous and of good character.

S. V. 351-2.

Because of this unbounded generosity, stream-enterers grow in virtue but may diminish in material wealth, and the Buddha even established a training rule as a result of this trait. If the bhikkhu sangha sees that members of a family have increasing faith but diminishing wealth, it can formally assign them the title of *sekha* ('learner'), regardless of whether they are actually enlightened or not. {888} (It is usually not possible to determine the level of realization in another. Here, behaviour is used as the standard.) If a monk who is not ill and has not been previously invited goes to members of this family and eats their food, he transgresses one of the training rules.<sup>199</sup>

From this example, one can discern two important principles. First, this training rule focuses on and declares a person's inner, spiritual qualities for the benefit of the community, by dictating a standard of behaviour suitable to the circumstances. Second, it reveals how those people who are endowed with certain qualities – whose faith is correctly aligned with the Buddhist teachings, or who have realized the Dhamma as stream-enterers – do not seek reward for their good deeds. They do not chase after pleasurable sense objects for gratification. These questions do not arise for them: 'I have done good; why don't good things come back to me?' or: 'I have been generous; why am I not rich? I haven't got what I wanted.'

<sup>199</sup>Vin. IV. 180; even if he visits their house and they offer food, he should not receive it, not to mention going and asking for food as this is an offence under any circumstance (except with relatives or one who has given a formal invitation); see: Vin. I. 45; Vin. IV. 87, 193. It is the same with the other three requisites (see: Vin. III. 148, 212, 256; Vin. IV. 102-3). See also: D. III. 224-5; S. II. 195; A. II. 27-8; A. III. 108-9; Nd. I. 495; Nd. II. 59; Vism. 39-42.

Stream-enterers possess not only the physical eye, which sees material things, but they have developed the ‘eye of Dhamma’ (*dhmma-cakkhu*)<sup>200</sup> or the ‘wisdom eye’, which sees clearly into the truth. They have complete confidence in the power of goodness, a confidence that can never be shaken regardless of unfavourable material circumstances. When they have clearly seen the truth and walked the virtuous path, no one including devas can tempt them to deviate. They are steadfast in virtue. The commentaries use the example of Anāthapiṇḍika to show the degree of a stream-enterer’s rectitude.<sup>201</sup> They cannot be enticed or intimidated by devas; on the contrary, devas pay respect to them. {889}

## 7.9 BUDDHA’S WORDS ON STREAM-ENTERERS

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Here are some passages from the Pali Canon concerning stream-enterers:

### A. EPITHETS AND DESCRIPTIONS

*Buddha*: Sāriputta, this is said: ‘The stream, the stream.’ What now, Sāriputta, is the stream?

*Sāriputta*: This Noble Eightfold Path, venerable sir, is the stream; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

*Buddha*: Good, good, Sāriputta.... This is said: ‘A stream-enterer, a stream-enterer.’ What now, Sāriputta, is a stream-enterer?

<sup>200</sup>See, e.g.: Vin. I. 12, 16; in most cases the Dhamma eye refers to knowledge resulting in stream-entry (*sotāpattimagga-ñāṇa*), e.g.: VinA. V. 973; DA. I. 278; AA. II. 356; AA. IV. 102; UdA. 283; Nd2A. 8. Sometimes the term includes the path of once-returning and the path of non-returning, e.g.: VinA. III. 537; DA. I. 237; PsA. I. 77; DhA. 306. Sometimes it refers to the three paths and the three fruits, e.g.: SA. III. 297. And in some places it refers to all four paths and all four fruits, including the fruit of arahantship, e.g.: NdA. 83; MA. III. 92; MA. V. 99; SA. II. 392; VinT.: Mahākhandhakaṃ, Dhammacakkappavattanasuttavaṇṇanā. One passage in the Pali Canon refers to two occasions for the arising of the Dhamma eye; the first is the path of stream-entry and the second the path of non-returning (A. I. 242).

<sup>201</sup>DhA. III. 9; J. I. 226.



*Sāriputta*: One who is endowed with this Noble Eightfold Path, venerable sir, is called a stream-enterer: this venerable one of such a name and clan.

*Buddha*: Good, good, Sāriputta.

S. V. 347-8.

This noble disciple is called a person who is accomplished in view (*diṭṭhi-sampanna*), accomplished in vision (*dassana-sampanna*), who has arrived at this true Dhamma, who sees this true Dhamma, who possesses a trainee's knowledge, a trainee's true knowledge, who has entered the stream of the Dhamma, a noble one with penetrative wisdom, one who stands squarely before the door to the Deathless.<sup>202</sup>

S. II. 45, 58, 79-80.

A well-taught noble disciple (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*), who has encountered the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma (*ariya-dhamma*), who has encountered true men (*sappurisa*) and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma.<sup>203</sup>

E.g.: M. I. 8, 135, 300, 310, 433; M. III. 17-18, 188-9; S. III. 3-4, 16-17, 42-6, 96, 102, 113-4, 137-8, 151, 164-5; S. IV. 287.

<sup>202</sup>The terms *diṭṭhi-sampanna* and *dassana-sampanna* are frequently used alone as synonyms for a stream-enterer; for *diṭṭhi-sampanna* see, e.g.: M. I. 322-5; M. III. 64-5; S. II. 80, 133-9; S. V. 441-2, 457-65; A. I. 26-7; A. III. 373, 438-40; A. V. 119-20; Ps. I. 161; Vbh. 335-6; (commentarial explanations at e.g.: SA. II. 59; MA. IV. 107; AA. III. 387; AA. IV. 185); *dassana-sampanna* is only found in verses, e.g.: A. I. 151; A. III. 34; Thag. verses 45, 174; (commentarial explanations at e.g.: AA. III. 244). *Ariyo nibbedhikapaṇṇo* (a noble one with penetrative wisdom) can also be translated as 'a noble one with wisdom that penetrates defilement', 'a noble one with liberating wisdom', or 'a noble one with unimpeded wisdom' (see: Ps. II. 201-202; DA. III. 1029, [3/300]; MA. III. 31, 326; MA. IV. 85; SA. I. 122; AA. II. 86; AA. III. 223, 258, 406; Nd1A. II. 285, 353, 359; Vism. 88; VismṬ.: Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddesavaṇṇanā, Samādhicatukkavaṇṇanā).

<sup>203</sup>For more information on *sutavā ariyasāvaka*, *ariya-dhamma*, and *sappurisa*, see Appendix 3.

They have seen, attained, realized and penetrated the Dhamma, passed beyond doubt, did away with confusion, and gained perfect confidence, and become independent of others in the Teacher's dispensation.<sup>204</sup> {890}

*E.g.: Vin. I. 12, 16, 19, 20, 23, 37, 181, 225-6, 242, 248; Vin. II. 157, 192; D. I. 110, 148; D. II. 41; M. I. 379-80, 501; M. II. 145; A. IV. 186-7, 209-10; Ud. 49.*

A variation of this passage is: One who carries out [the Buddha's] instruction, who responds to his advice, who has crossed beyond doubt ... in the Teacher's dispensation.

*M. I. 234, 491 (this refers also to once-returners)*

Alternatively: One who is firmly established and at ease in this Dhamma and Discipline, who has crossed beyond doubt ... in the Teacher's dispensation.

*A. III. 297; cf.: D. III. 39, 52; S. IV. 254.*

A noble disciple who has arrived at the fruit, [realized the Dhamma], and understood the teaching.<sup>205</sup>

*Vin. III. 189; A. III. 284.*

One who has utter confidence in the Tathāgata, who sees the Deathless, who realizes the Deathless.<sup>206</sup>

*A. III. 451.*

No longer subject to perdition, bound [for deliverance], headed for enlightenment.

*E.g.: Vin. III. 10; D. II. 92-3, 155; M. I. 34; S. V. 193; A. I. 231-2.*

<sup>204</sup>This passage tends to follow the description of someone attaining the 'Dhamma eye'. *Aparappaccaya* ('independent of others') can also be translated as: 'no need to believe others'.

<sup>205</sup>Words in parentheses only found in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

<sup>206</sup>This passage mentions the names of twenty-one laymen, some of whom are non-returners.

## B. GENERAL CRITERIA

Householder [Anāthapiṇḍika], when five fearful retributions are stilled in a noble disciple, and he possesses the four factors of stream-entry, and he has clearly seen and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom the noble method, if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself: 'I am one finished with hell, finished with the animal realm, finished with the domain of ghosts, finished with the plane of misery, the bad destinations, the place of ruin. I am a stream-enterer, no longer bound to perdition, sure in destiny, with enlightenment as my destination....

1. *Stilling the five fearful retributions:* On account of his behaviour, one who destroys life encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future, and he experiences mental pain and anguish. For one who abstains from destroying life, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who steals encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from taking what is not given, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who engages in sexual misconduct encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from sexual misconduct, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who speaks falsely encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from false speech, this fearful retribution is stilled....

One who indulges in wine, liquor and intoxicants encounters fearful retribution in the present and in the future.... For one who abstains from intoxicants, this fearful retribution is stilled.... {891}

2. *Possessing the Four Factors of Stream-Entry:*<sup>207</sup> Here, the noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha thus: 'The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be

trained, teacher of devas and humans, the Awakened One, the Blessed One.’ (See Note 7.7)

He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Dhamma thus: ‘The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, timeless, inviting to come and see, to be brought within, to be experienced individually by the wise.’

He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Sangha thus: ‘The community of the Blessed One’s disciples is practising well, practising uprightly, practising correctly, practising properly; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals – this community of the Blessed One’s disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of respect, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.’

He possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones – unbroken, untorn, unblemished, untainted, free, praised by the wise, unambiguous (see Note 7.8), and leading to concentration.

3. *To see and penetrate with wisdom the noble method:* The noble disciple carefully analyzes Dependent Origination thus: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness comes to be.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless elimination and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. {892}

When these five fearful retributions are stilled in a noble disciple, and he possesses the four factors of stream-entry, and he has clearly seen and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom the noble method, if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself... ‘I am a stream-enterer ... with enlightenment as my destination.’<sup>208</sup>

## NOTE 7.7: UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

*Aveccappasāda* is sometimes translated as ‘unshakeable faith’. I have used the translation ‘firm confidence with wisdom’ to expand the meaning and to show the relationship of faith to wisdom. Wisdom is an inherent component to a balanced spiritual practice that expresses itself with ever greater clarity, until one no longer needs to refer to the term ‘faith’. At least one should understand that faith here is based on wisdom. *Avecca* can be translated as ‘knowing’, ‘examining’, and ‘penetrating with wisdom’; see: D. III. 158; Kh. 4; Sn. 40, 66; (explained at: DA. III. 933; KhA. 185; SnA. I. 277, 368). Compare with *avicca* in the Rūpa Siddhi Pakaraṇa [16/17], and with *anuvicca* at A. V. 88 (explained at AA. IV. 98). For commentarial passages on this interpretation of *aveccappasāda*, see: AA. II. 333; AA. III. 363; DA. II. 544. A concise definition equates *aveccappasāda* with *acalappasāda*, e.g.: DA. II. 646; DA. III. 1021; SA. II. 74; SA. III. 90, 276; AA. I. 396; AA. V. 44. See also the relationship between *aveccappasāda* and the abandonment of the sixteen *upakkilesa* at M. I. 37.

Of these three criteria, the four factors of stream-entry are direct attributes of stream-enterers. The remaining two criteria are a cause and an effect of these four factors, respectively. Understanding the ‘noble method’ (the law of Dependent Origination) is a cause for these factors of stream-entry, because when wisdom sees this law of nature, faith is stable and based on reason, and conduct is in accord with moral principles. The first criterion is an effect, because when faith and conduct reach this

<sup>207</sup> The four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) here refer to the four qualities of a stream-enterer; see SA. III. 278. There are three distinct groups of *sotāpattiyaṅga* (each with four factors) – see below.

<sup>208</sup> Also see A. V. 182-3, which reference has ‘contemplates thus’ rather than ‘analyzes Dependent Origination thus’. A. IV. 405-408 contains the same self-examination and declaration, but only mentions the five fearful retributions and the four factors of stream-entry – there is no mention of the noble method. A. III. 211-12 is an alternative presentation: instead of the five retributions are the ‘deeds of restraint concerning the five precepts’, and the four factors of stream-entry are called the ‘four supreme mental abidings for dwelling in happiness in the present’. There are many references to stream-enterers specifically linked to an understanding of Dependent Origination (the ‘noble method’), e.g.: S. II. 43, 59, 80 (they are usually referred to here as ‘perfected in view’ – *diṭṭhi-sampanna*). Stream-enterers are considered to be ‘true knowers of the world’ (S. II. 80; A. IV. 238; Dh. verse 44). At S. II. 59, stream-enterers are said to possess two forms of knowledge: ‘truth-knowledge’ (*dhamma-ñāṇa*) and ‘conformity knowledge’ (*anvaya-ñāṇa*), which are both related to Dependent Origination.

## NOTE 7.8: IRREPROACHABLE

Following DA. II. 537; AA. III. 345; VinT.: Parivāra-ṭīkā, Antarapeyyālaṃ, Katipucchāvāraṇṇanā, etc., the term *aparāmaṭṭha* can be translated two ways: first, as ‘irreproachable’: a person’s conduct is flawless and no one can find true fault with it. Second, a person’s conduct is not defiled by craving and fixed views – it is pure and practised according to how moral conduct should be practised – it has no ambiguity or hidden agenda, e.g. to gain personal advantage or to attain status. This conduct is cherished by enlightened beings (*ariyakanta-sīla*); the Buddha said this is the supreme mode of conduct (A. III. 36).

stage, the ‘fearful retributions’ cease. Therefore, the Pali Canon generally refers solely to the four factors of stream-entry, as the constant attribute of stream-enterers:

Bhikkhus, a noble disciple who possesses four things is a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the lower world.... A noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha ... the Dhamma ... the Sangha.... He possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones ... leading to concentration.<sup>209</sup>

*E.g. from S. V. 343 to S. V. 405.*

The four factors of stream-entry are sometimes called a ‘Dhamma-lens’ or ‘Dhamma-mirror’ (*dhammādāsa*) for stream-enterers to use for inspection and self-assessment.<sup>210</sup> They are sometimes called an ‘ocean of merit’, ‘ocean of good fortune’, and ‘food for joy’.<sup>211</sup> At other times they are referred to as supreme abidings for living happily in the present (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*).<sup>212</sup> Virtuous conduct is sometimes expanded into the three pure physical actions and the four pure verbal actions,

<sup>209</sup>This presentation occurs frequently in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Mahāvāra Vagga. The four factors of stream-entry are usually referred to as the four ‘qualities’ (*dhamma*); they are specifically referred to as the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) in the preceding quotation and at S. V. 345 and S. V. 364-5.

<sup>210</sup>D. II. 93; S. V. 357-60.

<sup>211</sup>S. V. 391-2, 399-402 (the fourth factor of *sīla* is sometimes changed to *cāga* or *paññā*).

<sup>212</sup>A. III. 211.

together referred to as the seven essential qualities (*saddhamma*), and the factors of stream-entry are in this case called the four 'desirable states' (*ākaṅkhiya-ṭhāna*).<sup>213</sup> In some passages the factors of stream-entry are divided into the ten 'right states' (*sammatta*): the Eightfold Path plus right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).<sup>214</sup> {893}

An alternative presentation of the four factors of stream-entry replaces moral conduct (*sīla*) with generosity (*cāga*):

A noble disciple who possesses four things is a stream-enterer....  
A noble disciple possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha ... the Dhamma ... the Sangha.... He dwells at home devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in relinquishment, one devoted to the requests of others, delighting in giving and sharing....

Whatever there is in the family that is suitable for giving, all that is shared unreservedly among those who are virtuous and of good character.

S. V. 351-2, 396-7; S. IV. 304.

All of the attributes of stream-enterers fall under the qualities of faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom. For this reason, the Buddha frequently encouraged his disciples to develop these qualities and to use them as a measuring stick for the progress of awakened beings. Likewise, he suggested they be used to measure the progress of all his disciples, including those not yet enlightened:

Bhikkhus, growing in five areas of growth, a male noble disciple grows with a noble growth (*ariyā vaḍḍhi*), and he acquires the essence, acquires the best, of this bodily existence. What are the five? He grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom.

<sup>213</sup>S. V. 354-6.

<sup>214</sup>S. V. 382-5.

When he grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, the virtuous and knowledgeable male disciple acquires right here the essence for himself.

Bhikkhus, growing in five areas of growth, a woman noble disciple grows with a noble growth, and she acquires the essence, acquires the best, of this bodily existence. What are the five? She grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom.

When she grows in faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, the virtuous and knowledgeable woman disciple acquires right here the essence for herself.<sup>215</sup>

*A. III. 80; S. IV. 250; cf.: A. V. 137.*

A bhikkhu possesses faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom. He thinks: ‘Oh, that by realizing for myself with direct knowledge, I may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints!’ And by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints.<sup>216</sup>

*M. III. 103.*

Even if a person has not mastered these five qualities, recollecting someone else who has mastered them brings ease of mind and acts as an incentive for spiritual practice: {894}

A bhikkhunī hears thus: ‘The bhikkhunī named so-and-so has died; the Blessed One has declared of her: “She was established in final knowledge [of arahantship].”’ And she has either seen that sister for herself or heard it said of her: ‘That sister’s moral conduct was thus, her qualities were thus, her wisdom was thus, her virtues were

<sup>215</sup> *Ariyā vaḍḍhi* can also be spelled *ariyā vaḍḍhanā* or *ariyā vuḍḍhi*.

<sup>216</sup> Earlier in this sutta (M. III. 99-103), it states that someone possessing these five qualities can choose to be reborn in any level of deva or Brahma realm according to his or her wishes.



thus, her deliverance was thus.' Recollecting her faith, conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she directs her mind to such a state. In this way a bhikkhunī has a happy abiding.<sup>217</sup>

M. I. 466.

Bhikkhus, I do not praise standing still, not to mention declining in wholesome qualities. I praise only growth in wholesome qualities – not standing still, not declining.

And what is the decline of wholesome qualities, not standing still, not growth? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith, conduct, learning, generosity, and discerning wisdom, these qualities do not remain constant and are not developed. This I call the decline of wholesome qualities, not the standing still, not the growth.... And what is the standing still of wholesome qualities...? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith ... wisdom, these qualities neither decrease nor increase.... And what is the growth of wholesome qualities...? Here, whatever qualities a monk possesses of faith ... wisdom, these qualities do not remain constant nor do they decline.<sup>218</sup>

A. V. 96.

There are several instances when the Buddha presented variant definitions for some of these five qualities:

<sup>217</sup>This sutta mentions bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, lay-men and lay-women who have heard the reputations of enlightened beings, from arahants down to stream-enterers; here, I have offered an example (see: M. I. 465-8).

<sup>218</sup>These five qualities of faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom are sometimes called the five 'accomplishments' (*sampadā*) – see: A. III. 53, 118. Sometimes they are called the five 'treasures' (*dhana*) – e.g.: A. III. 53. They are mentioned in many different contexts, e.g.: D. III. 164-5; M. II. 179; A. I. 210-11; A. III. 181, 314; A. V. 333-4; Ud. 50. Occasionally, learning (*suta*) is left out and the remaining qualities are called the 'four accomplishments'; this indicates that these four are the essential qualities (see, e.g.: A. II. 66; A. IV. 281, 285-6, 324-5, 363-4). And sometimes these qualities are not referred to by name (e.g.: A. IV. 270-72).

1. Faith (*saddhā*): apart from the firm confidence with wisdom in the three ‘jewels’ as found in the four factors of stream-entry, the Buddha often presented another definition:

And what is the accomplishment in faith? Here, a noble disciple has faith; he has faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Awakened One, the Blessed One.’<sup>219</sup> {895}

*E.g.: A. II. 66; A. III. 53; A. IV. 284, 288, 324-5, 363-4.*

2. Moral conduct (*sīla*): on many occasions, the Buddha defined moral conduct very simply, as the five precepts:

Here, a noble disciple abstains from the destruction of life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquors and intoxicants which are a basis for negligence.<sup>220</sup>

From the surrounding material it is fair to say that these two passages on faith and conduct refer to ‘noble’ disciples who have not yet reached a stage of awakening, as will become clear from additional quotations below.<sup>221</sup>

3. Learning (*suta*): in addition to having encountered the noble ones and being skilled in the noble teaching (*ariya-dhamma*), as mentioned earlier, the Buddha gave an alternative definition:

And what is the treasure of learning? Here, a noble disciple is one of great knowledge, and bears in mind and retains

<sup>219</sup>Faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata is also found in the factors of one who exerts effort (*padhāniyaṅga*); see: D. III. 237; M. II. 128; A. V. 15. And it is a definition for the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*); see: S. V. 197-8, 199.

<sup>220</sup>Same as preceding footnote.

<sup>221</sup>In the expression ‘noble disciples who have not yet reached a stage of awakening’, or ‘unenlightened noble disciples’, the term ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya-sāvaka*) here refers to a ‘disciple of the Buddha, the Noble One’, rather than to a ‘disciple who is a noble one’.

what he has learned. In these teachings, beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end, which in spirit and letter proclaim the absolutely perfected and purified holy life, he is erudite, he remembers them, recites them, is well-versed in them, and penetrates them with vision.<sup>222</sup>

A. III. 53.

4. Generosity (*cāga*): there are normally no variant definitions from that presented earlier.
5. Wisdom (*paññā*): apart from an understanding of Dependent Origination, the Buddha presented definitions that can also be applied to 'noble' disciples who are not yet awakened:

And what is the treasure of wisdom? Here, a noble disciple is wise, he possesses wisdom that penetrates arising and passing away, which is noble and pierces defilement, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.<sup>223</sup>

A. III. 53.

And what is accomplishment in wisdom? One who dwells with a heart overcome by covetousness and greed, by ill-will, by sloth and torpor, by restlessness and worry, and by doubt does what he should avoid and fails in his duty; as a consequence his fame and happiness diminish. When a noble disciple thus understands that these qualities are defilements of the mind, he abandons them. When he has abandoned them, he is called a noble disciple of great wisdom, of vast wisdom, one who sees the path of prosperity, one endowed with wisdom. This is called accomplishment in wisdom.<sup>224</sup>

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A. II. 67.

<sup>222</sup>This definition of learning is often included in other groups of spiritual qualities.

<sup>223</sup>Referred to as an 'accomplishment' (*sampadā*) at: A. IV. 284-5, 288, 324-5. Called an 'ocean of merit' at S. V. 392. 'Penetrates arising and passing away'

One passage from the Pali Canon enumerates six qualities of a stream-enterer:

By possessing six qualities, the householder Tapussa [and twenty other lay disciples] has reached certainty about the Tathāgata, has seen the Deathless, has realized the Deathless, and conducts his life accordingly. He possesses firm confidence with wisdom in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. He possesses noble moral conduct, noble knowledge, and noble deliverance.

A. III. 451-2.

### C. ABANDONED QUALITIES AND QUALITIES OF FRUITION

(Trans.: for additional quotations, see Appendix 5.)

One who is perfect in view (*diṭṭhi-sampanna*)<sup>225</sup> has abandoned six things. He has abandoned fixed personality view, doubt, attachment to rules and vows, lust that leads to ruin, anger that leads to ruin, and delusion that leads to ruin.... It is impossible that one perfect in view could give rise to these six things.

There are these six impossibilities (*abhabbatṭhāna*): it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will live disrespectfully and without regard for the Teacher<sup>226</sup> ... the Dhamma ... the Sangha ... the training.... It is impossible that he will cling to that which should not be clung to ... It is impossible that he will give rise to an eighth birth.<sup>227</sup>

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will believe that any conditioned phenomenon is permanent ... is [essentially] pleasurable ... is a 'self'....

(*udayatthagāminiya*) can also be translated as 'understands growth and decline'. 'Pierces defilement' (*nibbedhikā*) can also be translated as 'penetrates the truth'.

<sup>224</sup>The gist of this teaching is to be able to reflect on things without being overwhelmed by the five hindrances.

It is impossible that he will perform a heinous crime (anantariya-kamma)<sup>228</sup> ... that he will believe purity is gained through auspicious rituals ... that he will seek one truly worthy of offerings (dakkhiṇeyya) outside of this teaching. {898}

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will perform matricide ... will perform patricide ... will kill an arahant ... will with evil intent draw the blood of the Tathāgata ... will split the Sangha ... will follow another teacher.<sup>229</sup>

There are also these six impossibilities: it is impossible that one who is perfect in view will believe that pleasure and pain are self-created ... are created by an external agent ... are both self-created and created by an external agent ... that pleasure and pain arise randomly, not self-created ... arise randomly, not created by an external agent ... arise randomly, neither self-created nor created by an external agent.... And what is the cause [for this non-belief]? One perfect in view clearly sees both cause and the produced effect.<sup>230</sup>

A. III. 438-40.

One who can abandon these five qualities is capable of realizing stream-entry: selfishness<sup>231</sup> in regard to one's dwelling, selfishness in regard to one's family, selfishness in regard to one's wealth, selfishness in regard to one's social standing, and selfishness in regard to truth.<sup>232</sup>

A. III. 272-3.

<sup>225</sup> A stream-enterer.

<sup>226</sup> The Buddha.

<sup>227</sup> Trans.: stream-enterers can only be reborn a maximum of seven times.

<sup>228</sup> Acts with immediate results, e.g.: matricide (see below).

<sup>229</sup> These last two groups of *abhabbaṭṭhāna* also occur at: M. III. 64; A. I. 26-7; Vbh. 335-6.

<sup>230</sup> Compare with the nine *abhabbaṭṭhāna* and the five *abhabbaṭṭhāna* of an arahant, at: D. III. 133, 235; for example, an arahant is incapable of intentionally killing a living creature.

<sup>231</sup> Trans.: *macchariya*: also translated as 'stinginess' or 'meanness'.

Shortly before the First Recitation, after the Buddha's death, four hundred and ninety-nine arahants were selected to attend along with Ven. Ānanda, who was still a stream-enterer. He was invited because he had spent a long time learning the Dhammavinaya directly from the Buddha, and because he was a stream-enterer:

It is not possible that he (Ven. Ānanda) could be biased due to likes, dislikes, delusion, or fear.

*Vin. II. 285.*

Mahānāma the Sakyan approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: 'Venerable Sir, this city of Kapilavatthu is rich and prosperous, populous, crowded, with congested roads. In the evening, when I am entering Kapilavatthu after visiting the Blessed One or the bhikkhus who are dear to the heart, I come across a bustle of elephants, horses, chariots, carts and people. On that occasion, my mindfulness regarding the Buddha becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the Dhamma becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the Sangha becomes muddled. The thought then occurs to me: "If at this moment I should die, what would be my destination, what would be my future state (abhisamparāya)?"'

'Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your passing away will not be a bad one. When a person's mind has been refined over a long time by faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, his body, consisting of form, composed of the four elements, born from mother and father, built up from rice and pudding, requiring scrubbing and massaging,<sup>233</sup> subject to impermanence, to breaking apart and dispersal, is devoured by crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, jackals and various creatures. {899} But his mind, refined over a long time by faith, conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom – that is elevated

<sup>232</sup>The same holds for realizing the first four jhānas and the remaining three stages of enlightenment. The next sutta (A. III. 273) is identical, except selfishness (*macchariya*) is replaced with ingratitude (*akataññutā akataveditā*).

and reaches distinction.... Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Do not be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your passing away will not be a bad one. A noble disciple who possesses four things<sup>234</sup> inclines towards Nibbāna, is devoted to Nibbāna....'

S. V. 369-71.

There are these six blessings in realizing the fruit of stream-entry: one is firm in the good Dhamma; one is unable to fall back; one's suffering is limited; one is endowed with exceptional knowledge; one has clearly seen into causes and the effects of causes.<sup>235</sup>

A. III. 442.

The person who is accomplished in view, freed from the vast plain of misery, understands as it really is: 'This is suffering....' 'This is the origin of suffering....' 'This is the end of suffering....' 'This is the path leading to the end of suffering.' Therefore, you should endeavour to [understand as it really is]: 'This is suffering....' 'This is the path leading to the end of suffering.' (See Note 7.9)

S. V. 442.

'Bhikkhus, suppose that the great ocean would dry up and be destroyed except for two or three drops of water. What do you think, which is more: the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed or the two or three drops that remain?'

'Venerable sir, the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed is more. The two or three drops of water that remain are trifling. They do not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the water in the great ocean that has dried up and been destroyed.'

'So too, bhikkhus, for a noble disciple, a person accomplished in view who has reached the truth, the suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated is more, while that which remains is trifling. It does not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part ... as there is a maximum of seven more

lives. Of such great benefit is the realization of the Dhamma, of such great benefit is it to obtain the Dhamma eye.’ (See Note 7.10) {900}

The bliss of worldly pleasures and the bliss of heaven equal not one-sixteenth of the bliss of craving’s end.<sup>236</sup>

*Ud. 11.*

‘Bhikkhus, suppose that a man would place seven stones the size of mung beans next to Mount Sineru. What do you think, which is more: the seven stones the size of mung beans placed by that man or Mount Sineru?’

‘Venerable sir, Mount Sineru is more....’

‘So too, bhikkhus, the extraordinary achievements of ascetics, brahmins, wanderers, and followers of other sects do not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the achievement of a noble disciple, a person accomplished in view. So great in achievement is a person accomplished in view, so great in direct knowledge.’

*S. II. 139.*

<sup>233</sup>Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi translates this clause as: ‘subject to being worn and rubbed away’.

<sup>234</sup>The four factors of stream-entry.

<sup>235</sup>The passage translated as ‘one’s suffering is limited’ is literally translated as ‘one’s suffering is finished’. This passage in the Thai edition has the word *na* inserted, but this seems to be redundant – the Burmese edition does not contain this word.

<sup>236</sup>The bliss of craving’s end = *tanhakkhaya-sukha*.



## NOTE 7.9: THE PLANE OF MISERY

The beginning of this sutta offers a comparison to demonstrate the vastness of the plane of misery (*apāya*). At S. V. 342, there is a comparison between a world-turning monarch and a stream-enterer: a world-turning monarch, who is ruler of the four continents and after death experiences the delights of heaven, but is not a stream-enterer, is not safe from the hell realms or other planes of misery. A stream-enterer, however, even if he lives on almsfood and is dressed in threadbare robes, is safe from these planes of misery.

## NOTE 7.10: THE SUFFERING WHICH REMAINS

This is one of ten suttas comparing the suffering that remains for a stream-enterer with the suffering that has been eliminated (S. II. 133-9).

Other comparisons include dirt under a fingernail with the entire earth, water on the tip of a blade of grass with water in a lake hundreds of miles long and hundreds of miles deep, seven tiny balls of clay with the entire earth, and seven tiny pieces of gravel with the Himalayas. The same ten suttas (plus two more) occur at S. V. 457-65, which differ only with the final section:

A noble disciple, one accomplished in view who has reached the truth, understands as it really is: 'This is suffering'.... 'This is the way leading to the end of suffering'.... The suffering that remains is trifling. Compared to the former mass of suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated, the latter is incalculable, does not bear comparison, does not amount even to a fraction, as there is a maximum of seven more lives. Therefore, you should endeavour to [understand as it really is]: 'This is suffering....'

**D. ATTRIBUTES AND CONDUCT BEFORE ATTAINING STREAM-ENTRY**

Compare the qualities here of faith, moral conduct, generosity and wisdom with these same qualities described earlier in passages directly relating to stream-enterers:

One in whom the four factors of stream-entry are completely and totally absent is an ‘outsider, one who stands among the worldlings.’<sup>237</sup>

S. V. 397.

*King Mahānāma:* Venerable sir, in what way is one a lay follower?

*Buddha:* When one has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, one is then a lay follower.

*Mahānāma:* In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in moral conduct?

*Buddha:* When a lay follower abstains from the destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquor and intoxicants that are a basis for negligence, the lay follower is accomplished in moral conduct.

*Mahānāma:* In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in faith?

*Buddha:* Here, a lay follower is a person of faith; he has faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Awakened One, the Blessed One. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in faith.

*Mahānāma:* In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in generosity?

*Buddha:* Here, a lay follower dwells at home devoid of the stain of stinginess ... delighting in giving and sharing. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in generosity.

*Mahānāma:* In what way, venerable sir, is a lay follower accomplished in wisdom?

*Buddha:* Here, a noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom that ... penetrates the truth, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in wisdom.<sup>238</sup>  
{901}

S. V. 395; cf.: A. IV. 220-23.

Let us have another look at faith devotees (*saddhānusārī*) and truth devotees (*dhammānusārī*), who rank just below stream-enterers:

Bhikkhus, the eye (ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, the six sense-objects, the six kinds of consciousness ... the five aggregates) is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. One who trusts these teachings and is devoted to them thus is called a faith-devotee....

One for whom these teachings are accepted after being investigated to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a truth-devotee....<sup>239</sup>

S. III. 225-8.

There is another group of four factors of stream-entry, but here, rather than referring to the qualities of a stream-enterer, they are modes of spiritual practice that lead to stream-entry:

*Buddha:* Sāriputta, this is said: 'A factor for stream-entry.' What now, is a factor for stream-entry?

<sup>237</sup> The definitions for 'worldlings' (*puthujjana*) and enlightened beings (*ariya-puggala*) seem to get progressively more restricted and inflexible in the commentaries and sub-commentaries.

<sup>238</sup> For the complete definitions of these qualities, see earlier quotations, above.

<sup>239</sup> At S. V. 201-202, noble beings are ranked according to the strength of the five faculties: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Here, someone with a strength of faculties just below a stream-enterer is a faith-devotee, with the next lower level a truth-devotee. A person without any degree of these spiritual faculties is an 'outsider, one who stands among the worldlings.'

*Sāriputta*: Association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṁseva*) is a factor for stream-entry. Hearing the teachings of superior persons (*saddhamma-savana*) is a factor for stream-entry. Proper reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is a factor for stream-entry. A comprehensive spiritual practice (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) is a factor for stream-entry.

S. V. 347.

Bhikkhus, there are these four factors for stream-entry: association with superior persons, hearing the teachings of superior persons, proper reflection, and a comprehensive spiritual practice. (See Note 7.11)

S. V. 404; D. III. 227.

Bhikkhus, these four things, when developed and cultivated, lead to the realization of the fruit of stream-entry. What four? Association with superior persons, hearing the teachings of superior persons, proper reflection, and a comprehensive spiritual practice.

S. V. 410-11; referred to at Ps. II. 189.

These four qualities lead not only to stream-entry but to all levels of wisdom, ending in the realization of arahantship. They may be referred to by many other names, but because the Buddha emphasized them in this context they are called the ‘factors for stream-entry’.<sup>240</sup> {902}

<sup>240</sup> See the passages following from the previous footnote (i.e.: S. V. 411-13). At Ps. II. 189, it states that these four qualities are conducive for the realization of once-returning up to the realization of arahantship, and that they benefit wisdom in many ways, for example to cultivate wisdom, to complete wisdom, to sharpen wisdom, and to bring about ‘penetrative wisdom’ (*nibbedhika-paññā*). As factors for cultivating wisdom, these four are also called ‘qualities conducive to wisdom’ (*paññāvuḍḍhi-dhamma*) or simply the four *vuḍḍhi* (or *vuḍḍhi-dhamma*). At A. II. 245-6 these qualities are referred to as conducive to wisdom and of great service to human beings; they can also be called ‘qualities of great service’ (*bahukāra-dhamma*).

## NOTE 7.11: FACTORS FOR RIGHT VIEW

The first three factors are factors for right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). *Sappurisa-saṁseva* = *kalyāṇamittatā*; *saddhamma-savana* = wholesome ‘learning from others’ (*parato-ghosa*). These factors for right view are explained in the latter half of *Buddhadhamma*.

*Dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* is gradual, systematic and correct practice: preliminary spiritual practices are conducive to subsequent accomplishments. A correct practice of *sīla*, for example, leads to the realization of *Nibbāna*; one does not follow rules blindly or act from fixed views.

The *Cūḷaniddesa* (Nd. II. 70) offers examples of preliminary practices (e.g.: moral conduct, sense restraint, moderation in eating, and wakefulness) as well as subsequent accomplishments (or ‘primary teachings’), e.g.: the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Eightfold Path (i.e. the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment – *bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).

One should observe the preliminary practices with a goal in mind, to act in harmony with and be conducive to later stages of practice.

### 7.10 ADDITIONAL POINTS ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF STREAM-ENTERERS

Let us look more closely at the five qualities of faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity and wisdom, which incorporate the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*). The Buddha emphasized these qualities and used them as benchmarks for progress in relation to ‘noble disciples’, both before the realization of stream-entry and after. Special attention should be given to the quality of faith: why did the Buddha mention faith every time he discussed this stage of practice, even though Buddhism considers wisdom to be the supreme quality for spiritual development?

These five qualities are referred to as the five ‘accomplishments’ (*sampadā*), the five ‘treasures’ (*dhana*), and the five qualities of ‘growth’ (*vaḍḍhi*):

**A. FAITH (SADDHĀ)**

Trust and conviction resulting from reasoned and wise contemplation. There are three aspects to faith:

1. Faith in the Buddha: the existence of the Buddha is proof that through their own efforts and by mindfulness and wisdom human beings are able to realize the highest truth. Human beings can be trained and cultivated, both in regard to proper conduct vis-à-vis their external environment and in regard to spiritual qualities. They are able to develop wisdom to the point that they escape from the oppression by mental defilement and make an end of suffering, realizing supreme deliverance. With this realization human beings become excellent and self-reliant; they need not petition a divinity (e.g. devas, Māra or Brahma) to intercede on their behalf. By recognizing the exceptional virtues of the Buddha who has reached this realization, a person with faith should cultivate these virtues in him- or herself and try to reach the truth that the Buddha has made known.
2. Faith in the Dhamma – the Truth or the highest good – which the Buddha discovered and revealed. {903} This truth is stable, certain and autonomous; it is a natural law of cause and effect. It does not rely on the appearance of a Buddha; it is neutral and impartial to all beings. It invites investigation and spiritual practice. Every person who has developed himself adequately and has sufficient wisdom can realize this truth. This realization leads to liberation and the end of suffering.
3. Faith in the Sangha, the model community. This community acts as proof that every person has the potential to realize the highest truth realized by the Buddha. The community only comes into existence, however, when individuals allow the truth to manifest through spiritual practice. This community is comprised of people with different levels of maturity and development, but is unified by the adherence to the same standards: they have the Dhamma as their focus and standard of measurement and they are the vessels through which the Dhamma manifests. One should treasure and

participate in the virtue of this community, because the Sangha acts more than any other community to preserve the Dhamma in the world; it is the source for goodness and wellbeing to spread in the world.

The three aspects of faith are: a trust that truth – a natural law of cause and effect – exists; human beings are capable of realizing this truth; and there are exceptional people who have reached this truth and share it with others. Those who have confidence in this truth and in the human potential to realize it will strive to generate the results, especially through proper action. They believe in the causal link between action and the fruits of action, and this belief leads to steadfast ethical behaviour and a solid understanding. They do not rely primarily on external forces for help. And they trust that together people can build a virtuous or ideal community, which is comprised of individuals who have trained themselves and realized the truth of the Buddha. By reflecting on causality, a person has a firm conviction that the Buddha was truly awakened, that his teachings accord with the truth, and that it is of utmost benefit to join the community of enlightened disciples who have followed this teaching.

## **B. MORAL CONDUCT (SĪLA)**

A moral code: the entire system of conduct covering both private behaviour and one's interaction with society through physical actions and speech, including one's livelihood. This code of conduct is established to assist in the attainment of the highest good. Its aim is to prevent unskilful actions and promote good actions by teaching people to see the relationship between their deeds and their environment. It brings about stability, both personal and social, and is a foundation for higher spiritual practice. It helps to perfect physical and verbal conduct and emphasizes harmonious coexistence. {904} Such a harmonious social environment allows each individual to live at peace and to train him or herself in order to reach higher states of realization.

For the general public, the basic code of conduct that supports wellbeing is the five precepts: to not violate living creatures, to not violate others' property, to not violate loving relationships, to not violate truth by

speaking falsely or aggressively, and to not impair mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) by using addictive substances.<sup>241</sup> Certain communities establish more intricate and refined codes of conduct, for example the eight precepts, the ten precepts, and the two hundred and twenty-seven precepts, for an ordered discipline and to reach the goal of that specific community.

There are several attributes of Buddhist morality:

1. it creates a conducive external environment for spiritual practice leading to the highest goal;
2. it promotes peace and harmony within a community, so that each individual can pursue his or her activities in comfort; and
3. the restraint of moral conduct leads to self-discipline and a reduction of mental impurity. Moral conduct makes a person receptive to wholesome qualities. In particular it is a basis for concentration.<sup>242</sup>

Although there are levels of moral conduct higher than the five precepts, all desirable codes of conduct required for Dhamma practice (referred to as ‘conduct cherished by the noble ones’ – *ariyakanta-sīla*) share the same essence and have the same criteria: they are followed neither out of desire for pleasurable rewards, nor out of attachment, nor out of fixed views on morality, nor by blindly following social customs. They are followed by understanding the true purpose of moral precepts. For lay Buddhists who have this proper perspective, observing the five precepts is enough to lead to stream-entry.

<sup>241</sup>Mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension, or the awareness of right and wrong, are the protectors of moral conduct.

<sup>242</sup>The most basic forms of *sīla*, e.g. the five precepts, aim for non-cruelty and non-oppression, which is the first step to building a supportive environment. Higher levels of *sīla* aim to create both a supportive external environment and internal environment – to help each person train him- or herself for higher spiritual accomplishments.



### C. LEARNING (SUTA)

‘That which is heard’; knowledge gained from listening, reading, studying, news media, or any other sources; knowledge of the ‘noble teachings’ (*ariya-dhamma*) – the teachings of enlightened beings – which reveal the highest way of life and the path to awakening. Knowledge gained for careers and general activities in the world (for example in the arts and sciences) is insufficient to become a ‘noble disciple’. {905} Worldly knowledge varies between different individuals and it is not always harmless. Although it is developed to solve problems and to generate happiness, often it has the opposite desired effect and creates all sorts of complications. Therefore it is not the same as the learning referred to here.

The knowledge of a noble disciple is always beneficial. It is the knowledge that every person needs to lead a good life. It enables people to apply professional knowledge to promote personal and social well-being. It prevents harm and solves problems in a truly effective way. And most importantly, it alone can lead an ordinary person to become enlightened. For professional knowledge to be an effective tool for solving problems it must be aligned with the knowledge of the noble teachings. All these forms of knowledge, however, including the knowledge of noble teachings, resemble at first a storeroom containing raw materials. The knowledge has not yet been applied to truly settle one’s affairs. After acquiring knowledge a person assimilates it and makes it his own, as a particular view or belief. But for the knowledge to be truly effective, it must become an instrument for wisdom, at which point it develops into analytical and discriminative knowledge and is integrated into systematic, comprehensive practice (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*).

### D. GENEROSITY (CĀGA)

True giving; outward relinquishment by giving material things and inward relinquishment by abandoning greed; an absence of stinginess. Noble disciples do not seek reward (material gain, prestige, happiness or heaven) in exchange for their gifts. The expression in the suttas, ‘delighting in giving and sharing’ (*dānaśāṃvibhāga-rata*), indicates that noble disciples derive joy from the very act of giving. They do not

experience the suffering or disappointment from such thoughts as: ‘I have given but received nothing in return.’ Noble disciples are endowed with lovingkindness and compassion. Without the urge to acquire or to possess, the heart becomes expansive and sympathy for others arises. One clearly sees other people’s hardship and suffering, and naturally inclines to generosity. One finds joy in giving, by alleviating others’ suffering and making them happy. The goodness in the act of giving becomes the reward. By giving, the world becomes a happier place. {906} In addition, generosity purifies the heart, reduces mental impurities, and leads a person closer to the goal of Buddhism.<sup>243</sup> As Ven. Sāriputta said:

Wise persons do not give gifts for worldly happiness, nor do they give gifts for a better rebirth. Wise persons give gifts to remove defilement, to reach the state of no renewed existence.<sup>244</sup>

Nd. I. 424-5.

Besides generous assistance in a wider context, noble disciples are generous with their fellow companions. They willingly relinquish their personal belongings for public consumption, to benefit the virtuous members of their community.

Because noble disciples are ‘superior persons’ (*sappurisa*), they give the ‘gifts of a good person’ (*sappurisa-dāna*). (See Note 7.12)

One of these qualities is to give respectfully; a noble disciple values the recipient, the gift, and the act of giving. He gives willingly and without resentment; no matter how low the recipient’s social standing, he does not hold the person in contempt, acting with kindness and the intention to help.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>243</sup> For the reasons behind giving, see Appendix 4.

<sup>244</sup> ‘Worldly happiness’ (*upadhi-sukha*) is happiness tainted by defilement or happiness of the three spheres of existence: the sense-sphere, the fine-material sphere, and the immaterial sphere. *Upadhi* here is translated as defilement.

<sup>245</sup> This is consistent with the attribute of generosity of noble disciples: ‘devoted to the requests of others’ (*yācayoga*). A noble disciple is responsive to appeals and eager to help.

## NOTE 7.12: QUALITIES OF GIVING

These qualities consider the attributes of the donor, over and above the needs of the recipient. There are several different groups of these qualities:

**(A)** Group of five:

1. gives respectfully;
2. gives with humility;
3. gives with his own hand;
4. gives a pure gift (or does not give leftovers);
5. gives with the knowledge of the fruits of giving (*āgamana-dīṭṭhika*) – the commentaries explain this as knowing the fruits of giving and believing in kamma and the results of kamma; *M. III. 24*; *A. III. 171-2*; *A. IV. 392-3*;

**(B)** Group of five:

1. gives with faith;
2. gives respectfully;
3. gives at the proper time;
4. gives with a generous heart, with no pride (this is the commentarial explanation; this quality is also translated as ‘gives with a heart of service’);
5. gives without troubling oneself or others (e.g. by elevating oneself and denigrating others); *A. III. 173*;

**(C)** Group of eight:

1. gives clean gifts;
2. gives choice things;
3. gives at the proper time;
4. gives appropriate things;
5. gives with discretion;
6. gives regularly;
7. the mind is bright at the moment of giving;
8. after giving, the mind is delighted; *A. IV. 244*.

### E. WISDOM (PAÑÑĀ)

Comprehensive knowledge; clear knowing; discriminative knowledge; reasoned analysis. A noble disciple distinguishes between true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, benefit and harm. It is a practical knowledge; a person understands causality and understands how to relate to conditions in order to solve problems. This knowledge applies specifically to human suffering: it is used to alleviate suffering and to live a good life. {907} There are many ways to refer to this wisdom, including knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, knowledge of Dependent Origination, and knowledge free from the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). The definition of the ‘accomplishment of wisdom’ (*paññā-sampadā*) as an attribute of a noble disciple is: ‘Wisdom that penetrates arising and passing away, which is noble and pierces defilement, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.’<sup>246</sup>

No matter what level of expertise a person has in worldly knowledge, as a prominent politician, brilliant businessman, clever inventor, or skilled researcher, for example, the knowledge of a noble disciple is indispensable for every person in solving life’s problems and living honourably.

Learning (*suta*) can be a conditioning factor for wisdom: it provides information and expands a person’s understanding. It is not only Dhamma learning that supports wisdom; worldly knowledge, especially life experience, can foster an understanding of the truth. A person skilled in reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) gains an understanding of the world and of life from applying technical or professional knowledge. The decisive factor for spiritual progress, however, is wisdom. Some people are highly educated but are unable to reflect; they therefore do not grow wise and do not truly benefit from their knowledge. Some people have only a meagre level of formal education but are very wise; their wise reflection enables them to solve problems. For a wise person, increased knowledge of any kind is used to their advantage. Because a wise person can still prosper despite a shortage of formal learning, there are many occasions where

<sup>246</sup> Alternatively, one knows the cycles of nature: of birth, old age, sickness and death, of growth and decline. ‘Pierces defilement’ can also be translated as ‘penetrating the truth’.

the number of attributes of noble disciples is reduced from five to four, leaving faith, conduct, generosity and wisdom.

Wisdom fulfils not only learning (*suta*); it also validates all the other factors of a noble disciple. Wisdom ensures that faith is correct, not erring towards gullibility. Wisdom leads to suitable moral conduct, which is praised by awakened beings and free from clinging to rules and practices. Wisdom brings about true relinquishment, because as long as one does not truly understand the world and phenomena, and one has not discovered a more refined happiness, it is natural that one takes pleasure in sensuality. With a lack of wisdom it is difficult to avoid being preoccupied by worldly pleasures and to be generous without wishing for some form of sense pleasure or other reward. Wisdom thus unites the other factors; it is the essential factor of a noble disciple and is the aim of each successive level of spiritual practice.

To sum up, there are four primary virtues of a noble disciple: {908}

1. *Saddhā*: faith in the wisdom, virtue, and perseverance of human beings; these qualities promote a realization of the truth and the highest good as taught by the Buddha and his disciples. This faith fosters the building of a virtuous society, established on principles of truth.
2. *Sīla*: self-discipline, which leads to an appropriate behaviour and relationship to others and to one's environment. This conduct supports the blossoming of virtue in an individual and fosters social harmony.
3. *Cāga*: relinquishment, which reduces selfishness and prepares a person to assist others.
4. *Paññā*: wisdom; penetrative knowledge of things as they truly are, as following laws of nature, as arising and passing away according to causes and conditions. This knowledge accompanied by a free mind promotes a proper relationship to things and an appropriate, balanced conduct. A person then knows how to apply or develop the other virtues in a suitable way.

Learning (*suta*) acquired by any form – by instruction, encouragement, advice, or study – supports the development of the other virtues and brings about greater success, but the required amount of learning and the level of success depends on a person's ability to reflect with wisdom.

Let us return to the first virtue of faith (*saddhā*) and examine how it is a crucial factor at the beginning of spiritual practice. Normally, faith is divided into three groups: faith in the Buddha, faith in the Dhamma, and faith in the Sangha. Occasionally, a single, precise definition is presented, especially when describing the faith of a noble disciple before the realization of stream-entry: *[A person] has faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: 'The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Awakened One.'* This form of faith is called 'faith in the Tathāgata's awakening' (*tathāgatabodhi-saddhā*, see Note 7.13). It is faith in the wisdom of the Buddha, who is considered the archetype, representative, or pioneer for all human beings.

The Buddha's awakening confirms that all human beings are capable of realizing the truth and reaching the highest good through mindfulness, wisdom and disciplined effort. The Buddha compared himself to a baby chick who is the first to peck its way through the eggshell of ignorance,<sup>247</sup> and to a discoverer of an ancient path who reveals this path to humanity.<sup>248</sup> Faith in the Buddha's awakening is thus equivalent to faith in the capability and wisdom of human beings. {909} Or more succinctly, it is self-confidence or faith in oneself. This confidence is not selfish belief or pride, but rather confidence in being human or an objective trust in humanity. One believes in the human potential for wisdom, that every person can reach the highest goal through spiritual training and satisfy the greatest of human aspirations.<sup>249</sup> The Buddha is the symbol of self-belief; he was the first person to assert this human potential and the first person to not attribute enlightenment to a divine or supernatural power.

<sup>247</sup> Vin. III. 3-4.

<sup>248</sup> S. II. 106; S. III. 66, 108-109; M. III. 4.

<sup>249</sup> In answer to the question of whether human knowledge is limited, the knowledge of one who is well-trained is the highest possible degree of human wisdom. If this knowledge has limits, then no knowledge exists elsewhere that surpasses and augments it; even the knowledge belonging to the highest gods is conferred on them by human beings (see: Kevaṭṭa Sutta, D. I. 215-23; Brahmanimantanika Sutta, M. I. 326-31).

## NOTE 7.13: FAITH IN THE TATHĀGATA'S AWAKENING

Alternatively, 'faith in the wisdom of the discoverer of Truth'. It is noteworthy that the Buddha uses the term Tathāgata here to refer to himself, because there are many epithets for the Buddha and each one emphasizes different qualities.

The use of the term Tathāgata here is consistent with the passage where the Buddha describes the laws of nature, which exist autonomously and are not dependent on the arising of Tathāgatas; a Tathāgata is merely the discoverer and revealer of these truths (see: A. I. 286; S. II. 25).

On many occasions the term Tathāgata is translated as a 'being' (e.g.: M. I. 426; S. IV. 395; explained, for example, at MA. III. 142). Interested scholars may compare *bodhi* here with the concept of Buddhahood in the Mahayana tradition.

Effectively, faith in the Buddha's awakening encompasses faith in the Triple Gem: there is trust that human beings can develop wisdom to the point of resolving even the most refined difficulties in the heart, and they are able to reach the highest liberation and complete happiness, just as the Buddha was able to accomplish; there is trust that these principles of practice and the highest goal are aspects of truth based on natural laws; and there is trust that there are people who have reached this goal, who comprise a noble community, have verified the truth, propagate the Dhamma, spread blessings, and are fully prepared to assist others in joining this noble community.

Although Buddhism advocates wisdom, faith is an essential quality at the beginning stages of practice, before a person realizes his or her potential and perfects wisdom. Faith here is different from what is commonly understood and should not be mistaken for blind faith; it is faith in wisdom, linked with wisdom, and leads to wisdom.

There are two important aspects to faith in the Triple Gem or to faith in the Buddha's awakening. First, the entire teaching in Buddhism, either of the highest goal or of modes of practice, rests on the principle that human beings are capable of following in the Buddha's footsteps and realizing the truth through their own effort and wisdom. There exists no external, supreme source of power surpassing that of human beings. If

this principle were to be false, then the entire Buddhist system of practice and the stated goal would be meaningless and void. {910} Second, if a Buddhist disciple does not have trust in this human potential, he will be unable to progress along the path of Buddhism. How would he be able to devote himself to practice? In fact, he would not be a true disciple of the Buddha. Faith in the Buddha's awakening is thus an essential quality for a Buddhist.<sup>250</sup>

Stream-entry is a valid goal for Buddhist practitioners and reaching this essential stage of awakening should be encouraged. The related factors of faith, conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom, which the Buddha repeatedly taught, and when developed can be considered equivalent to stream-entry, should also be emphasized. These five factors can be developed gradually, both before the realization of stream-entry and after, and they are relevant to the present time.

Today's society is in need of faith that is based on reason not credulity, and of trust in the human potential for reaching the highest good.

Society requires an understanding of the true spirit of moral conduct, as connected to other spiritual qualities; this conduct then guides and protects society.

In today's society there is an abundance of learning and a profusion of information, but it often appears to create increased confusion and difficulty for people. Society requires an education in noble principles that reveals the essential meaning of life and points out ways of disentanglement from problems; such learning leads to self-sufficiency and suitable action. {911}

Today's society faces increasingly dire economic problems, which require self-sacrifice, generosity and mutual assistance coming from a pure heart. The earth no longer has the resources to sustain people's unbridled greed. People need to discover the happiness that comes from giving and sharing and that leads to social harmony.

<sup>250</sup>For a later division of faith into four factors, see Appendix 2 in chapter 14 on faith.



Contemporary society is full of people who take pride in their intelligence because they have received a formal education. They are able to accomplish extraordinary things and wield a certain power over nature and the environment. People have become expert at worldly knowledge to the extent that their power is exceptional. But because they lack transcendent wisdom, they have only begun to penetrate the mysteries of the universe. As a result of pride, people risk falling into a pit created by their own intelligence; they meet with obstruction on the physical level and frustration in their hearts. To solve these problems, people require noble wisdom.<sup>251</sup>

Looking at the state of the world today and the widespread behaviour of people, there are two outstanding qualities of a stream-enterer that should be emphasized as guidelines for living:

First, stream-enterers have a firm understanding of the law of cause and effect. Their trust in wisdom is adequately strong to expect successful results from actions based on mindfulness and balanced effort, and in line with causality.<sup>252</sup> They do not rely on fate or petition a supernatural force from outside to intercede on their behalf. However, because their wisdom is not yet complete, their confidence is not self-sustaining. They still rely on someone else who has reached the truth and leads the way. This is faith in the Buddha's awakening or faith in the Triple Gem. This is the highest and purest level of faith; thereafter wisdom is perfected and replaces faith. The wisdom of stream-enterers is not yet absolute; their wisdom is reinforced by faith.

Second, stream-enterers are firmly established on the path to awakening. Their understanding of the world is sufficient to not be influenced by defilement nor to overrate worldly conditions (*loka-dhamma*).<sup>253</sup> They have begun to experience transcendent joy and freedom, which brings

<sup>251</sup>Recovering the importance of and emphasizing these five factors resolves another important issue: that many Westerners mistakenly view Buddhism as a pessimistic religion or one that abdicates responsibility and shows no interest in society.

<sup>252</sup>They believe in *kamma*.

<sup>253</sup>Trans.: the eight 'worldly conditions': gain and loss, praise and blame, happiness and suffering, fame and obscurity.

about an appreciation of the truth. They develop *chanda*: enthusiasm and love for truth. They desire truth so much that there is no chance of them returning to a fascination with material pleasures. Unlike ordinary people, they seek no reward – of material gain, honour, fame, praise, pleasure or heaven – from their virtuous conduct (*sīla*) or from acts of generosity (*cāga*). Their moral conduct is steadfast; they are not discouraged if they do not reap these aforementioned rewards. {912}

This Dhammapada verse illustrates the life of a stream-enterer:

*Fear-stricken people in large numbers take refuge in mountains,  
Forests and sacred groves and trees.  
But no such refuge is safe,  
No such refuge is supreme.  
Not by resorting to such a refuge  
Is one freed from all misery.*

*One who goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha;  
Who sees clearly with wisdom:  
Suffering, the origin of suffering,  
The transcendence of suffering,  
And the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering.  
This, indeed, is a safe refuge;  
This, indeed, is the refuge supreme.  
By reaching such a refuge,  
One is freed from all misery.*

*Dh. verses 188-92.*

Let us return to the Buddha's frequent teaching:

Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and those who are receptive – whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen – these you should exhort, settle and establish in the four factors of stream-entry.

Leaders of a family, an organization, or a business who really deserve the title of leader and fulfil their responsibility are able to foster the five qualities of stream-entry in their relatives, dependents and employees:

Supported by the Himalayas, a great tree grows in these five growths: it grows in branches and leaves, in inner bark, in outer bark, in sapwood, and in hardwood. So too, supported by a devout family leader, members of a family grow in these five growths: they grow in faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom.<sup>254</sup>

A. III. 44.

Besides encouraging general assistance to family and friends, the Buddha gave a specific teaching concerning the factors of stream-entry in reference to repaying the goodness of one's parents:

I declare, O monks, that there are two persons whose goodness it is difficult to repay. What two? One's mother and father. Even if one were to carry one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other, attending to them, until one reached the age of a centenarian, reached the age of one hundred years; and if one were to care for them by kneading, massaging, and bathing, and they would even void their excrements there – even by that one would not do right by one's parents, one would not repay them. Even if one were to establish one's parents as the supreme lords and rulers over this earth rich in the seven treasures, one would not do right by one's parents, one would not repay them. What is the reason for this? Parents have been of great service to their children: they have nurtured, fed, and introduced them to the world.

But one who encourages his unbelieving parents, settles and establishes them in faith; who encourages his immoral parents, settles and establishes them in moral conduct; who encourages his stingy parents, settles and establishes them in generosity; who encourages his ignorant parents, settles and establishes them in wisdom – such a one does right by his parents, he repays them.

A. I. 61-2.

<sup>254</sup> 'Family leader' is translated from *kula-pati*. *Kula* is usually translated as 'family' or 'lineage', but the word originally meant 'group', 'company', or 'party'. It can refer to people of the same social standing, and the definition can be extended to those who share an activity or who have mutual interests: an organization, institution or business. For example, the president of Nālandā University in India (destroyed in 1193 AD) was called a *kula-pati*.

## 7.11 APPENDIX 1: SĪLABBATA-PARĀMĀSA

*Sīlabbata-parāmāsa* is one of the most misunderstood of the ten fetters. {422} In the Suttanipāṭa, the Buddha often talks about the wrong view of certain people who believe that purity is gained solely by following moral precepts and religious practices.<sup>255</sup> The term ‘purity’ (*suddhi*) here refers to the goal of the religious life, equivalent to liberation (*vimutti*).<sup>256</sup> This wrong view may manifest in observing precepts and practices in order to go to heaven, as revealed in this common passage from the suttas: *He has such a view as this: ‘By this moral precept or austerity or asceticism or celibate life I shall become some kind of god or divine being.’*<sup>257</sup> Noble disciples – the enlightened ones and true sages – do not hold this view and have ‘let go’ of moral precepts and religious practices.<sup>258</sup> There are many passages in the Mahāniddeśa and Cūḷaniddeśa explaining this attachment to precepts and observances. For example:

Some brahmins and ascetics equate purity with morality. They believe that purity, immaculateness, liberation, deliverance, and freedom come solely from moral precepts, abstinence (*saññama*), restraint (*saṁvara*) and obedience.... Some brahmins and ascetics equate purity with religious austerities. They observe the practice of behaving like elephants (*hatthi-vata*), like horses (*assa-vata*), like cows (*go-vata*) ... they observe the rites of Brahma, of devas, of praying to the four directions....<sup>259</sup>

*Nd. I. 88-9. Cf.: Nd. I. 92-3, 188, 310; Nd. II. 11, 28.*

This explanation helps clarify the definition of *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* from the Abhidhamma: *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa is this manner of view and belief of*

<sup>255</sup> Sn. 41, 155-6, 164-5, 208-209.

<sup>256</sup> E.g.: Nd. I. 88-9, 188; Nd. II 29.

<sup>257</sup> M. I. 103, 388; S. IV. 180; A. III. 250; A. IV. 55, 461; Nd. I. 34, 215.

<sup>258</sup> E.g.: Sn. 175-6, 208-209.

<sup>259</sup> See also the commentarial explanation: Nd1A II. 272.

*ascetics and brahmins outside (of this Dhammavinaya): 'Purity stems from keeping moral precepts and austerities.'*<sup>260</sup> The phrase 'outside (of this Dhammavinaya)' can lead some people to wrongly understand that *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* is found only in other religions. This passage from the Abhidhamma is merely an example; it can be reworded as: *beliefs like those of other (non-Buddhist) ascetics and brahmins*. In fact, one need not add these words 'other' or 'outside' at all. The passages in the Suttanipāta, Mahāniddeśa,<sup>261</sup> or commentaries<sup>262</sup> do not use these words. For if a person clings to this wrong view, even if one is Buddhist, one is 'outside'.

Besides being a deep-rooted misunderstanding, this blind faith in moral precepts and religious practices reveals an inherent craving, for example a wish to go to heaven.

*Sīlabbata-parāmāsa* is composed of the words *sīla* (morality, moral precept), *vata* (austerity, religious practice), and *parāmāsa* (extreme attachment). The words *sīla* and *vata* are explained in the Mahāniddeśa, as defined above.<sup>263</sup> The Mahāniddeśa elaborates by saying that some things are both *sīla* and *vata*, while others are *vata* but not *sīla*. For example, in the bhikkhu discipline (Vinaya) those aspects having to do with self-control (*saṁyama* or *sañña*), restraint (*saṁvara*), and moral integrity are *sīla*. Those aspects having to do with vows or observances are *vata*. Examples of practices that are *vata* but not *sīla* are the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga-vata*), e.g. vowing to live in the forest, eat only food gathered on alms-round, and wear rag-robles.<sup>264</sup> In regard to monks of other traditions who keep for example the 'dog practice' (*kukkura-vata*) in order to be reborn in heaven, the commentaries say that *sīla* is the behaviour mimicking dogs and *vata* the particular routines of such a practice.<sup>265</sup> In regard to Buddhists, an example of *sīla* is keeping the five precepts and of *vata* is

<sup>260</sup>Dhs. 183, 198, 364-5, 374-5.

<sup>261</sup>Nd. I. 188.

<sup>262</sup>E.g.: DhsA. 348.

<sup>263</sup>Nd. I. 88-9.

<sup>264</sup>See: Nd. I. 66, 475.

<sup>265</sup>See: MA I. 151.

keeping the ascetic practices.<sup>266</sup> In regard to bhikkhus, the commentaries occasionally say that the four kinds of pure morality (*pārisuddhi-sīla*) are *sīla* and the thirteen ascetic practices are *vata*.<sup>267</sup>

*Parāmāsa* is sometimes translated as ‘caress’ or ‘fondle’ but its general meaning in the Pali Canon is ‘seize’ or ‘take hold’, e.g.: a monk ‘grabs hold’ of a layman;<sup>268</sup> Dīghāvu ‘holds’ the king of Kāśi’s head to kill him;<sup>269</sup> the Buddha is not ‘attached’ to what he knows;<sup>270</sup> one should not ‘take’ that which is not freely given;<sup>271</sup> ‘seizing’ rods and swords to fight.<sup>272</sup> {423} The definition of ‘caress’ probably comes from the Jātaka stories describing the birth of Suvanṇasāma, Kusa and Maṇḍavya, where a holy man touches the mothers’ navels.<sup>273</sup> Perhaps it is also influenced by Vin. I. 121 which defines *parāmasanā* as ‘stroke’ or ‘rub’ (*ito cito ca sañcopanā*). The principal meaning of *parāmāsa*, however, is clearly defined as: *sabhāvaṃ atikkamitvā parato āmasatīti parāmāso* – ‘to grasp at, exceed, and deviate from reality’. One overreaches, by exceeding or distorting the truth, making more of something than it actually is.<sup>274</sup> For example, one may mistakenly believe something to be permanent which is in fact fleeting. Precepts and religious practices are established as a foundation for spiritual development; but one may miss the point and believe that liberation comes merely from keeping these rules and practices.

*Sīlabbata-parāmāsa* is a belief or view (*diṭṭhi*).<sup>275</sup> One may ask how this fetter is distinct from the first fetter – *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* – which is also a belief. The commentaries explain that *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, the firm belief in ‘self’, is a view inherent in most people and does not require logical reasoning or

<sup>266</sup>Nd2A. 133.

<sup>267</sup>DhA. III. 399; cf.: AA. III. 326.

<sup>268</sup>Vin. III. 220, VinA. III. 672.

<sup>269</sup>Vin. I. 347.

<sup>270</sup>D. III. 28; DA. III. 829.

<sup>271</sup>A. III. 213.

<sup>272</sup>Nd. I. 216.

<sup>273</sup>J. IV. 379; J. V. 281; J. VI. 73; cf.: DhsA. 238; MA. II. 310.

<sup>274</sup>Nd1A. II. 339, 349; see also: Nd1A. I. 163; Nd1A. II. 304; DhsA. 49.

<sup>275</sup>E.g.: Sn. 156-7; Dhs. 183; M. I. 388; Nd1A. [1/122].

transmission from others. *Silabbata-parāmāsa* has an external or social context; it is related to what a person considers right and wrong conduct.<sup>276</sup> Because it pertains to spiritual practice, the commentaries thus designate *silabbata-parāmāsa* under the category of ‘self-mortification’ (*attakilamathānuyoga*), one of the two extremes to be avoided by Buddhists in order to walk the Middle Way.<sup>277</sup>

*Parāmāsa* is often found in the past participle form as *parāmaṭṭha* (‘touched’, ‘grasped’), and has the meaning of defiled or tainted. Something is tainted because it has been ‘smeared’ by craving: one keeps rules and precepts to gain a reward (wealth, fame, praise, bliss, etc.) or to be reborn in whatever state one’s religion professes. Pure morality is called *aparāmaṭṭha*: it is not stained by craving. One follows moral standards with wisdom and independence; one is not enslaved to craving and fixed views. This is the *sīla* of stream-enterers.<sup>278</sup>

A further consequence of this attachment to rules and practices is the debate between people about who is right and wrong. It can generate arrogance and conceit, looking down on those who are deemed less strict or less ethical.<sup>279</sup>

*Silabbata-parāmāsa* results from people unquestioningly following others; a symptom of the blind leading the blind. Some people see rules and practices as sacred or magical rites or ceremonies. Others follow the rules unwillingly, seeing them as arbitrary commandments; they do not see the harm in transgressing the rules nor do they see the benefits of restraint. Others again seek good luck or sensual pleasures by observing these rules and practices.

Keeping moral precepts and observing religious duties correctly is not *silabbata-parāmāsa*. One knows their true purpose, that they should be used for spiritual training, as a basis for concentration, for peace and

<sup>276</sup>See Nd1A. II. 349.

<sup>277</sup>See UdA. 351.

<sup>278</sup>E.g.: S. V. 343. Also explained at: VinA. VII. 1317; DA. I. 108; DA. II. 536; SA. III. 277; AA. III. 345; Vism. 13-4. Cf.: SA. II. 98. Also translated as ‘irreproachable’: one is beyond blame and fault.

<sup>279</sup>See: Sn. 156-7, 171-2.

simplicity, and to promote goodness in society. One sees clearly the harm in oppression of others. One follows moral precepts willingly by having insight into their benefits, feeling shame in doing wrong, and generating enthusiasm for the good. Eventually true moral conduct becomes automatic and natural; no training or compulsion is required because the defilements that cause evil are gone.

Non-violence is one of the six devotions practised by arahants, not because they cling to rules and practices but because they are free from greed, hatred and delusion.<sup>280</sup> {424} At first, moral behaviour is normal behaviour because of habit and the strength of one's determination. Later, moral behaviour is normal behaviour because the causes for evil and unwholesomeness have all been eliminated. Someone who keeps moral precepts correctly is called *sīlavatūpapanna* ('endowed with ethics')<sup>281</sup> or *sīlabbata-sampanna* ('perfect in morality').<sup>282</sup> To say that purity is gained by moral precepts is inaccurate, but to say purity is gained without moral precepts is also inaccurate.<sup>283</sup> Religious observances and ceremonies may not be a required part of spiritual practice, especially for the laity, but pure (*aparāmaṭṭha*) morality – not diverging from truth and unblemished by craving – is an essential basis for liberation.<sup>284</sup>

Here is a way of measuring conduct: if by keeping precepts and religious practices unwholesome qualities increase and wholesome qualities wane then that conduct is incorrect; but if wholesome qualities increase and unwholesome qualities wane then that conduct will bear good fruit.<sup>285</sup>

As long as one is unawakened (*puṭhujjana*) there will be some degree of clinging to and mistaken application of moral precepts and religious practices, commensurate with one's share of craving, wrong view, and delusion. At least one will need to check and counter certain impulses. For

<sup>280</sup>Vin. I. 183-4; A. III. 376.

<sup>281</sup>It. 80; Sn. 36.

<sup>282</sup>A. I. 167.

<sup>283</sup>Sn. 164-5.

<sup>284</sup>E.g.: S. V. 343, 408-409. See the earlier section on stream-enterers.

<sup>285</sup>See: A. I. 225; Ud. 71.



stream-enterers coarse defilements have been quelled and they are thus called ‘perfect in moral conduct’.<sup>286</sup> They uphold rules and observances in just the right way, neither too laxly nor too strictly.

## 7.12 APPENDIX 2: THE LINK BETWEEN THE FOURFOLD SELF-MASTERY (BHĀVITA) AND THE FOUR KINDS OF DEVELOPMENT (BHĀVANĀ)

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{383} In the Tipiṭaka, although there are many passages in which the Buddha mentions as a group the four aspects of an arahant’s complete development – i.e. he or she has gained self-mastery in body (*bhāvitakāya*), virtue (*bhāvitasīla*), mind (*bhāvitacitta*), and wisdom (*bhāvipaññā*) – there is no single passage in which these four factors are defined together. There exist only cases in which one or a few of these factors are defined in specific circumstances, for example by correcting a misunderstanding about one or more of these aspects of development. This may be because at the Buddha’s time his disciples were familiar with these terms and there was thus no need to define them. (The passages containing definitions tend to be answers or explanations the Buddha gave to non-Buddhists, for example to wanderers and ascetics of other traditions.)

Similarly, the four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*) – which lead to self-mastery (*bhāvita*) – are not found together as a group in the Tipiṭaka, unless one counts the Burmese edition, which includes the Peṭakopadesa. This text includes the passage: ‘By way of the Eightfold Path one also obtains the four kinds of development: moral development (*sīla-bhāvanā*), physical development (*kāya-bhāvanā*), mental development (*citta-bhāvanā*), and wisdom development (*paññā-bhāvanā*).’<sup>287</sup>

Other passages in the Tipiṭaka mention at most three kinds of development. Following on from the threefold training, the Saṅgīti Sutta arranges three kinds of development as follows: ‘The threefold training entails the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), the training in higher mind

<sup>286</sup>E.g.: A. I. 231.

<sup>287</sup>Peṭakopadesapāḷi [p. 290]; here moral development is placed before physical development.

(*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*); the three kinds of development entail physical development, mental development, and wisdom development'.<sup>288</sup> Note also that the term *sīla-bhāvanā* does not appear at all in the Tipiṭaka (apart from the Peṭakopadesa mentioned above). The term *sīla-bhāvanā* thus only exists inherent in the term *bhāvita-sīla*.

In contrast, the commentaries frequently mention all four aspects of self-mastery (*bhāvita*) and all four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*) as unified groups, and provide a fair number of explanations for these terms. These explanations, however, sometimes conflict with one another.

The terms *citta-bhāvanā* and *paññā-bhāvanā* tend not to be a problem and are well understood. The confusion and contradictions tend to arise in regard to the terms *kāya-bhāvanā* and *sīla-bhāvanā* (and in extension to the terms *bhāvita-kāya* and *bhāvita-sīla*).

The Peṭakopadesa (cited above) seems to give definitions variant from other texts for all four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*). Note the following passage: 'In respect to the four kinds of development, by way of right effort and right livelihood the body is developed, by way of right speech and right effort moral conduct is developed, by way of right thought and right concentration the mind is developed, by way of right view and right mindfulness wisdom is developed. By way of these four kinds of development, these two factors come to fulfilment: the mind (*citta*) and wisdom (*paññā*).'<sup>289</sup>

Let us compare this passage with the Nettipakaraṇa (which is also included in the Burmese Tipiṭaka). Here, the four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*) are not explained, but the fourfold self-mastery (*bhāvita*), which is inherently connected to the kinds of development, is explained. One will see that here the explanation contradicts that of the Peṭakopadesa: 'Of the three groups (*khandha*), the body of morality (*sīla-khandha*) and the body of concentration (*samādhi-khandha*) constitute tranquillity

<sup>288</sup> D. III, 219-20.

<sup>289</sup> *Citta* here refers to tranquillity meditation (*samatha*) and *paññā* refers to insight meditation (*vipassanā*).

meditation (*samatha*), while the body of wisdom (*paññā-khandha*) constitutes insight meditation (*vipassanā*).... That monk is developed in body, developed in moral conduct, developed in mind, developed in wisdom. When the body is developed, two factors are developed: right action and right effort; when moral conduct is developed, two factors are developed: right speech and right livelihood; when the mind is developed, two factors are developed: right mindfulness and right concentration; when wisdom is developed, two factors are developed: right view and right thought.<sup>290</sup> {384}

Note that the terms *bhāvanā* and *bhāvita* can also be translated as cultivation / (fully) cultivated or training / (fully) trained. The scriptures use the term *vaḍḍhanā* as a synonym for these terms, for example: *bhāvita-kāyoti vaḍḍhita-kāyo*<sup>291</sup> and *bhāvita-sīloti vaḍḍhita-sīlo*.<sup>292</sup>

Most of the commentarial explanations conform with the Nettipakaraṇa, which seem to be at odds with the Peṭakopadesa. Take for example a passage from the commentaries of the Nettipakaraṇa itself: ‘With the fulfilment of excellent moral conduct (*abhisamācārika-sīla*), one is developed in body (*bhāvita-kāya*); with the fulfilment of moral conduct fundamental to the holy life (*ādibrahmacariyaka-sīla*), one is developed in virtue (*bhāvita-sīla*). Moreover, by way of sense restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*) one is developed in the body (of the five doorways) – *bhāvita-(pañcadvāra)-kāya*; by way of other forms of moral conduct one is developed in virtue.’<sup>293</sup>

The commentaries to the Aṅguttara Nikāya offer a similar yet distinctive explanation: ‘By way of physical development (*kāya-bhāvanā*), that is, by contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), one is called developed in body (*bhāvita-kāya*).... Moreover, by developing the five doorways (*pañcadvāra*) one is developed in body. The term ‘developed in body’ refers here to virtue as sense restraint (*indriyasamvara-sīla*); the term ‘developed in moral conduct’ (*bhāvita-sīla*) refers to the three remaining

<sup>290</sup>Nett. 76. Note that this is only a selection of the explanation from this text.

<sup>291</sup>Nd1A. II. 267.

<sup>292</sup>AA. II. 261.

<sup>293</sup>NettA. [154].

kinds of virtue.’<sup>294</sup> Other commentaries and sub-commentaries contain infrequent explanations of the terms *bhāvanā* and *bhāvita*. For example, the commentaries to the Saṃyutta Nikāya states: ‘The term *bhāvita-kāya* refers to the body endowed with the five doorways.’<sup>295</sup> This passage is consistent with the two commentarial passages cited above.

Furthermore, some commentarial and sub-commentarial passages emphasize that the term *bhāvanā* in the context of the four kinds of development does not refer to spiritual practice currently engaged in – to practice applied in order to reach the goal – but rather to the practice of arahants which is completed or has already reached the goal. For example: ‘It is development by the fact of having been developed.’<sup>296</sup>

### 7.13 APPENDIX 3: LEARNED ONES (SUTAVANT), NOBLE DISCIPLES (ARIYA-SĀVAKA), AND NOBLE DHAMMA (ARIYA-DHAMMA)

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{913} The expression ‘learned noble disciple’ (*sutavant* or *sutavā ariyasāvaka*) is always paired with the expression ‘untaught ordinary person’ (*assutavā puthujjana*), which is explained as: *An untaught ordinary person, who has not seen the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who has not seen true men, and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma.* The commentaries explain ‘untaught ordinary person’ as a ‘blind’ or ‘foolish’ person (*andha-puthujjana* or *andhabāla-puthujjana*). The expression ‘has not seen the noble ones’ means that a person has not regularly sought out and visited the noble ones, and even if he has met them he does not know how to derive benefit from this meeting. ‘Seen’ here means seeing with wisdom, not merely seeing with the physical eye.

In the Pali Canon the term ‘noble Dhamma’ (*ariya-dhamma*) can refer to the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kamma-patha*),<sup>297</sup> to the ten qualities of an adept (*asekha-dhamma*; also known as the ten right

<sup>294</sup> AA. II. 261. The three remaining kinds of virtue are: *pāṭimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*, *ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*, and *paccaya-paṭisevana-sīla*.

<sup>295</sup> SA. II. 395.

<sup>296</sup> Dīgha Nikāya Ṭīkā (Pāṭika) III. 277; *bhāvitabhāvena bhāvanā*.

<sup>297</sup> A. V. 274.

states – *sammatta*: the Eightfold Path plus right knowledge – *sammā-ñāṇa* – and right liberation – *sammā-vimutti*),<sup>298</sup> or simply to the five precepts.<sup>299</sup> The commentaries explaining these canonical references give a broad definition to *ariya-dhamma*, as meaning ‘various spiritual qualities’, for example the Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

Regarding the term *ariya* (or *ariya-puggala*), these commentaries say that it usually refers to the Buddha, Pacceka-Buddhas, and Buddhist disciples, but where *ariya* is paired with *sappurisa* (‘true men’) it refers solely to the Buddha, while *sappurisa* (or *sappurisa-jana*) refers to Pacceka-Buddhas and Buddhist disciples.<sup>300</sup>

#### 7.14 APPENDIX 4: INCENTIVES FOR GIVING

There are several occasions when the Buddha discussed the incentives for people to offer gifts:

1. To give for gain; to give out of attachment; to give believing one will receive an identical gift in return after death;
2. to give out of the belief that giving is good;
3. to give out of the consideration that one’s ancestors gave gifts and one should not break this family tradition;
4. to give thinking: ‘I can provide for myself but these people are unable to provide for themselves; when I can provide for myself, it is unsuitable to not give to those who cannot provide for themselves’;
5. to give with the thought: ‘This gift of mine is like the great sacrifices of the ascetics from the past’; one seeks prestige;

<sup>298</sup> A. V. 241.

<sup>299</sup> A. III. 213; explained at AA. III. 100, 304.

<sup>300</sup> See: MA. I. 21; SA. II. 97; AA. I. 63; DhsA. 349; cf.: Nd. I. 146-7, 248-9; DA. I. 59; Nd1A. II. 273; PsA. I. 205, 266; VinṬ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā; VinṬ.: Pārājīkakaṇḍam, Bhikkhupadabhājanīyavaṇṇanā.

6. to give thinking that joy and delight will arise as a consequence;
7. to give in order to equip the mind or to improve the quality of the mind; one believes that giving is a way to develop the mind, that giving softens the heart of both the donor and recipient, that giving is a form of renunciation, and that giving fosters lovingkindness and compassion; one gives with the thought: ‘May those who suffer find happiness through this gift’; technically speaking, this last form of giving is a support for tranquillity and insight.<sup>301</sup>

*A. IV. 59-63.*

1. To give because of circumstances; a recipient happens to arrive;
2. to give out of fear;
3. to give as repayment;
4. to give hoping the recipient will return the favour; to wish for a reward;
5. to give out of the belief that giving is good;
6. to give thinking: ‘I can provide for myself but these people are unable to provide for themselves....’;
7. to give with the thought that by giving one’s fame will spread;
8. to give in order to equip and improve the mind.

*D. III. 258; A. IV. 236.*

1. To give out of affection;
2. to give out of anger;
3. to give out of confusion;
4. to give out of fear;
5. to give out of the consideration that one’s ancestors gave gifts....;

6. to give with the thought that by giving one will be reborn in heaven;
7. to give thinking that joy and delight will arise as a consequence;
8. to give in order to equip the mind or to improve the quality of the mind.

*A. IV. 236-7.*

The sutta of the first group finishes with a description of the states of existence where donors with these various motivations will be reborn, but this description accords with the natural consequences of these actions. The states of rebirth are not necessarily connected to the wishes of the donor. {914}

<sup>301</sup>The factors in this group and in the following groups are organized from lesser to higher motivations.

## 7.15 APPENDIX 5: ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS

### FACTORS OF STREAM-ENTRY – ABANDONED QUALITIES

When there is form, by depending on form, by clinging to form, such a view as this arises: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self....’

Such a view as this arises: ‘That which is the self is the world; having passed away, I will be permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change....’<sup>302</sup>

Such a view as this arises: ‘If I am not, then it will not be for me; I will not be, and it will not be for me....’<sup>303</sup>

Such a view as this arises: ‘Gifts bear no fruit, offerings (yijṭṭha) bear no fruit, acts of worship (huta) bear no fruit. There is no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world; no mother, no father; no beings who are reborn spontaneously; no ascetics and brahmins faring and practising rightly in the world who, having realized this world and the other world for themselves by direct knowledge, make them known to others. We consist of the four great elements. When one dies, earth returns to the earth, water returns to water, fire returns to fire, and air returns to air; the faculties are dispersed into space. Four men with the bier as fifth carry away the corpse. Footprints appear as far as the charnel ground; the bones whiten; burnt offerings end with ashes. Giving is a doctrine of fools. The words of those who teach a doctrine of spiritual gain are empty, false and incoherent. Fools and the wise are alike destroyed and perish with the breakup of the body; after death they do not exist....’<sup>304</sup>

<sup>302</sup>The view of eternalism (*sassata-vāda*).

<sup>303</sup>The view of annihilationism – *uccheda-vāda* (see: S. III. 99). Although this is a form of wrong view, the Buddha said that of all the doctrines outside of Buddhism, annihilationism is best, because its advocates will be averse to becoming (*bhava*) and will not be averse to the end of becoming. See: A. V. 64; AA. V. 27; SA. II. 306.

<sup>304</sup>Nihilism (*natthika-vāda*).



Such a view as this arises: ‘When one acts or makes others act, slaughters or makes others slaughter, torments or makes others inflict torment, inflicts sorrow or makes others inflict sorrow, oppresses or makes others inflict oppression, harasses or makes others inflict harassment; when one destroys life, steals, burgles, plunders, breaks into houses, ambushes highways, seduces another’s wife, tells lies – no evil is done by the doer. If, with a razor-rimmed disc, one were to make the living beings of this earth into one mass of flesh, into one heap of flesh, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the right bank of the Ganges killing, slaughtering and tormenting, and making others kill, slaughter and inflict torment, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the left bank of the Ganges giving gifts and making offerings, and having others give and offer, because of this there would be no merit and no outcome of merit. By giving, by self-discipline, by self-restraint, by speaking truth, there is no merit and no outcome of merit....’<sup>305</sup>

Such a view as this arises: ‘There is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings; beings are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings; beings are purified without cause or condition. There is no fruit of action, no fruit of effort, no fruit of energy, no fruit of perseverance. All beings, all sentient beings, all living beings, all creatures, are without power, strength and energy; shaped by destiny, circumstance, and nature, they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes of human beings....’<sup>306</sup> {897}

Such a view as this arises: ‘There are these seven bodies that are unmade, unformed, uncreated, without a creator, barren, steady as mountain peaks, steady as pillars. They do not move or change; they do impede each other or cause pleasure and pain to each other.

<sup>305</sup>The doctrine of the inefficacy of action (*akiriya-vāda*).

<sup>306</sup>The doctrine of non-causality (*ahetuka-vāda*). Six classes of human beings = *abhijāti*.

These seven bodies are: the earth-body, the water-body, the fire-body, the air-body, pleasure, pain, and the soul (jīva). Even one who cuts off another's head with a sharp sword does not deprive anyone of life; the sword merely passes through the space between the seven bodies. There are approximately one million four hundred thousand modes of generation, six thousand kinds of kamma ... sixty-two sub-aeons, six classes of human beings, eight stages in the life of man ... three thousand hells ... eight hundred and forty thousand great aeons through which the foolish and wise roam and wander, after which they will alike make an end to suffering. In this round of rebirth, there is none of this: "By this conduct, this vow, this austerity or this holy life I will make unripened kamma ripen or eradicate ripened kamma by repeatedly experiencing it." In this round of rebirth, there is no such method, like ladling out a measured amount, of ending pleasure and pain. There is no shortening or extending, no raising or decreasing. Just as, when a ball of string is thrown, it unwinds completely, so too the foolish and the wise wander, making an end to suffering....<sup>307</sup>

Such views as these arise: 'The world is eternal ... the world is not eternal ... the world is finite ... the world is infinite ... the soul and the body are the same ... the soul is one thing; the body another ... the Tathāgata exists after death ... the Tathāgata does not exist after death ... the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death ... the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death....'<sup>308</sup>

'What do you think, bhikkhus, is physical form ... (feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness) ... permanent or impermanent? That which is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, and contemplated by the mind: is that permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, venerable sir.'

<sup>307</sup> A combination of eternalism, the doctrine of the inefficacy of action, and the doctrine of 'purity by wandering on (in the round of rebirth)' (*samsāra-suddhi*).

<sup>308</sup> The ten 'extreme views' (*antaḡāhika-ditṭhi*).

‘Is that which is impermanent oppressive or easeful?’

‘Oppressive, venerable sir.’

‘But without clinging to what is impermanent, oppressive, and subject to change, could such a view<sup>309</sup> as that arise?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘When a noble disciple has abandoned doubt in these six cases,<sup>310</sup> and when he has abandoned doubt about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering, this noble disciple is called a stream-enterer, no longer bound to perdition, sure in destiny, with enlightenment as his destination.’<sup>311</sup>

*S. III. 202-16.*

<sup>309</sup> All of the aforementioned views.

<sup>310</sup> I.e. in the five aggregates and that which is seen, heard, sensed, etc.

<sup>311</sup> S. IV. 287 states that the sixty-two kinds of views stem from fixed personality view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*); when fixed personality view ceases, these views cease as well.

## 7.16 APPENDIX 6: LIST OF FOREMOST DISCIPLES

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This list of foremost disciples includes only the bhikkhus (there are separate lists for bhikkhunis, laymen, and laywomen); here the names of the monks are mentioned along with the prominent quality attributed to them:

- Aññakoṇḍañña (having gone forth for a long time and having experienced the events of the Buddha's life from the beginning – *rattaññū*);
- Sāriputta (great wisdom);
- Mahā Moggallāna (psychic powers);
- Mahā Kassapa (ascetic practices – *dhutaṅga*);
- Anuruddha (the 'divine eye' – *dibba-cakkhu*);
- Bhaddiya (those born in a high family);
- Lakunṭakabhaddiya (melodious voice);
- Piṇḍolabhāradvāja (uttering the 'lion's roar' – *sīhanāda*);
- Puṇṇa-Mantānīputta (speaking the Dhamma);
- Mahākaccāyana (elucidating brief teachings into detail);
- Cullapanthaka (creating a 'psychically formed body' – *manomaya kāya*);
- Cullapanthaka (competent in 'turning away' from *samsāra* by way of the citta: *ceto-vivaṭṭa*);
- Mahāpanthaka (competent in 'turning away' from *samsāra* through wisdom: *paññā-vivaṭṭa*);
- Subhūti (living remote and in peace: *araṇavihārī*);
- Subhūti (worthy of offerings);
- Revata Khadiravaniya (living in the forest);
- Kaṅkhārevata (adept at jhāna);
- Soṇa-Kolivisa (resolute energy);
- Soṇa-Kuṭikaṇṇa (beautiful speech);
- Sīvalī (receiving gifts);
- Vakkali (liberated by faith);

- Rāhula (love of training);
- Raṭṭhapāla (ordaining out of faith);
- Kuṇḍadhāna (receiving meal invitations);
- Vaṅḡisa (perspicacity);
- Upasena Vaṅgantaputta (inspiring confidence);
- Dabba-Mallaputta (appointing lodgings);
- Pilindavaccha (adored by devas);
- Bāhiya Dārucīriya (enlightened quickly);
- Kumārakassapa (varied and versatile discourse);
- Mahākoṭṭhita (analytic insight);
- Ānanda (erudite);
- Ānanda (mindful; superb memory);
- Ānanda ('exemplary conduct': *gati*);
- Ānanda (steadfast);
- Ānanda (as an attendant);
- Uruvelakassapa (with a large following);
- Kāḷudāyī (inspiring families);
- Baggula (with minimal illness);
- Sobhita (remembering past lives);
- Upāli (mastering the Vinaya);
- Nandaka (instructing the bhikkhunis);
- Nanda (guarding the sense doors);
- Mahākappina (instructing the bhikkhus);
- Sāgata (adept in the fire element);
- Rādha (nurturing discernment);
- Mogharāja (wearing a coarse robe).

## 7.17 APPENDIX 7: SEVEN NOBLE BEINGS

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For comparison, a varying explanation of the seven noble beings is as follows: note that several terms in this sutta are inconsistent in various editions of the Tipiṭaka (e.g. between the Thai and Roman editions).<sup>312</sup>

1. *Saddhānusārī*: a person who does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial (*arūpa-samāpatti*), but some of the taints (*āsava*) are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has adequate faith in and love for the Tathāgata. Furthermore, he has these faculties: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.
2. *Dhammānusārī*: a person who does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, but some of the taints are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has adequately understood by wise reflection those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata. He has the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.
3. *Saddhā-vimutta*: a person who does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, but some of the taints are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. His faith is planted, rooted and established in the Tathāgata.
4. *Diṭṭhippatta*: a person who does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, but some of the taints are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom. He has clearly understood and correctly applies with wisdom those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata.
5. *Kāya-sakkhī*: a person who contacts with the body and abides in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, and some of the taints are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom.
6. *Paññā-vimutta*: a person who does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, but all of the taints are destroyed through seeing the noble truths with wisdom.
7. *Ubhatobhāga-vimutta*: a person who contacts with the body and abides in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, and has destroyed all of the taints through seeing the noble truths with wisdom.

<sup>312</sup>M. I. 477-8.

## 7.18 APPENDIX 8: FOUR KINDS OF FAITH

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There is a group of factors established in a later period of time dividing faith / belief into four kinds:

1. *kamma-saddhā*: belief in kamma;
2. *vipāka-saddhā*: belief in the fruits of kamma;
3. *kammassakatā-saddhā*: belief that beings are the owners of their kamma;
4. *tathāgatabodhi-saddhā*: faith in the Buddha's awakening.

Apart from *tathāgatabodhi-saddhā* (a term formed from the Pali *sadda-hati tathāgatassa bodhiṃ*), this group of four is not found in the Pali Canon or even in the commentaries. This collection of four is a compilation of teachings found in different locations, but they are not found in the Pali Canon as these specific terms.

For example, *kammassakatā-saddhā* is only found in the Pali Canon as *kammassakatā-ñāṇa*;<sup>313</sup> in the earlier suttas there is only *kammassakatā*.<sup>314</sup> In the commentaries one finds *kammassakatā-paññā*<sup>315</sup> and *kammassakata-diṭṭhi*,<sup>316</sup> but these concern matters of wisdom.

*Kamma-saddhā* and *vipāka-saddhā* are derived from teachings concerning kamma, which are usually associated with wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*),<sup>317</sup> but these specific terms are not found in the Pali Canon. Even the expression 'believing in kamma', which is one of the five qualities of a lay-disciple (*upāsaka-dhamma*), is translated from *kammaṃ pacceti*, which means focusing on achievement through action rather than relying on luck. This subject reflects the development of Buddhist thought and tradition later, post-canonical times.

<sup>313</sup>See: Nd. I. 188-9; Dhs. 233; Vbh. 328.

<sup>314</sup>A. III. 185-6.

<sup>315</sup>E.g.: DA. II. 359; DA. III. 936; SA. I. 87.

<sup>316</sup>E.g.: MA. I. 188; SA. III. 199.

<sup>317</sup>E.g.: M. I. 288



Phra Buddha Saiyas (the Reclining Buddha Image)  
at Wat Pho or Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn  
2 Sanamchai Road, Grand Palace, Phra Nakhon, Thailand



## CHAPTER 8

# CALM AND INSIGHT

### *The Buddhist Teachings on Liberation of Mind and Liberation by Wisdom*

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Pali, the word *samatha* means ‘calm’ or ‘tranquil’, but the term generally refers to the actual methods of generating tranquillity and of developing a deeply concentrated mind. The purpose of *samatha* is to attain the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*).<sup>1</sup> In *samatha* practice one fixes one’s mind on an object (*ārammaṇa*) until the mind is one-pointed, which is called *samādhi* (concentration). When concentration is properly established the mind enters one of the *jhānas*. In the four fine-material *jhānas* (*rūpa-jhāna* or simply *jhāna*) one uses aspects of materiality as the object of attention. More refined than these are the four formless *jhānas* (*arūpa-jhāna*), in which one uses immaterial objects as the object of attention. Together these *jhānas* are called the eight ‘attainments’ (*samāpatti*).

In *jhāna* the mind is happy, peaceful and bright; there is no dullness or disturbance; the mind is free from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).<sup>2</sup> For the duration of *jhāna*, one is said to be free from the mental defilements (*kilesa*). The defilements return, however, when one exits *jhāna*. The

<sup>1</sup>*Jhāna*: meditative absorption; concentrative absorption. See Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*).

terms ‘cessation as suppression’ (*vikkhambhana-nirodha*) and ‘liberation as suppression’ (*vikkhambhana-vimutti*) are used for this suppression of defilement by concentration. Possible fruits of *jhāna* are the five special powers (*abhiññā*): psychic power, telepathy, recollection of past lives, divine ear, and divine eye. (See Note 8.1)

The word *samatha* often refers specifically to concentration (*samādhi*). Equating *samatha* with *samādhi* is in accord with both the Abhidhamma and the suttas, for no matter which special powers or attainments a person reaches, the essence of tranquillity meditation is concentration.<sup>3</sup>  
{427}

*Vipassanā* means ‘clear insight’. The term also refers to methods of cultivating wisdom in order to see the truth, to see things clearly as they are, not as one imagines them to be with a vision distorted by desire and aversion. This insight deepens until ignorance and attachment are uprooted, at which point one’s impressions, perceptions and attitudes are transformed.

The knowledge that gradually increases during this practice of insight is called *ñāṇa*, of which there are many levels. The final and highest knowledge is called *vijjā*, which completely eradicates ignorance. A mind endowed with such knowledge is joyous, peaceful and free. It escapes the clutches of defilements, which corrupt people’s thoughts and actions. An awakened person is not afflicted by defilements and need not struggle against them. This knowledge is the aim of insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and it leads to true and lasting liberation. This absolute liberation is called ‘cessation as severance’ (*samuccheda-nirodha*) or ‘liberation as severance’ (*samuccheda-vimutti*).<sup>4</sup>

The goal of tranquillity meditation is *jhāna*; the goal of insight meditation is *ñāṇa*.<sup>5</sup> People can practise solely *samatha* meditation, wishing

<sup>3</sup>The Abhidhamma, e.g.: Dhs. 61, 64, 68. The suttas, e.g.: A. I. 61 (explained at AA. II. 119). At A. III. 373, in reference to the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*), *samatha* replaces *samādhi*, and *vipassanā* replaces *paññā*.

<sup>4</sup>Trans.: *samuccheda*: ‘cutting off’, ‘destroying’.

<sup>5</sup>Although *samatha* can lead to the five *abhiññā*, which are levels of *ñāṇa*, this attainment must be preceded by *jhāna*. The mind that is suitably endowed with

## NOTE 8.1: HIGHER KNOWLEDGE

Trans.: the term *abhiññā* is used in different contexts. In general it means ‘higher knowledge’, ‘supreme knowledge’. There are six kinds of supreme knowledge. The first five (listed above) are mundane forms of knowledge; the sixth kind – knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*) – is transcendent. In this chapter, when referring to the first five kinds I use the terms ‘special power’, ‘supernormal power’, ‘supreme power’, or ‘higher psychic attainments’; in reference to all six kinds I use the terms ‘supreme knowledge’, ‘supreme attainment’, or ‘direct knowledge’.

to enjoy the fruits of such practice: the *jhānas* and the supreme powers (*abhiññā*). They may stop here, not concerning themselves with insight meditation and the development of wisdom. But a person practising insight meditation must rely on some level of concentration. They may attain *jhāna* first and use *jhāna* as a basis for insight, they may practise insight first and then practise tranquillity, or they may practise both forms of meditation simultaneously. Those who are called ‘practitioners of pure insight’ (*suddhavipassanā-yānika*) do not practise tranquillity in a ‘direct’ or ‘exclusive’ way – they do not attain *jhāna* before developing insight – but they still depend on tranquillity in a broad sense: they still depend on concentration. The initial concentration of someone practising insight may be ‘temporary’ (*khaṇika-samādhi*). But at the point of attaining path and fruit (*magga-phala*), concentration is firmly established (‘attainment concentration’ – *appanā-samādhi*), reaching at least the first *jhāna*.

However extraordinary the *jhānas* or psychic powers may be, if they result exclusively from tranquillity meditation they are still ‘mundane’: they lie within the domain of unawakened beings.<sup>6</sup> Examples of such

*samādhi* then uses the power of *jhāna* to attain this next stage of knowledge. Strictly speaking, *samatha* ends at *jhāna*; it does not go beyond *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-ñāṇa* (see: VismT.: *Paññābhāvanānisamsaniddhesavaṇṇanā*, *Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā*).

<sup>6</sup>E.g.: Vism. 370–72.

accomplishments are the psychic powers of Ven. Devadatta,<sup>7</sup> the temporary emancipation of Ven. Godhika,<sup>8</sup> and the stories in the texts of monks, rishis and laypeople who attained jhāna.<sup>9</sup> {428}

Concentrative attainments and supernormal powers resulting from tranquillity meditation were accessible before the Buddha's time.<sup>10</sup> Those individuals who achieved these attainments came from other religious traditions and preceded the Buddha, for example Āḷāra Kālāma who reached the third formless jhāna and Uddaka Rāmaputta who attained the fourth formless jhāna.<sup>11</sup> These attainments are not the goal of Buddhism since they do not bring about true deliverance from suffering and defilement. There were monks of other traditions who having attained the four jhānas maintained wrong view and claimed that abiding in these jhānas is equivalent to Nibbāna, a claim the Buddha repudiated.<sup>12</sup>

The true purpose of tranquillity meditation in Buddhism is to generate concentration to use as a basis for insight. (See Note 8.2) A cultivation of this insight supported by concentration leads to the final goal of Buddhism. Someone with the special quality of reaching this highest goal and being endowed with the exceptional fruits of tranquillity meditation will be admired and revered. But someone who has attained only the fruits of insight is still superior to someone who has attained jhānas and psychic powers yet remains unawakened. The concentration of non-returners who have not achieved the eight jhānas or the five supreme powers (*abhiññā*) is still considered 'complete'. It is secure and steadfast since no defilements exist to erode or disturb it. This is not true of those who attain jhāna or psychic powers but do not cultivate insight or attain path and fruit (*magga-phala*). Although their level of concentration may be exceptional, there is no guarantee of its stability. They are still susceptible to being overwhelmed by defilement. Even the concentration

<sup>7</sup>Vin. II. 184-5; J. IV. 200.

<sup>8</sup>S. I. 120-21.

<sup>9</sup>E.g.: Vism. 689; J. II. 274; SnA. I. 70; [1/87].

<sup>10</sup>MA. IV 165.

<sup>11</sup>M. I. 164-6, 240.

<sup>12</sup>D. I. 36-7.

## NOTE 8.2: TRANQUILLITY FOR INSIGHT

The supreme concentration is that which aids wisdom in dispelling the defilements and facilitates awakening. Technically speaking it is a factor in the Path (*magga-samādhi*). This concentration has a special name: *ānantarika-samādhi* (also spelled *anantarika*, *anantariya* or *ānantariya*), translated as ‘following immediately’ – it produces immediate *ariya-phala*, without interference. The Buddha said this concentration is peerless (Kh. 4; Sn. 40). Even if this concentration is of a lower level, it is still superior to other forms of fine-material and immaterial *jhānas*. (KhA. 182; SnA. I. 277). *Ānantarika-samādhi* is mentioned in other contexts, both in the Canon and the commentaries; see: D. III. 273; A. II. 150; PsI. 2, 94; DA. III. 1056; AA. III. 139; PsA. I. 37; VismṬ.: *Ñāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Sotāpānnapuggalakathāvaṇṇanā*; ThīgA. 99.

of stream-enterers and once-returners can be disturbed and weakened by sensual lust. Their *samādhi* is therefore still considered ‘incomplete’.<sup>13</sup>

This subject of calm and insight is connected to the deliverance by wisdom and deliverance of mind discussed below. {429}

## 8.2 LIBERATION OF MIND AND LIBERATION BY WISDOM

(Note the difference between *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*, which are states of mind, and *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* and *paññā-vimutta*, who are individuals.)

Earlier, liberation (*vimutti*) was mentioned as a synonym for *Nibbāna* and also discussed in the section on the attributes of awakened beings. Here, we will examine the term *vimutti* more closely. In the commentaries, the term *vimutti* in its highest sense has three distinct definitions:

1. *Vimutti* as the Path (*magga*): the act of liberation; the existing conditions at the moment of liberation.

<sup>13</sup>Non-returners have ‘complete’ *samādhi*, e.g.: A. I. 232; A. IV. 380; cf.: Vism. 704; VismṬ.: *Paññābhāvanānīsaṃsaniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā*. For the destination of non-returners after death see Appendix 5.

2. *Vimutti* as fruition (*phala*): the freedom resulting from liberation; the result of being a liberated person.
3. *Vimutti* as equivalent to Nibbāna: the state of a liberated person; the nature of freedom reached and experienced by a liberated person, providing such blessings as happiness, ease, contentment and peace; the liberation unawakened people determine as an object of contemplation and set as a goal.<sup>14</sup>

Of these three definitions, the second one of *vimutti* as fruition is the most specific and pertains to the essential meaning of liberation. It refers here most often to the fruition of arahantship, when one abandons all ten fetters (*sariyojana*) and is released from all mental taints (*āsava*). In the definition of *vimutti* as the Path, there are additional agents, especially true knowledge (*vijjā*) and dispassion (*virāga*), which are often paired with liberation. In such cases *vijjā* or *virāga* are defined as the Path, while *vimutti* constitutes the fruit. In the third definition *vimutti* is a synonym for Nibbāna. (See Note 8.3)

*Vimutti* as fruition, especially as the fruit of arahantship, is divided into two kinds: *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*. *Cetovimutti* is translated as ‘liberation of the mind’. It is the liberation made possible through the strength of concentration. It is the state of a concentrated mind, which quells passion and is free from the bonds of defilement.<sup>15</sup> {430} *Paññāvimutti* is translated as ‘liberation through wisdom’, but can equally be translated as ‘liberation of wisdom’ since it refers to the wisdom of an arahant that is purified and perfected. This wisdom dispels ignorance and frees a person from defilement.

<sup>14</sup> Some commentarial passages assert that Nibbāna is equivalent to *vimutti* because one is free from all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhamma*), not merely free from defilement. See: DA. III. 985.

<sup>15</sup> Here, and generally in the Pali Canon, *rāga* (lust) is not confined to the narrow meaning it has of ‘sexual lust’. It refers rather to any desire or infatuation for physical or mental objects. It is a synonym of *taṇhā* (craving) and encompasses the meaning of *dosa* (anger) as well since anger is a reaction directly resulting from lust.

## NOTE 8.3: VIMUTTI

These explanations accord with the commentarial definitions.

*Vimutti* as path and fruit, e.g.: DA. I. 220; MA. II. 281; AA. II. 263; AA. III. 378.

*Vimutti* as fruition and Nibbāna, e.g.: Ps2. 143-4; MA. I. 43; UdA. 69; ItA. I. 166.

*Vimutti* as *arahatta-phala*, e.g.: VinA. VII. 1366; DA. III. 1062; SA. I. 62, 171; AA. III. 227; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Vinayānisaṁsakathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Sīlaniddesaṇṇanā, Sīlappabhedakathāvaṇṇanā.

*Vimutti* paired with *vijjā*, quoted earlier in the section on the attributes of enlightened beings, e.g.: DA. III. 1057; VismT.: Anussatikammaṭṭhān-aniddesaṇṇanā, Ānāpānassatikathāvaṇṇanā.

In the Pali Canon: D. III. 274; M. III. 290; A. I. 83; A. II. 247.

There are many occurrences of *vimutti* paired with *virāga* in the phrase *virāgā vimuccati*, e.g.: S. III. 189; S. IV. 2.

For additional explanations, see e.g.: Ps2. 140; SA. II. 268.

Liberation of the mind is achieved by abandoning lust; liberation by wisdom is achieved by abandoning ignorance.

A. I. 61; Ps. II. 99.

The commentaries define *cetovimutti* as the concentration (*samādhi*) which is the fruit of arahantship, and they define *paññāvimutti* as the wisdom and knowledge which is the fruit of arahantship.<sup>16</sup> All persons who have attained arahantship have completed these two kinds of liberation. In passages referring to the attainment of arahantship these two terms therefore always exist as a pair, for example:

<sup>16</sup>*Cetovimutti* = *phala-samādhi*, *arahattaphala-samādhi* or *arahattaphala-citta*. *Paññāvimutti* = *phala-ñāṇa*, *phala-paññā*, *arahattaphala-ñāṇa* or *arahattaphala-paññā*. E.g.: DA. I. 313; SA. II. 175, 399; [3/411]; AA. II. 154; [2/93; 3/8, 61, 407]; UdA. 177; ItA. II. 74; SnA. II. 504; PañcA. 245. When accompanied by the word *anāsava* ('taintless') these terms refer specifically to the concentration and wisdom of an arahant.

With the destruction of the taints, one realizes for oneself with direct knowledge here and now the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless.

E.g.: D. I. 156, 167; D. II. 71, 251; D. III. 107, 132; M. I. 284, 367; S. IV. 267, 289; A. I. 220; A. III. 29, 425-6.

*Cetovimutti* is the fruit of tranquillity; *paññāvimutti* is the fruit of insight.<sup>17</sup> The commentaries assert that the appearance of these two terms as a pair indicates that tranquillity and insight must be combined, both at the level of ‘fruit’ (*phala*) and ‘path’ (*magga*).<sup>18</sup> Tranquillity (*samatha*) here can be taken in a broad sense as a required level of concentration; it need not refer to the deeper levels of concentration resulting in the higher psychic attainments.

Two things pertain to supreme knowledge.<sup>19</sup> What two? Serenity and insight.

When serenity is developed, what benefit does it bring? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit does it bring? Lust is abandoned.

When insight is developed, what benefit does it bring? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit does it bring? Ignorance is abandoned.

A mind defiled by lust is not liberated, and wisdom defiled by ignorance is not developed. Thus, monks, through the removal of lust there is liberation of mind, and through the removal of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom. (See Note 8.4) {431}

A. I. 61.

Liberation is complete with the attainment of both *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*. It is possible to only practise tranquillity and this practice

<sup>17</sup>ItA. II. 74.

<sup>18</sup>UdA. 177.

<sup>19</sup>*Vijjābhāgiya*: alternatively: ‘are constituents of supreme knowledge’; ‘support the arising of supreme knowledge’.



## NOTE 8.4: CETOVIMUTTI AND PAÑÑĀVIMUTTI

In the Pali Canon the attainment of *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti* is used as a definition for arahantship (e.g.: S. V. 406). This is evidence that all arahants attain both of these kinds of liberation. When these terms are used as a pair to refer to arahants, they are always preceded by the term *anāsava* ('free from the taints'). The passage at A. II. 87 mentions arahants who have attained *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti* but have not attained the eight *vimokkha* (*jhāna-samāpatti* and *nirodha-samāpatti*). This passage confirms that the *cetovimutti* of an arahant refers to a necessary degree of concentration in supporting wisdom in the eradication of the taints. It is not the *cetovimutti* discussed below that refers to the eight concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*).

The commentaries define *samatha* as *cittakaggatā* ('one pointedness'; *samādhi*), and define *vipassanā* as the knowledge that reflects on conditioned phenomena (AA. II. 119).

can lead to the higher concentrative attainments in which the defilements are suppressed. This is one kind of liberation albeit a temporary one. In order to reach true liberation, however, a person practising tranquillity must also integrate insight meditation. The term *cetovimutti* can be used in contexts apart from the realization of path and fruit, although in these contexts the liberation of the mind is not absolute. The decisive factor is therefore *paññāvimutti*, which gradually eliminates ignorance and eradicates the defilements. True lasting liberation comes with *paññāvimutti*. The term *anāsava* ('taintless') is used in conjunction with these two terms to emphasize perfect liberation. The term *cetovimutti* is used as a pair with *paññāvimutti* simply to show that a high level of concentration is required to prepare the mind for liberation by wisdom.

*Paññāvimutti* is only used in the context of complete liberation and is always accompanied by the term *cetovimutti*. *Cetovimutti* can be used in other contexts. If it refers to the decisive liberation of path and fruit, from stream-entry upwards, then it is paired with *paññāvimutti*. Otherwise it must be accompanied by a qualifying adjective clearly indicating a stage of definite awakening, for example: *akuppā* ('unshakeable') or *asamaya* ('lasting'). When found alone or accompanied by other terms then it does not refer to complete liberation.

Because of the similarity of the terms, the division of arahants into ‘one liberated by wisdom’ (*paññāvimutta*) and ‘one liberated both ways’ (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*) gives the impression that the former refers to someone who has solely attained liberation by wisdom (*paññāvimutti*). In fact, the attainment of *paññāvimutti* necessarily includes the attainment of *cetovimutti* in the sense that a person relies on a refined degree of concentration to attain liberation by wisdom. In this case, concentration does not need to be highlighted. Even someone who solely practises insight (*sukkha-vipassaka*) depends on tranquillity meditation to develop a required degree of concentration. In the case of ‘one liberated in both ways’ (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*), liberation of the mind (*cetovimutti*) is emphasized. The reason for this emphasis is because the kind of *cetovimutti* referred to here is exceptional, of the eight *vimokkha* or the higher attainments of *jhāna*.

As mentioned above, the term *vimutti* is used in many different contexts. The term *cetovimutti*, when referring to levels of liberation that are not yet transcendent, is most often used on its own; in this case it suggests a liberation that is not absolute. Inferior kinds of liberation generally occur through the power of concentration. {432} Later texts also use the term *vimokkha* when referring to non-transcendent liberation.<sup>20</sup> The original texts reserved a unique definition for *vimokkha* as explained in the chapter on awakened beings. Whichever term is used – *vimutti*, *cetovimutti* or *vimokkha* – it is usually accompanied by a qualifying adjective to clarify the context, for example: *sāmāyika-vimutti*, *sāmāyika-cetovimutti*, *sāmāyika-vimokkha* (all meaning ‘temporary liberation’), *appamaññā-cetovimutti* (‘boundless liberation’), or *santa-cetovimutti* (‘peaceful liberation’). Replacing the qualifying adjectives of inferior levels of liberation with adjectives of an opposite meaning denotes a supreme form of liberation (for example, by replacing *sāmāyika* with *asamaya*).

<sup>20</sup>The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* uses the term *vimokkha* along with qualifying adjectives to describe the different kinds of liberation (see: Ps. II. 35-71, especially pp. 40-41). As for the term *vimutti*, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* offers a wide range of definitions, from purity of moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*) to Nibbāna. Even feeling (*vedanā*) can be a form of *vimutti*, but all these definitions fall into two categories: Nibbāna and things that arise from having Nibbāna as one’s meditation object (*ārammaṇa*); Ps. II. 140-46.

*Vimutti* in a general sense can thus be divided into two kinds: as absolute and not-absolute. When referring to its highest meaning, the word *vimutti* is preceded by one of the following qualifying adjectives to make it clear that the reference is to absolute, transcendent liberation: *akuppā* (*akuppā-vimutti* and *akuppā-cetovimutti*: ‘unshakeable liberation’; ‘non-degenerative liberation’),<sup>21</sup> or *asamaya* (*asamaya-vimutti*<sup>22</sup> and *asāmāyika-cetovimutti*:<sup>23</sup> ‘lasting liberation’; ‘timeless liberation’). All these terms refer to ‘noble fruition’ (*ariya-phala*), especially to the fruit of arahantship.<sup>24</sup> And since the term *cetovimutti* on its own never refers to absolute liberation, the terms *akuppā* and *asāmāyika* are added to indicate a liberation of mind that is absolute, not subject to decay, and necessarily accompanied by liberation by wisdom. {433}

Another transcendent form of *cetovimutti* accessible to awakened beings is the ‘signless liberation of mind’ (*animittā-cetovimutti*), which is known as a ‘fruition attainment’ (*phala-samāpatti*). This is reached when stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners and arahants wish to abide at ease and enter a state of concentration, experiencing the *rasa* (‘flavour’; ‘quality’) of their realization. This state of liberation is an ‘abiding at ease in the present’ (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*) and a ‘noble, transcendent bliss’ (*ariyalokuttara-sukha*). It is called ‘signless liberation of mind’ because it is a freedom of mind wherein the person takes no notice of signs and features belonging to conditioned phenomena (i.e. to form,

<sup>21</sup>In many places the different editions of the Tipiṭaka use *akuppā-vimutti* and *akuppā-cetovimutti* interchangeably – the Thai editions use *akuppā-vimutti* while the Roman editions use *akuppā-cetovimutti*, e.g.: Vin. I. 11; S. III. 29; S. IV. 9; S. V. 204, 423; A. I. 259; A. IV. 56. *Akuppā-vimutti* is used consistently at: M. I. 167; M. III. 163; A. I. 231; A. III. 355; It. 53; Thag. verse 182. *Akuppā-cetovimutti* is used consistently at: D. III. 273; M. I. 197; A. IV. 305, 448.

<sup>22</sup>M. I. 197 (here, *asamaya-vimokkha* is used as a synonym for *asamaya-vimutti*). This term is sometimes used for individuals, as *asamaya-vimutta* (e.g.: A. V. 336; Pug. 3, 11).

<sup>23</sup>Timeless, permanent liberation (M. III. 110; Nd. II. 64).

<sup>24</sup>E.g.: DA. III. 1057; MA. II. 174; [2/312]. However, MA. IV 158 states that *asāmāyika-vimutti* equals *asāmāyika-vimokkha*, i.e. the four paths (*magga*) and four fruits (*phala*).

feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness), and only focuses on Nibbāna (has Nibbāna as the object of awareness).<sup>25</sup>

The many lesser, mundane levels of liberation are included in the term *cetovimutti* when this term occurs on its own. Alternatively, the term *sāmāyika-cetovimutti* (equivalent to *sāmāyika-vimutti* and *samaya-vimutti*, all meaning ‘temporary liberation’) is used.<sup>26</sup> The word *adhimutti* (‘intent upon’; ‘absorbed in’) is often used to describe these lesser levels of liberation, or else *adhimutti* is used as a synonym for the above terms (see Note 8.5).<sup>27</sup> *Adhimutti* refers to being absorbed in an object to the extent that one is freed from disturbances and defilements for as long as one abides in that state, for example one is freed from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) when absorbed in jhāna.

The standard definition for ‘temporary liberation’ (*sāmāyika-cetovimutti*) equates this liberation with the eight mundane attainments (*samāpatti*): the four fine-material and the four immaterial jhānas.<sup>28</sup> The concentrative attainments of unawakened persons are confined to these eight. In order to specify that the deliverance of mind here refers to the eight attainments, the word *santa* (‘peaceful’; ‘refined’) is occasionally added, as *santa-cetovimutti*.<sup>29</sup>

‘Temporary liberation’ (*cetovimutti*, *sāmāyika-cetovimutti*, *vimutti*, or *sāmāyika-vimutti*) can also have a very broad definition, referring to absorption into any object of faith, inspiration, or delight. This kind of

<sup>25</sup> See: D. III. 249; M. I. 296–9; S. IV. 297; A. III. 292; MA. II. 352; SA. III. 98; Vism. 700; VismṬ.: Paññābhāvanānīsaṃsaṇḍesavaṇṇanā, Phalasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā. DA. III. 1036 claims that this term only refers to *arahattaphala-samāpatti*, but AA. III. 347 says that it refers to a proficient level of insight.

<sup>26</sup> At M. I. 196 *samaya-vimutti* is used as a synonym for *samaya-vimokkha* and refers to mundane liberation (*lokiya-vimutti*), i.e. to the eight *samāpatti* (see: MA. II. 232; AA. III. 292; and cf.: Ps. II. 40). In the Pali Canon *samaya-vimutti* is sometimes used to denote a person, just as the term *samaya-vimutta* (A. III. 173). The Abhidhamma, however, reserves this latter term for stream-enterers, once-returners and non-returners who have attained the eight *samāpatti* (see: Pug. 10; PañCA. 179).

<sup>27</sup> E.g.: Nd. II. 41; DA. III. 985, 1032; SA. I. 183, 220; AA. III. 321; AA. V. 64; SnA. II. 601; NdA. 59; PsA. I. 88.

<sup>28</sup> M. III. 110–11; Nd. II. 64; S. I. 120–21; Sn. 9; MA. IV. 158; SA. I. 183; SnA. I. 105. For an example of temporary liberation in jhāna see: A. II. 214.

<sup>29</sup> A. I. 64; A. II. 165; AA. II. 134, [2/456].

## NOTE 8.5: REFLECTING ON NIBBĀNA

This definition of *vimutti* as equivalent to *adhimutti* can be used in regard to Nibbāna, in the sense of ‘intent upon’ or ‘reflecting upon’ Nibbāna, and can be used in reference to both unenlightened and enlightened beings, even to arahants (e.g.: S. I. 154; D. III. 239-40; A. III. 245; MA. I. 43; SA. I. 220; ItA. I. 166).

The Abhidhamma gives two definitions for *vimutti*: ‘concentrative absorption’ (*cittassa adhimutti*) and Nibbāna (Dhs. 234). The commentaries explain that concentrative absorption refers to the eight *samāpatti*, since one is absorbed in the object of meditation and free from harmful mental states (DhsA. 409).

At Nd. II. 41, the definition is broadened to include being intent upon forms, sounds, smells, tastes, fame, happiness, robes, almsfood, the Discipline, the suttas, the Abhidhamma, etc. (e.g.: *rūpādhimutta*, *cīvarādhimutta*, *vinayādhimutta*). Compare the dual description of *vimutti* at Ps. II. 145-6.

liberation accompanies a mind that is intensely focused on an object. This focus generates strength, courage and perseverance. It is the incipient stage in a natural process (*idappaccayatā* or *paṭiccasamuppāda*) that leads on to joy, tranquillity and concentration. {434} It is called liberation because it is an escape from conflicting and bothersome mental qualities (*paccanika-dhamma* – ‘mental adversaries’), such as doubt, discouragement, mental sluggishness, and fear. These mental qualities are suppressed as long as the conditions supporting liberation are maintained, as long as the mental strength generated by inspiration remains. The texts even classify the aspiration to live in the forest,<sup>30</sup> or the joy that arises when listening to a Dhamma talk,<sup>31</sup> as this kind of liberation of mind. Aspects of this kind of liberation, however, can also give rise to unwholesome mental states.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>The intention and desire to live in the forest (see: M. I. 156-7; MA. II. 162).

<sup>31</sup>A. V. 139; AA. V. 52.

<sup>32</sup>A. V. 192; AA. V. 64. It is most probably this kind of liberation that is included as ‘wrong liberation’ (*micchā-vimutti*) in the ten wrong qualities (*micchatta*) at: D. III. 290; M. I. 42; A. V. 211-12.

There are names for specific kinds of temporary liberation (*sāmāyika-cetovimutti*), depending on the object on which the mind is focused. The temporary liberation of mind that is most often mentioned and encouraged is called ‘boundless liberation’ (*appamāṇā-cetovimutti* or *appamaññā-cetovimutti*).<sup>33</sup> Here, one develops concentration by radiating the qualities of lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) in all directions with a mind that is unbounded and immeasurable, until the mind is absorbed in these wholesome states and enters *jhāna*. The mind is then freed from the five hindrances and from the unwholesome qualities that are antagonistic to the four qualities listed above: the liberation of lovingkindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*) is free from ill-will, the liberation of compassion (*karuṇā-cetovimutti*) is free from hostility, the liberation of appreciative joy (*muditā-cetovimutti*) is free from jealousy, and the liberation of equanimity (*upekkhā-cetovimutti*) is free from lust.

Other kinds of temporary liberation of mind, which occur in the scriptures only rarely, include: *suññatā-cetovimutti* (liberation of mind stemming from the insight that all conditioned phenomena are empty of self and empty of anything related to self – *attaniya*);<sup>34</sup> *ākāraṇiyyā-cetovimutti* (the immaterial *jhāna* directed upon the sphere of nothingness);<sup>35</sup> and *mahaggatā-cetovimutti* (while in *jhāna*, radiating the mind engaged with a *kaṣiṇa* meditation object over however large an area or domain as one chooses).<sup>36</sup>

Drawing upon the above material, it is fair to say that any devotion to an ideal or object of faith, for example to a supreme deity, is a kind of absorption and can be included in the broad definition of *cetovimutti*.

<sup>33</sup>E.g.: M. I. 297; M. II. 207; M. III. 146; D. I. 250; D. III. 248; A. I. 38-9; A. III. 290-91; A. IV. 301; A. V. 299; S. II. 264; S. IV. 322; ItA. I. 89; PsA. I. 88.

<sup>34</sup>A teaching by Ven. Sāriputta; M. I. 297; explained at MA. [2/476-7].

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>A teaching by Ven. Anuruddha (M. III. 146-7; explained at MA. IV. 200). [Trans.: the ten *kaṣiṇa* meditations: meditation on earth, water, fire, air, the colour blue, the colour yellow, the colour red, the colour white, space, and consciousness (or light).]

Some people claim that abiding in jhāna is Nibbāna, or claim that ‘extinction of perception and feeling’ (*saññāvedayita-nirodha* or *nirodha-samāpatti*), the highest concentrative attainment, is Nibbāna. {435} In fact, these concentrative attainments are used as instruments to attain arahantship. They prepare the mind and make it suitable for awakening. These attainments, along with their material and immaterial properties, are conditioned phenomena, which are reflected upon by Dhamma practitioners with insight and wisdom to give rise to true knowledge (*vijjā*).<sup>37</sup>

Arahants use these concentrative attainments for rest and to experience happiness, and these attainments are thus called ‘abiding at ease in the present’ (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*),<sup>38</sup> ‘divine abidings’ (*dibba-vihāra*),<sup>39</sup> and ‘gradually ascending abidings’ (*anupubba-vihāra*).<sup>40</sup> These states, however, are not Nibbāna. They are means by which Nibbāna can be realized and they are easeful abidings for those who have already realized Nibbāna. Indeed, the realization of Nibbāna facilitates the attainment of these concentrative states and allows a person to benefit greatly from them. For example, a person who has attained the eight jhānas will have the necessary concentration and wisdom to reach the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*) when they realize the state of non-returner or arahantship.<sup>41</sup>

A person who has not yet realized arahantship still has a degree of attachment to fine-material and immaterial existence, and they may still be fascinated or attached to concentrative attainments. {436} Although jhānas are excellent, Buddhism considers attachment to jhāna a weakness.

<sup>37</sup>E.g.: M. I. 350-52, 436; A. V. 343-6. See also: M. I. 159-60; M. III. 45; A. IV. 438-48. Note that *jhāna-samāpatti* is sometimes defined as ‘visible’ Nibbāna ‘indirectly’ (*pariyāya*), in the sense that defilements are suspended for the duration of the jhāna. For more on the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*) see Appendix 6.

<sup>38</sup>The four material jhānas as states to abide at ease in the present, e.g.: M. III. 4; A. IV. 231-2; A. V. 68, 339.

<sup>39</sup>The four material and four immaterial jhānas as divine abidings: D. III. 220; DA. III. 1006.

<sup>40</sup>The eight *samāpatti* plus *saññāvedayita-nirodha*, e.g.: D. III. 265, 290; M. I. 301-2; S. II. 212; A. I. 41; A. IV. 410-14; Vbh. 335, 342-3.

<sup>41</sup>Vism. 702.

Indeed, such attachment can be an obstacle for realizing Nibbāna. The Buddha said that if a monk attains the highest immaterial jhāna (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) but indulges in the feeling of this state he will not be able to realize Nibbāna, because there is still clinging (*upādāna*). Clinging to such a refined state the Buddha called ‘superior clinging’ (*upādāna-seṭṭha*, see Note 8.6). Arahants make use of jhāna to dwell at ease, but without any attachment.

Proof that jhānas, all the way up to attainment of cessation, are not Nibbāna is the fact that arahants who are ‘those liberated by wisdom’ (*paññāvimutta*) have not attained the immaterial jhānas and are unable to enter the attainment of cessation. From the Pali Canon we can deduce that at the time of the Buddha there were more *paññāvimutta* than *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*. For example, at a large gathering of monks the Buddha told Ven. Sāriputta:

Of these five hundred bhikkhus, Sāriputta, sixty bhikkhus are triple-knowledge bearers (*tevijja*),<sup>42</sup> sixty bhikkhus are bearers of the six direct knowledges (*chaḷabhiñña*), sixty bhikkhus are liberated in both ways, while the rest [three hundred and twenty] are liberated by wisdom.

S. I. 191.

Liberation by wisdom (*paññāvimutti*) is decisive and is equivalent to attaining Nibbāna. This kind of liberation transforms liberation of mind (*cetovimutti*), which may have been achieved long before and repeatedly accessed in the past – or else it arises simultaneously with *paññāvimutti*<sup>43</sup> – into unshakeable liberation of mind (*akuppā-cetovimutti*), since the taints have now been eliminated.

<sup>42</sup>Trans.: ‘triple knowledge bearers’ (*tevijja*) refers to those individuals who have realized the threefold knowledge (*vijjā*): recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings according to their kamma (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of the truth resulting in the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*).

<sup>43</sup>*Cetovimutti* arising simultaneously with *paññāvimutti* is the true and essential kind of liberation of mind.



## NOTE 8.6: A STATE CONSIDERED EXCELLENT

M. II. 265. The commentaries explain *upādāna-seṭṭha* here as ‘a state considered excellent’ (i.e. a higher realm in which to be reborn), but the explanation above is consistent with the etymology and the context (see MA. IV. 67).

The Buddha said if someone with exceptional qualities (for example he is wealthy, famous, learned, a preacher of Dhamma, a follower of ascetic practices, a forest dweller, a refuse-rag wearer, a tree-root dweller, or an attainer of any of the eight jhānas) becomes arrogant and looks down on others, then this person is an ‘inferior’ person (Sappurisa Sutta, M. III. 37-45).

The teaching at A. II. 27-8 states that a bhikkhu in the noble lineage is content with his robes, almsfood, and dwelling, and delights in meditation, but does not use his virtues to praise himself or to intimidate others.

Awakened persons derive the maximum benefit from *cetovimutti*, without harming themselves or others. They do not indulge in these attainments nor do they use the fruits of concentration – the mundane psychic powers – in a misguided way for self-gratification. Here, liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom exist as a pair, as is frequently mentioned in the texts: *The deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.*<sup>44</sup> {437} The Buddha said that this unshakeable liberation of mind (*cetovimutti* combined with *paññāvimutti*) is the essence and goal of Buddhism:

When he is diligent, he attains permanent liberation (*asamaya-vimutti*). And it is impossible for that bhikkhu to fall away from that permanent liberation.

<sup>44</sup>M. I. 266, 270; S. IV. 120, 184, 189, 200; A. III. 165. A variation occurs at A. V. 139-43: *The deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom wherein moral practice ... a lack of moral practice ... lust ... anger ... restlessness cease without remainder.* The commentaries explain this as referring to the liberation of *soṭāpatti-phala* all the way to *arahatta-phala*.

So this holy life, brahmin, does not have gain, honour, and fame for its benefit, or the attainment of virtue for its benefit, or the attainment of concentration for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind that is the goal of this holy life, its heartwood, and its end.<sup>45</sup>

M. I. 197.

There are three factors leading to the decline of temporary liberation of mind (*samaya-cetovimutti*). First are the defilements (*kilesa*) which have not yet been completely eliminated. They may have been suppressed or subdued, but they lie in wait and are aroused when the positive conditions like faith weaken. Second are the supportive conditions like faith, enthusiasm, contentment and determination. When these conditions fade or weaken, liberation of mind also declines. These supportive conditions may even fade for good reason. A person may at one time have strong faith in something and be greatly devoted, but later realize that the faith is not grounded in wisdom and the object of faith is unworthy of such devotion. Third are environmental factors, which include a person's health and external conditions like poverty or famine. In spiritual practice these three factors are linked. For example, due to some difficulty a person will lose heart; confusion, irritation and discouragement will arise and liberation of mind will vanish.

There are some interesting stories in the Pali Canon of how liberation of mind can be affected. Ven. Godhika was diligent and resolute and he reached temporary liberation of mind (*sāmāyika-cetovimutti*; the mundane concentrative attainments). But due to the torment of chronic illness he fell away from this liberation of mind. A second and a third time he reached temporary liberation of mind and fell away from it. This happened six times. {438} When he reached temporary liberation of mind a seventh time, he thought that he would surely fall away from it as before. He considered that it would be better to die while in this state of liberation than die after falling away from it. He thus used a knife to kill himself, but as he was lying on his bed in pain he established mindfulness and reflected

<sup>45</sup>This sutta reveals how people can become beguiled by wealth, honour, fame, morality, concentration and knowledge, and not progress to unshakeable liberation of mind. Cf.: M. I. 200-205.

on the feelings (*vedanā*) arising. While meditating in this way he achieved arahantship before attaining final Nibbāna.<sup>46</sup>

Another passage describes the ascetics and brahmins who went into the forest, living on fruits and berries, thinking that if they were to get caught up in sensuality they would become intoxicated and fall under the spell of Māra. When food was scarce and they became thin and weak, their determination and enthusiasm slackened, and they returned to the wider world to enjoy sense pleasures.<sup>47</sup>

The commentaries sorted the many definitions of *vimutti* into five groups, following the same model that they used for sorting the definitions of ‘cessation’ (*nirodha*).<sup>48</sup> These five groups act as a useful summary, as they contain the essence of all the definitions presented so far:<sup>49</sup>

1. *Vikkhambhana-vimutti*: liberation through the suppression of the defilements. The suspension of the five hindrances through the power of concentration. This refers to the eight ‘attainments’ (*samāpatti*): the four fine-material and the four immaterial jhānas, and sometimes includes ‘access concentration’ (*upacāra-samādhi*).
2. *Tadaṅga-vimutti*: liberation by way of specific qualities. To be freed from unwholesome qualities by the substitution of opposite qualities. Technically speaking, it is the freedom from wrong views and attachments through the application of insight or knowledge. For example, focusing on impermanence frees one from the belief in permanence. It can also be used, however, in reference to general matters of virtue and ethics. For example: a devotion to generosity

<sup>46</sup>S. I. 120-22; SA. I. 182. The commentaries say that he wanted to die while in jhāna so that he would be assured a rebirth in the Brahma realms.

<sup>47</sup>M. I. 156; MA. II. 162.

<sup>48</sup>Trans.: see the section on Jhāna, Nirodha and Nibbāna in chapter 6 on Nibbāna.

<sup>49</sup>See: UdA. 32; DA. III. 879; MA. IV. 168; SA. III. 209; DhA. I. 158, 434; Vism. 410. Compare with *viveka* at VbhA. 316 and with *pahāna* at Ps. I. 26-7; Ps. II. 220; Vism. 693-4. UdA. 220 mentions the ‘ripening factors’ (*paripācaniya-dhamma*) for *vimutti*, referring, e.g. to: Ud. 36; S. IV. 105; M. III. 277. D. III. 243 mentions the five things that lead a person to successively greater degrees of *vimutti*.

frees one from stinginess and greed; a commitment to lovingkindness frees one from ill-will and negativity; and a dedication to compassion and non-violence frees one from violence and cruelty.

These first two kinds of liberation cover the meaning of ‘temporary liberation’ (*sāmāyika-cetovimutti*) and are mundane. {439}

3. *Samuccheda-vimutti*: the cutting off of the defilements; liberation through final knowledge; *vimutti* as the ‘path’ (*magga*).
4. *Paṭipassaddhi-vimutti*: the utter removal and stilling of defilements; *vimutti* as the ‘fruit’ (*phala*).
5. *Nissaraṇa-vimutti*: the state of deliverance; complete liberation leading to supreme joy and unhindered engagement with the world; *vimutti* as Nibbāna.

These final three kinds of liberation are defined as ‘permanent liberation’ (*asāmāyika-cetovimutti*) and are transcendent. Essentially, these five kinds of liberation are equivalent to *samatha*, *vipassanā*, *magga*, *phala*, and Nibbāna, respectively.

### 8.3 IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES ON THE REALIZATION OF NIBBĀNA

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{442} The following questions are often debated among Buddhist scholars and practitioners:

- Can someone who only practises insight meditation (*vipassanā*) attain arahantship, without practising tranquillity meditation (*samatha*)?
- Is it necessary to attain jhāna before attaining Nibbāna?
- To achieve the six kinds of ‘higher psychic attainments’ (*abhiññā*), is it sufficient to have attained the fourth jhāna or must one have also attained the formless jhānas (i.e. the eight *samāpatti*)?

- To attain the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*) and realize Nibbāna, must one have previously attained the reminiscence of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*) and the knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*)?
- While in jhāna can one practise insight and contemplate conditioned phenomena or must one first emerge from jhāna?
- Is it possible to develop *samatha* further and achieve concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*) after attaining path and fruit (*magga-phala*)?

Some of these questions involve key aspects of realizing Nibbāna, some are only tangentially related, and some have already been discussed at length, especially the question on whether a person can attain Nibbāna by solely practising insight meditation. This section will focus on those questions which are directly related to realization, drawing upon evidence from the scriptures.

#### GENERAL ASPECTS OF REALIZATION

I declare, O monks, that the destruction of the taints occurs in dependence on the first jhāna, or the second jhāna, or the third jhāna, or the fourth jhāna; in dependence on the base of the infinity of space, or the base of the infinity of consciousness, or the base of nothingness, or the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, (or in dependence on the cessation of perception and feeling).<sup>50</sup>

*Jhāna Sutta at A. IV. 422-3.*

<sup>50</sup>The passage in parentheses is not found in the Siam Raṭṭha edition in Thai, but is found in other editions, for example the Burmese edition.

This sutta and three other suttas<sup>51</sup> describe the way to use each stage of concentrative attainment for reflection and to gain insight into the true nature of conditioned phenomena. The above sutta continues: {443}

When it is said, ‘I declare, O monks, that the destruction of the taints occurs in dependence on the first jhāna’, for what reason is this said? Here ... a monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna.... Whatever states are included there comprised by form, feeling, perception, volitional formations or consciousness: he views those states as impermanent, as subject to stress ... as empty, as nonself.<sup>52</sup> Having viewed them thus, his mind then turns away from those states and focuses upon the deathless element: ‘This is peaceful, this is sublime: that is ... Nibbāna.’ If he sustains (the first jhāna),<sup>53</sup> he attains the destruction of the taints; but if he does not attain the destruction of the taints because of delight in the Dhamma, then ... he is due to be spontaneously reborn [in the celestial realm *Suddhāvāsā*] and there attain final Nibbāna, without ever returning from that world.<sup>54</sup>

From here the sutta describes a similar process of cultivating insight to reach the destruction of the taints for each of the concentrative levels all the way up to the sphere of nothingness.<sup>55</sup>

The Mahāmālūṅkya Sutta has less detail but describes the contemplation of the three characteristics in reference to the five aggregates,

<sup>51</sup>Mahāmālūṅkya Sutta (M. I. 432-37), Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta (M. I. 349-53), and Dasama Sutta (A. V. 343-4); the latter two suttas are identical but with different names and origins.

<sup>52</sup>For the formless jhānas the word ‘form’ is removed since in these jhānas there is no contemplation of form; there is only contemplation of the four *nāma-khandha*: *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*.

<sup>53</sup>‘If he sustains (the first jhāna)’ is translated from the Pali: *so tattha ṭhito*. AA. IV. 196 explains this as: ‘If he sustains the first jhāna (or each of the successive jhānas), he develops strong insight and realizes arahantship.’ Another definition is: ‘He sustains insight with the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) as the objects of meditation’ (MA. III. 188). MA. III. 14 and AA. V. 85 explain this as: ‘He sustains *samatha* and *vipassanā*.’

<sup>54</sup>I.e., he or she is a non-returner (*anāgāmi*).

<sup>55</sup>Thus including the four fine-material jhānas and the first three immaterial jhānas.

in each of the jhānas up to the sphere of nothingness, resulting in the destruction of the taints. The Aṭṭhakanāgara and Dasama suttas have a slight variation:

A monk enters and abides in the first jhāna.... He considers this and understands it thus: ‘This first jhāna is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.’ Sustaining that [first jhāna], he attains the destruction of the taints.

In these suttas the liberations of mind through lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity are inserted between the fine-material jhānas and the formless jhānas, adding four more concentrative attainments for contemplation.

These four suttas contain essentially the same information; they differ only in minor details. They describe the development of insight in jhāna, from the first jhāna to the sphere of nothingness, ending in the destruction of the taints. The Jhāna Sutta, however, adds a summary:

Thus, monks, there is penetration to final knowledge (aññāpaṭivedha) as far as meditative attainments accompanied by perception (saññā-samāpatti) reach. {444}

A. IV. 426.

This means that in jhāna, from the sphere of nothingness and below, there is perception (along with other accompanying aggregates), which can be applied for contemplation and supports insight for the realization of the destruction of the taints. In the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), perception is too refined and cannot be applied for contemplation. This holds even more true in the extinction of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*). Therefore these two attainments are not ‘attainments accompanied by perception’ (*saññā-samāpatti*).

If this is so, how is it possible to attain the destruction of the taints while in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and in the extinction of perception and feeling? The answer is that one must first

exit these highest levels of concentrative attainment and then apply wisdom to contemplate conditioned phenomena and reach the destruction of the taints. The Anupada Sutta contains a passage concerning the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception:

Again, monks, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. He emerged mindful from that attainment. Having done so, he contemplated the past states, which had ceased and changed, thus: ‘So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.’

*M. III. 28.*

Compare this with the description of contemplating conditioned phenomena while in the sphere of nothingness (and while in lower jhānas), in which there is no mention of exiting the absorption. For example, in the above sutta it says:

Again, bhikkhus, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing,’ Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of nothingness. And the states in the base of nothingness – the perception of the base of nothingness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness; the zeal, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention – these states were known to him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ‘So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.’

The Cūḷaniddesa, a secondary text, explains the contemplation of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception in a similar way to the Majjhima-Nikāya above:

He entered upon and abided in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Having emerged from that attainment, he



regarded, examined, reflected on, and investigated the mind and the mental constituents arising in that attainment as impermanent ... subject to stress ... not-self ... not free.

*Nd. II. 23.*

An examination of the original text (Sn. 205-6), however, reveals that the phrase ‘base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception’ here is an error. It should read ‘sphere of nothingness’, as confirmed by the commentaries (NdA. 30; SnA. II. 593).

The secondary and later texts ordinarily describe the contemplation of conditioned phenomena and the development of insight after emerging from concentrative attainments, irrespective of how high or low these attainments are.

Similar explanations are given in reference to the extinction of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*): having emerged from this attainment, a person contemplates the fine-material qualities of this state, contemplates the qualities in the preceding state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, or contemplates all conditioned phenomena, to understand the truth and reach the destruction of the taints.<sup>56</sup>

In a similar fashion, one can contemplate conditioned phenomena or the mental constituents of *jhāna* after emerging from each of the *jhānas*, from the sphere of nothingness down to the first *jhāna*.<sup>57</sup> The passages above are provided, however, to prove that it is also possible to develop insight while abiding in these states of *jhāna*, without first emerging from them. Only with the two highest concentrative attainments – of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and the extinction of perception and feeling – must one first exit in order to develop insight.<sup>58</sup> {445}

<sup>56</sup>See: MA. IV. 91. For more information, see Appendix 2.

<sup>57</sup>‘Emerging from the *jhānas*’ here corresponds with the commentarial explanation of exiting the states of mind empowered by that specific attainment, i.e. one does not use *jhāna* as a foundation.

<sup>58</sup>On whether one can develop insight in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception see Appendix 3.

The commentaries refer to one who practises in this way as ‘one who uses tranquillity as a vehicle’ (*samatha-yānika*): such a practitioner practises tranquillity until reaching jhāna, at which point he or she develops insight. This is the first way of practice in a group of four, which is mentioned in the scriptures:

1. The practice of insight preceded by tranquillity  
(*samathapubbaṅgama-vipassanābhāvanā*).
2. The practice of tranquillity preceded by insight  
(*vipassanāpubbaṅgama-samathabhāvanā*).
3. The practice of tranquillity and insight in association  
(*yuganaddhasamatha-vipassanābhāvanā*).
4. The way of practice when the mind is distorted or misled by an excitement or agitation in regard to the Dhamma  
(*dhammuddhaccaviggahita-mānasa*).

Here one has the misapprehension that the intermediate results of one’s practice constitute path, fruit, and Nibbāna.<sup>59</sup>

These four ways of practice are a summary of the four pathways (*magga*) described by Ven. Ānanda:

Friends, whatever bhikkhu or bhikkhunī has declared the attainment of arahantship in my presence has done so by these four paths or by a certain one among them. What four?

Here, friends, a monk develops insight preceded by tranquillity. While he develops insight preceded by tranquillity, the path arises in him. He now pursues, develops and cultivates that path, and while he is doing so the fetters are abandoned and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

<sup>59</sup>The commentaries classify *dhammuddhacca* as ‘impurities of insight’ (*vipassanūpakilesa*): AA. III. 143; Vism. 634. The term *viggahita* is here translated as ‘excited and agitated’ in line with VismT.:  
Maggāmaggañānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā,  
Vipassanupakkilesakathāvaṇṇanā.

Again, friends, a monk develops tranquillity preceded by insight. While he develops tranquillity preceded by insight, the path arises in him. He now pursues, develops and cultivates that path ... and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

Again, friends, a monk develops tranquillity and insight in tandem. While he thus develops tranquillity and insight in tandem, the path arises in him. He now pursues, develops and cultivates that path ... and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

Or again, friends, a monk's mind is seized by agitation caused by higher states of mind. But there comes a time when his mind becomes internally steady, composed, unified, and concentrated. Then the path arises in him. He now pursues, develops and cultivates that path ... and the underlying tendencies are uprooted.

A. II. 157-8; Ps. II. 92; referred to at *VismT*:  
*Maggāmaggañānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*,  
*Vipassanupakkilesakathāvaṇṇanā*.

**Insight preceded by tranquillity:** the Paṭisambhidāmagga defines this thus: initially, the mind is one-pointed, steady and concentrated.<sup>60</sup> {446} This concentration can arise from any of these causes: the power of renunciation (*nekkhamma*); the power of a freedom from ill-will (*abyāpāda*); the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*), which combats drowsiness; an absence of restlessness (*avikkhepa*); reflection on aspects of Dhamma (*dhamma-vavatthāna*), which dispels doubt; knowledge (*ñāṇa*); joy (*pāmojja*);<sup>61</sup> the first jhāna; the second jhāna; the third jhāna; the fourth jhāna; the sphere of infinity of space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*); the sphere of infinity of consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*); the sphere of nothingness; the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; the ten *kaṣiṇa* meditations; meditation on the ten reflections (*anussati*); meditation on the ten stages of decay (*asubha*); and meditation on the thirty-two aspects of mindfulness of breathing.<sup>62</sup> Concentration is followed

<sup>60</sup>Ps. II. 93-6; cf.: Ps. I. 95, 175-6.

<sup>61</sup>The Paṭisambhidāmagga describes how these seven qualities, from renunciation to joy, are involved in the arising of access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) for pure insight practitioners (*sukkha-vipassaka*): PsA. I. 310; cf.: PsA. I. 68, 103.

<sup>62</sup>It would be enough to simply mention the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, since this is the highest jhāna. This long list is presented to show the

by wisdom, which discerns all the attributes of the different stages of concentration as impermanent, subject to stress (*dukkha*), and nonself.

The commentaries present a simpler explanation for this first way of practice: a person first develops concentration (either access concentration or attainment concentration). He then reflects on that level of concentration, along with accompanying mental factors, as impermanent, etc., until there is noble path-attainment (*ariya-magga*).<sup>63</sup>

**Tranquillity preceded by insight:** the Paṭisambhidāmagga explains:<sup>64</sup> initially, a person uses insight to see things as impermanent, subject to stress, and nonself. Then, he ‘lets go’ of all the qualities manifest during insight meditation, and this ‘letting go’ becomes the new object of meditation. The mind then becomes one-pointed and concentrated.

The commentaries elaborate: a person has not yet generated tranquillity, but he or she discerns the universal characteristics (impermanence, etc.) in the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*). When insight (*vipassanā*) is complete, ‘letting go’ of all factors of insight becomes the object of meditation and the mind becomes one-pointed and concentrated. This leads to path attainment. (See Note 8.7) {447}

The commentaries say that whichever of these two ways of practice a person follows (tranquillity preceded by insight or insight preceded by tranquillity), tranquillity and insight must always arise side by side at the moment of noble path attainment.<sup>65</sup> This is so because *samatha* and *vipassanā* are essentially equivalent to the eight factors of the Noble Path:

distinction between states of mind that are attained (from the first jhāna to the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception) and ways of practice to reach these attainments (cf.: PsA. I. 312).

<sup>63</sup> See: MA. I. 108; NdA. II. 313.

<sup>64</sup> Ps. II. 96.

<sup>65</sup> MA. I. 108; Vism. 682. PsA. I. 281 states that tranquillity and insight are mutually supportive both at the time of aspiring to the Noble Path and at the moment of attaining the Path. AA. II. 184 states that tranquillity and insight act as a pair at path attainment and at fruition attainment. Cf.: Ps. I. 70; PsA. I. 287; UdA. 397; ItA. II. 29.

## NOTE 8.7: TRANQUILLITY OR INSIGHT

See: MA. I. 108; NdA. II. 313; AA. III. 143; ItA. I. 54. A. II. 92-4 mentions those who have tranquillity but no insight and those who have insight but no tranquillity. These attainments are called *ceto-samatha* and *adhipaññādharmā-vipassanā*, respectively.

AA. III. 116 explains these as:

1. attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), and
2. insight contemplating conditioned phenomena.

This passage from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* reveals that gaining insight does not inevitably give rise to tranquillity, or as the commentaries say: although one gains insight, one may not reach the desired level of concentration, i.e. *jhāna*. One is encouraged in this case to make more effort practising *samatha*.

This passage also reveals the encouragement to practise tranquillity and insight as a pair, in order to eliminate the taints at a later stage. Cf.: A. V. 99; A. IV. 360-1; the identical passage occurs at: Pug. 7-8, 61-2. The *Abhidhamma* gives a lofty definition of these terms, explaining *ceto-samatha* as the fine-material and immaterial attainments, and *adhipaññādharmā-vipassanā* as path and fruit (PañcA. 244). From this explanation, one who attains tranquillity but not insight is an unenlightened person who has attained the eight *jhānas*, while someone who attains insight but not tranquillity is a noble disciple who is a pure-insight practitioner. Someone who has attained neither is an ordinary, unawakened person.

*vipassanā* equals right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and *samatha* comprises all the remaining six factors. These eight factors arise naturally together at the moment of attaining the ‘noble realm’ (*ariya-bhūmi*). (See Note 8.8)

**Tranquillity and insight in tandem:** the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* explains:<sup>66</sup> a person develops tranquillity and insight in tandem, in sixteen ways. One of these ways is that the practice of *samatha* and the practice of *vipassanā* lead to an identical object of meditation (*ārammaṇa*). For example, when one abandons restlessness (*uddhacca*), the mind becomes concentrated and ‘cessation’ (*nirodha*) becomes the object of awareness.

<sup>66</sup>Ps. II. 97-100.

## NOTE 8.8: PATH KNOWLEDGE

*Samatha*, *vipassanā* and the factors of the Path, see: PsA. I. 195; VbhA. 120; VismṬ.: Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Ekavidhādivinichayakathāvaṇṇanā.

The eight factors of the Path arising simultaneously at the moment of ‘path-knowledge’ (*magga-ñāṇa*), see: PsA. I. 195; VbhA. 120; Vism. 680; MA. II. 363.

In fact, the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyadhamma*) arise simultaneously in the mind at the moment of ‘path-knowledge’. Note that this interpretation of the factors of the path or of enlightenment arising simultaneously comes from the Abhidhamma, which states that the thirty-seven factors are mental constituents (*cetasika*) arising in a single mind moment. The number of path factors or enlightenment factors present at the moment of ‘path-knowledge’ can also be reduced, depending on the kind of knowledge accompanying that particular stage of the path (see: PsA. I. 193; DhsA. 228; Vism. 666-7; DA. III. 804; CompṬ.: Cittaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Vitthāragāṇanavaṇṇanā).

(At the same time), by abandoning ignorance, insight arises and ‘cessation’ becomes the object of awareness. In this way, tranquillity and insight work together on an equal basis.

Some commentarial passages claim that although there is cooperation between tranquillity and insight, this does not mean that *samatha* and *vipassanā* arise simultaneously, since it is not possible to contemplate conditioned phenomena while the mind is one-pointed in *jhāna*.<sup>67</sup> These passages state that these two ways of meditation act as a pair in so far that insight follows on from a person’s level of concentrative attainment, and equally the next level of concentrative attainment relies on one’s previous level of insight. A person enters first *jhāna*, exits first *jhāna*, contemplates the conditioned nature of first *jhāna*, enters second *jhāna*, exits second *jhāna*, contemplates the conditioned nature of second *jhāna*, enters third *jhāna*, etc., until he exits from and contemplates the conditioned nature of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.<sup>68</sup> An important example of this explanation is the account of Ven. Sāriputta, who

<sup>67</sup> For more on this subject see Appendix 2.

<sup>68</sup> AA. III. 143.

developed tranquillity and insight in tandem, from the first jhāna to the attainment of path and fruit (of arahantship).<sup>69</sup>

**The way of practice when the mind is misled by higher states of mind:** the Paṭisambhidāmagga explains:<sup>70</sup> when a person reflects on the three characteristics in reference to the five aggregates, the following mind states may arise: radiance (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāṇa*), bliss (*pīti*), serenity (*passaddhi*), joy (*sukha*), determination (*adhimokkha*), balanced effort (*paggāha*), careful attention (*upaṭṭhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and devotion (*nikanti*). The practitioner here believes that the radiance, for example, is a higher state of mind: he believes he has attained path, fruit or Nibbāna. {448} Thinking in this way causes restlessness and these ten states of mind are not seen as they really are, as impermanent, subject to stress, and not-self. Wise discernment of these ten mind states causing the mind to waver leads to a settled, clear and concentrated mind. With this wisdom, one is not carried away by these mind states. The heart will be pure and still and one's meditation will neither be misguided nor impaired. The path can subsequently arise.

The commentaries refer to these higher states of mind as the ten 'impurities of insight' (*vipassanūpakilesa*, see Note 8.9), which arise in people whose insight practice is still weak (*taruṇa-vipassanā*). Because these qualities are exceptional and have not been experienced before, practitioners are likely to believe they have attained path and fruit. This misunderstanding leads them to deviate from the way of insight; they abandon their meditation practice while delighting in these states of mind. The correct way of practice is to recognize the true nature of these mental states when they arise: that they are impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*), and subject to decline. They do not belong to us; they are not who we are ('I am not this; this is not mine'). By not being overly excited by these mental states, attachment to them wanes. A person is then able to practise correctly until reaching path and fruit.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup>MA. IV. 90; in reference to: M. III. 25-9.

<sup>70</sup>Ps. II. 101-102.

<sup>71</sup>For more detail, see: Vism. 633-8; AA. III. 143; NdA. 106; VinṬ.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.:

## NOTE 8.9: THE TEN IMPURITIES OF INSIGHT

The ten ‘impurities of insight’, (*vipassanūpakilesa*):

1. *obhāsa*: a beautiful radiance previously unknown;
2. *ñāṇa*: a penetrating knowledge; a feeling that one can contemplate everything without obstruction;
3. *pīti*: bliss; thorough contentment;
4. *passaddhi*: serenity; the mind and body feel exceedingly tranquil, light, agile and bright; an absence of agitation, heaviness and discomfort;
5. *sukha*: an exceptional, refined happiness pervades the body and mind;
6. *adhimokkha*: a tremendous faith that accompanies insight and fills the mind with joy;
7. *paggāha*: balanced effort; a state of being neither too strict nor too lax;
8. *upaṭṭhāna*: clear, well-established mindfulness; an ability to recollect with dexterity and fluency;
9. *upekkhā*: equanimity in relation to all conditioned phenomena;
10. *nikanti*: a profound and peaceful satisfaction, which creates an attachment to insight; this is a subtle form of craving (*taṇhā*), which the practitioner is unable to discern.

*Vism.* 633-7; *VismṬ.*: *Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*,  
*Vipassanupakkilesakathāvaṇṇanā*.

According to the commentaries, there are two principal ways of practice: insight preceded by tranquillity and tranquillity preceded by insight. The remaining two ways of practice are simply extensions of these former two. The third way of practice, of tranquillity and insight in tandem, is a subdivision of the first way of practice. The fourth way of practice is applied in special circumstances, when specific problems arise by practising the first three ways. It is a strategy for solving these problems arising in practice. {449}

*Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*,

*Vipassanupakkilesakathāvaṇṇanā*; see also the second part of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā*, on the section including the *yuganaddha-gathā* (Burmese or Roman alphabet editions – Thai edition has not yet been published).



These two principal ways of practice are probably the origin of the two meditation techniques enumerated in the commentaries: the ‘vehicle of tranquillity’ (*samatha-yāna*) of the *samatha-yānika* (‘one who uses tranquillity as a vehicle’) and the ‘vehicle of insight’ (*vipassanā-yāna*) of the *vipassanā-yānika* (‘one who uses insight as a vehicle’). The *samatha-yānika* practises tranquillity first and insight later. Generally speaking, this tranquillity can simply be ‘access concentration’ (*upacāra-samādhi*) or it can refer to ‘attainment concentration’ (*appanā-samādhi*) of the *jhānas*.<sup>72</sup> The commentaries prefer the more restricted meaning, for someone who has attained the *jhānas*.<sup>73</sup> They claim that the way of practice described by the Buddha, quoted at the beginning of this section (i.e. that the destruction of the taints occurs in dependence on the first *jhāna*, etc.), belongs to the *samatha-yānika*.

A *vipassanā-yānika* is also called a *suddhavipassanā-yānika* – ‘one who practises pure insight as a vehicle’. This refers to those who develop insight without having previously developed concentration. When they have correctly contemplated the true nature of things, the mind becomes peaceful and concentration arises automatically. At first, the concentration may be ‘momentary’ (*khaṇika-samādhi*), which is the lowest level of concentration required for subsequent insight practice, as confirmed by this passage:

Without momentary concentration, insight cannot function.<sup>74</sup>

*VismṬ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Nidānādikathāvaṇṇanā*

Someone who begins with temporary concentration and then practises insight is also classified as a *vipassanā-yānika*, because most everyone experiences temporary concentration when the mind is settled in an activity or due to a conducive environment. As concentration becomes naturally stronger through insight practice, it may develop into ‘access concentration’ (*upacāra-samādhi*): concentration on the verge of *jhāna*.

<sup>72</sup>E.g.: *VismṬ.: Diṭṭhivisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Nāmarūpapariggahakathāvaṇṇanā*.

<sup>73</sup>E.g.: *Vism.* 588.

<sup>74</sup>Cf.: *VinA.* II. 433; *Vism.* 289; *VismṬ.: Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā, Ānāpānassatikathāvaṇṇanā*.

(See Note 8.10) Finally, at the moment of realizing path and fruit, concentration is well-established as ‘attainment concentration’ (See Note 8.11), and one reaches at least the first jhāna.<sup>75</sup> This accords with the principle mentioned earlier, that a person realizing the ‘noble realm’ must be accomplished in both tranquillity and insight. {450}

When those who use tranquillity as a vehicle attain arahantship, they are divided into two kinds: those liberated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*) and those liberated both ways (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*). The former are those who have attained jhāna not higher than the fourth jhāna. The latter are those who have attained a formless jhāna or higher, up to the extinction of perception and feeling. Those who use insight as a vehicle and who attain arahantship are all classified as *paññā-vimutta*, and the commentaries assign a special name for them: *sukkha-vipassaka* (‘dry insight practitioners’, see Note 8.12). The commentaries divide the arahants into ten kinds, listed from the highest to the lowest:<sup>76</sup>

**A. Those Liberated Both Ways (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*):** (See Note 8.13)

1. Liberated in both ways and accomplished in the extinction of perception and feeling.
2. Liberated in both ways and accomplished in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.
3. Liberated in both ways and accomplished in the sphere of nothingness.
4. Liberated in both ways and accomplished in the sphere of infinite consciousness.
5. Liberated in both ways and accomplished in the sphere of infinite space.

<sup>75</sup>PsA. I. 194; DhsA. 213, 228, 230; Vism. 666-7, 699-700. The commentaries claim this attainment of jhāna remains for one mind moment. Thereafter, an enlightened person can regularly enter *phala-samāpatti* (in that particular jhāna) at will, and enjoy ‘noble, transcendent bliss’ (*ariyalokuttara-sukha*), abiding at ease in the present (Vism. 700-701). The moment of realizing path and fruit: see Appendix 4.

<sup>76</sup>DA. II. 512; DA. III. 889; MA. III. 188; PañcA. 190.

## NOTE 8.10: INSIGHT WITHOUT JHĀNA

VismṬ. (Paṭipadāññadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārupekkhāññakathāvaṇṇanā) describes those *suddhaviṇṇaṇa*-yānika without jhāna, which means they achieve temporary or access concentration.

*Samatha*-yānika and *vipassanā*-yānika can be matched with the *appanā-kammaṭṭhāna* and *upacāra-kammaṭṭhāna* in the cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): DA. III. 754 = MA. I. 239 = VibA. 215 correspond with DA. III. 805 = MA. I. 301. See also: AA. III. 230; ItA. I. 169; SnA. II. 504; Vism. 371, 587; VismṬ.: Dīṭṭhivissuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Nāmarūpapariṇiggaṇakathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Paṭipadāññadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārupekkhāññakathāvaṇṇanā.

As evidence that it is possible to practise insight without having first attained jhāna, see the Buddha's definition of the faculty of concentration (*samādhindriya*): S. V. 200 (cf.: S. V. 198-9).

## NOTE 8.11: KINDS OF CONCENTRATION

This group of three kinds of concentration (*khaṇika*, *upacāra* and *appanā*) comes from the sub-commentaries (found as a complete set at: NdA. I. 129; PsA. I. 183; DhsA. 117; Vism. 144). Occasionally, they appear as a pair (*upacāra* and *appanā*): Vism. 85, 126, 371. Sometimes they are referred to as *upacāra-jhāna* and *appanā-jhāna* (e.g.: SnA. II. 504; DhsA. 278; VismṬ.: Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddesavaṇṇanā, Samādhicattukavaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Pathavikasiṇaniddesavaṇṇanā, Bhāvanāvidhānavaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Paññābhāvanānisaṁsaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā).

Although the word *appanā* appears in the Pali Canon, it is only used as a synonym for *vitakka* and *sammā-saṅkappa* (Dhs. 10, 12, 63; Vbh. 86, 237, 257). For a further analysis of these kinds of *samādhi* see the section on right concentration in chapter 18 of *Buddhadhamma*.

## NOTE 8.12: DRY INSIGHT PRACTITIONERS

The terms *samatha-yānika*, *vipassanā-yānika*, *suddhavipassanā-yānika* and *sukkha-vipassaka* (those whose realization is ‘arid’ because they do not attain jhāna before developing insight) all come from the commentaries.

*Samatha-yānika*, *vipassanā-yānika* and *suddhavipassanā-yānika* together at: DA. III. 754; MA. I. 239; NdA. 102; [VbhA. 280]; Vism. 587-9; VismT.: *Diṭṭhivisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Nāmarūpapariggahakathāvaṇṇanā*; *samatha-yānika* and *sukkha-vipassaka* at AA. III. 142; KhA. 178, 183; SnA. I. 277, [2/448]; NdA. II. 313; *samatha-yānika* on its own at: VismT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, *Nidānādikathāvaṇṇanā*; *sukkha-vipassaka* on its own at: DA. III. 1032; PsA. I. 194; DhsA. 228; Vism. 666; VismT.: *Paṭipadāñānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Saṅkhārupekkhāñānakathāvaṇṇanā*; CompT.: *Cittaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Vitthāragāṇanavaṇṇanā*; CompT.: *Manodvāravithi*, *Appanājavānavāraṇṇanā*; CompT.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Kammacatukkavaṇṇanā*.

## NOTE 8.13: LIBERATED BOTH WAYS

See the earlier section on the seven noble beings. The first of these *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* listed here, who have attained the extinction of perception and feeling, only reach this highest concentrative attainment as non-returners. This is unlike the other attainments, which are achievable at any stage of practice.

The other eight attainments are exclusively the fruit of *samatha*, while the extinction of perception and feeling is the fruit of *samatha* and *vipassanā* in association. In particular, the extinction of perception and feeling requires an optimum strength and purity of concentration, with no trace of sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*) remaining in the mind. *Kāma-chanda* is synonymous with *kāma-rāga* (sensual lust), a ‘fetter’ (*sarīyojana*) which only non-returners and arahants have abandoned. Therefore, only non-returners and arahants who have previously attained the eight jhānas can enter the extinction of perception and feeling (e.g.: Vism. 702-5; PsA. I. 314).

**B. Those Liberated by Wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*):**

6. Liberated through wisdom and accomplished in the fourth jhāna.
7. Liberated through wisdom and accomplished in the third jhāna.
8. Liberated through wisdom and accomplished in the second jhāna.
9. Liberated through wisdom and accomplished in the first jhāna.
10. Liberated through wisdom as a ‘dry insight practitioner’.

The first nine kinds of arahants use tranquillity as a vehicle; their concentrative accomplishments occur before practising insight. The tenth kind of arahant uses insight as a vehicle. {451}

#### 8.4 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF TRANQUILLITY MEDITATION

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Passages in the Tipiṭaka describing particular ways of practice use rather fixed terminology, even though these passages appear in different locations. There are two main outlines for the way of practice in which tranquillity precedes insight, and they both involve reaching a superior level of concentration before developing insight. This can be called the supreme way of practice. The following examples of these two main outlines are drawn from passages recording the Buddha’s awakening:

**A. OUTLINE #1**

This common description describes the four jhānas followed by the threefold knowledge (*vijjā*):

So too, Aggivessana, [when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength], quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna ... the second jhāna ... the third jhāna ... the fourth jhāna.

When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection (upakkilesa), malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives.... [This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose.]

When my concentrated mind was thus purified ... I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.... [This was the second true knowledge attained by me in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was banished ... light arose.]

When my concentrated mind was thus purified ... I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: ‘This is suffering’, ‘this is the origin of suffering’, ‘this is the cessation of suffering’, ‘this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’.... ‘These are the taints’, ‘this is the origin of the taints’, ‘this is the cessation of the taints’, ‘this is the way leading to the cessation of the taints’.

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of becoming, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: ‘It is liberated.’ I directly knew: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.’

[This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was banished ... light arose.]<sup>77</sup>

M. I. 247-9.

When this description is used to describe the practice of realization for disciples of the Buddha, the terminology is usually the same except for the

<sup>77</sup> Also found at many other places, e.g.: Vin. III. 3-4; M. I. 21-2; M. II. 93, 212; A. IV. 176. The passage in parentheses (‘when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength’) is sometimes replaced with: *I was resolute, full of energy, active, with mindfulness established, not forgetful, tranquil within the body, unperturbed, collected and composed in mind.*

passages in brackets.<sup>78</sup> {452} Some passages describe directing the mind to the eight kinds of knowledge rather than just the three mentioned above,<sup>79</sup> while other passages only mention directing the mind to the final knowledge, of destruction of the taints.<sup>80</sup>

## B. OUTLINE #2

A less common description describes the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*) in addition to the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*), followed by the knowledge of the destruction of the taints:

So too, Ānanda, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered and dwelled in the first *jhāna* ... but as I was dwelling in this state, mental application accompanied by perception (*saññā-manasikāra*) associated with sensuality disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment (*ābādha*). Then it occurred to me: ‘With the subsiding of applied and sustained thought, let me enter and dwell in the second *jhāna*.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the second *jhāna* ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with applied thought disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ... ‘Let me enter and dwell in the third *jhāna*.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the third *jhāna* ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with rapture disturbed my mind, which was

<sup>78</sup>E.g.: M. I. 181-2, 276, 347, 412-3, 440-41, 521-2; M. II. 38; A. I. 163, 166-7; A. II. 210-1. Most of these passages describe the practice from ordination as a monk to the realization of arahantship.

<sup>79</sup>D. I. 73-85. The eight kinds of knowledge: 1. *ñāṇa-dassana* (DA. I. 220 says this equals *vipassanā-ñāṇa*); 2. *manomayābhiniṃmāna* (= *manomayiddhi* – to create a psychically formed body); 3. *iddhi-vidhā* (to perform psychic powers); 4. *dibbasota* (‘divine ear’); 5. *cetopariya-ñāṇa* (telepathy); 6. recollection of past lives; 7. knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings; 8. knowledge of the destruction of the taints.

<sup>80</sup>A. III. 91, 100.

for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ... ‘Let me enter and dwell in the fourth jhāna.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the fourth jhāna ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with equanimity disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ‘With the complete surmounting of perceptions of form ... let me enter and dwell in the base of infinite space.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the base of infinite space ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with physical form disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ‘With the complete surmounting of the base of infinite space ... let me enter and dwell in the base of infinite consciousness.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the base of infinite consciousness ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with the base of infinite space disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ‘By completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness ... let me enter and dwell in the base of nothingness.’

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the base of nothingness ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with the base of infinite consciousness disturbed my mind, which was for me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ‘By completely surmounting the base of nothingness ... let me enter and dwell in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.’ {453}

Then [on a later occasion] I entered and dwelled in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception ... but as I dwelled in this state, mental application accompanied by perception associated with the base of nothingness disturbed my mind, which was for



me an impediment. Then it occurred to me: ‘By completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception ... let me attain the extinction of perception and feeling.’

Then [on a later occasion] having seen the danger in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception ... I attained the extinction of perception and feeling, and by seeing with wisdom the taints were completely destroyed.

So long, Ānanda, as I did not attain and emerge from these nine gradual abidings, in both direct and reverse order, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when I attained and emerged from these nine gradual abidings, in both direct and reverse order, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its ... devas and humans.

The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakeable is my liberation of mind; this is my last birth; now there is no more renewed existence.’

A. IV. 439-48.

When this second outline of the gradual path to enlightenment is used in a general sense for disciples, it follows the same terminology but without the detailed analysis:

When that monk abandons these five hindrances ... quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters upon and abides in the first jhāna ... second jhāna ... third jhāna ... fourth jhāna ... the base of infinite space ... the base of infinite consciousness ... the base of nothingness ... the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception ... enters and abides in the extinction of perception and feeling. And having seen with wisdom, his taints are utterly destroyed.<sup>81</sup>

A. IV. 437-8.

<sup>81</sup> Also found at A. IV. 409-456; M. I. 159-60, 174, 203-204, 208; Nd. II. 44; cf.: M. III. 25.

The reason for selecting two passages describing the Buddha's enlightenment as examples for the two outlines of practice is to show how these two ways of practice are essentially the same, despite appearing different. They both describe the enlightenment of a single Buddha, and this enlightenment occurred only once.

Scholars may be confused by or misunderstand these two outlines of practice, by interpreting each description too literally and overlooking evidence from other sources that reveal their compatibility. There are five main misunderstandings about these two outlines of practice:

1. The belief that it is necessary to attain the first two kinds of knowledge (recollection of past lives and the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings) before one is able to reach awakening.
2. The belief that the fourth fine-material *jhāna* is an adequate basis for reaching the threefold knowledge (*vijjā*) and the six kinds of 'higher psychic attainments' (*abhiññā*).
3. The belief that it is possible to reach enlightenment while abiding in the extinction of perception and feeling. {454}
4. The belief that these two outlines indicate two distinct ways of practice to awakening.
5. The belief that the gradual attainments described in these outlines occur in a single period of time.<sup>82</sup>

Let us look more closely at these misunderstandings:

<sup>82</sup>These five misunderstandings occur easily and many scholars are guilty of making these mistakes. One remarkable misunderstanding is that of Mr. Kalupahana, who claims that these two formulas refer to distinct ways of practice that branch off after a person has attained the fourth *jhāna*. He says the second way of practice, from the base of infinite space to the extinction of perception and feeling, is equivalent to *cetovimutti*, while the first way of practice, i.e. the threefold knowledge (or even the six *abhiññā*), is equivalent to *paññā-vimutti*. He then goes on to say these two ways of practice lead to *aññā* – enlightenment. (This is an example of misunderstanding #4, but also includes the first two misunderstandings.) See: David J. Kalupahana, 'Causality: the Central Philosophy of Buddhism' (Honolulu: the University Press of Hawaii, 1975), pp. 181-2.

**A.** Evidence that it is not necessary to attain the recollection of past lives or the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings in order to attain arahantship or realize Nibbāna is clear:

1. In some examples of the first outline there is no mention of the first two kinds of knowledge: a person attains the fourth jhāna and directs the concentrated mind directly to the destruction of the taints.<sup>83</sup> These examples show that the two former kinds of knowledge are optional.
2. In the *Susīma Sutta*, the Buddha describes arahants liberated by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*), who are not attached to the five aggregates and discern Dependent Origination, and yet are unable to perform psychic powers: they do not have the divine ear, telepathy, recollection of past lives, the divine eye (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*), nor do they dwell in ‘peaceful deliverances’ (*santa-vimokkha* = formless attainments). They only possess the knowledge of the destruction of the taints; they do not possess the five mundane kinds of ‘supreme knowledge’ (*abhiññā*) nor have they accessed the formless jhānas.<sup>84</sup>
3. The attainment of the six *abhiññā* (including the three *vijjā*) depends on a certain degree of refined concentration. With sufficient concentration a person is able to direct the mind to generate a desired kind of *abhiññā*; it is not necessary to attain one kind of ‘supreme knowledge’ before attaining another:

That concentration has attained to full tranquillity and achieved mental unification.... Then, to whatever mental state realizable by direct knowledge (*abhiññāsacchikaraṇīya-dhamma*) he directs his mind, he achieves the capacity of realizing that state by direct knowledge, whenever the necessary conditions obtain.

<sup>83</sup> A. III. 89, 93-4 (already referred to); M. III. 36-7; cf.: A. II. 151.

<sup>84</sup> S. II. 120-27.

If he wishes: ‘May I wield the various kinds of psychic power... may I hear both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human ... may I understand the minds of other beings ... may I recollect my manifold past lives ... may I see beings passing away and being reborn ... may I in this very life enter and dwell in the taintless liberation of mind ... he achieves the capacity of realizing that state by direct knowledge, whenever the necessary conditions obtain. {455}

A. I. 254; A. III. 16-7, 25, 82-3; A. IV. 421; M. III. 97.

The required level of concentration to reach these attainments is as follows:

**B.** The concentration (*samādhi*) of the fourth *jhāna* is the highest form of concentration. Even the concentration of the formless *jhānas* is classified as the concentration of the fourth *jhāna*,<sup>85</sup> since the mental factors of the formless *jhānas* consist of the same two factors of the fourth *jhāna*: equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).<sup>86</sup> The concentration of the fourth *jhāna* is universally applicable: it can be used, for example, as a basis for insight, for ‘supreme knowledge’ (*abhiññā*), or for the ‘attainment of extinction’.<sup>87</sup> There is, however, a special clause: the concentration of the formless *jhānas* is more refined and further from adverse conditions (*paccanīka-dhamma*) than the concentration of the fourth *jhāna*.<sup>88</sup> Even the different formless *jhānas* become progressively more refined.<sup>89</sup> It is for this reason that those who attain arahantship after attaining the fourth *jhāna* are classified as ‘liberated by wisdom’ (*paññāvimutta*), not as ‘liberated in both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*). To be classified as ‘liberated in both ways’ one must have previously attained one of the formless *jhānas*.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, there is a proviso to the commentarial statement that the fourth *jhāna* is used as a basis for other

<sup>85</sup> Dhs. 55-6; DA. II. 387, 514; VinṬ.: Catutthapārājikaṃ, Vinītavatthuvaṇṇanā.

<sup>86</sup> E.g.: Vism. 325, 338-9; VismṬ.: Āruppaniddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭhamāruppavaṇṇanā.

<sup>87</sup> See: AA. II. 100.

<sup>88</sup> DA. II. 514; VinṬ.: Catutthapārājikaṃ, Vinītavatthuvaṇṇanā.

<sup>89</sup> See: Vism. 336-7; VinṬ.: Dutiyapārājikaṃ, Dhaniyavatthuvaṇṇanā.

<sup>90</sup> E.g.: M. I. 477-8; Pug. 72; DA. II. 514; DA. III. 889; MA. III. 188; PañcA. 190; see the reasons for this at: DA. II. 514 (all of these references have been previously referred to).

attainments: in some cases the concentration of ordinary fourth jhāna is used, while in other cases the more refined concentration of fourth jhāna (of the formless jhānas) is required.

As mentioned earlier, literally speaking, persons ‘liberated by wisdom’ (*paññā-vimutta*) have only attained the knowledge of the destruction of the taints; they have not attained other forms of knowledge (*vijjā* or *abhiññā*), nor have they attained the formless jhānas. Attainment of the three *vijjā* or the six *abhiññā* is the domain of ‘one liberated in both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*), who has also attained formless jhāna.<sup>91</sup> This is the standard definition as found in the Pali Canon.

The commentaries offer a more elaborate definition, which can be summarized as follows: at first, a person practises tranquillity meditation until attaining the fourth jhāna; this is followed by the attainments of all eight jhānas. These attainments, however, must be a result of practising the eight *kaṣiṇa* meditations (excluding the meditations on light and space).<sup>92</sup> Having gained fluency in the eight attainments, the mind becomes receptive.<sup>93</sup> At this point a person only needs to enter the fourth jhāna, and then directs the mind to generate or apply one of the *abhiññā*, according to his wishes.<sup>94</sup> {456} As preparation a person must access the eight attainments, but at the time of achieving a ‘supreme attainment’ (*abhiññā*), accessing the fourth jhāna is sufficient. Due to the previous cultivation of the eight jhānas, a person’s concentration in this

<sup>91</sup>Note that there are *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* who have not attained all three *vijjā* or all six *abhiññā* (i.e. they have not attained the mundane *vijjā* and *abhiññā*); see: S. I. 191; VismṬ.: Paññābhāvanānīsaṃsaṇḍesavaṇṇanā, Āhuneyyabhāvādisiddhi-kathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>92</sup>VismṬ.: Iddhividhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Abhiññākathāvaṇṇanā explains that formless jhāna cannot be achieved by meditation on space. And although meditation on light is conducive to attaining the ‘divine eye’, in this context it is equivalent to meditation on the colour white (*odāta*) and therefore does not need to be distinguished. In the commentaries, a person who attains the formless jhānas must attain fourth jhāna as a result of meditating on one of nine *kaṣiṇa*, excluding the meditation on space (see: Vism. 326).

<sup>93</sup>Vism. 370-5; VismṬ.: Iddhividhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Dasa-iddhikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>94</sup>E.g.: Vism. 382-5, 404-5, 410-11, 427-8; VismṬ.: Iddhividhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Dasa-iddhikathāvaṇṇanā.

case will be more refined than the concentration of someone who has never attained a level higher than the fourth jhāna.

From the angle of this commentarial explanation, one can say that the fourth jhāna is a basis for ‘supreme knowledge’ (*abhiññā*). This conforms to the statement that the mind possessing eight factors, by developing the concentration of the fourth jhāna to the degree of the formless attainments, is ‘suitable for application’; it is a basis, or ‘proximate cause’ (*padatṭhāna*), for realizing any state that may be realized by direct knowledge.<sup>95</sup> Exceptions to this rule are those who have a strong ‘previous connection’ (*pubba-yoga*): those who have made effort and accumulated virtue in the past, for instance the Buddha, the ‘silent’ Buddhas (*pacceka-buddha*) and the chief disciples. They need not follow this procedure and become proficient in the formless jhānas; they simply need to be skilled in the fourth jhāna to achieve *abhiññā*.<sup>96</sup>

The two passages above describing the Buddha’s awakening are compatible with this interpretation, even if they do not mention a ‘previous connection’. In the first passage the Buddha accesses the fourth jhāna and then directs the mind to realize the three *vijjā*. Earlier in his life he had established a strong foundation in *samatha* and attained the eight jhānas while living with the teachers Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta.<sup>97</sup> The second passage reveals that the Buddha developed proficiency in all levels of concentrative absorptions before his enlightenment.

C. Passages describing the extinction of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) can easily lead inexperienced readers to the false conclusion that a person who has attained this state reaches arahantship while abiding in this attainment:

<sup>95</sup> Vism. 376-8. The eight factors: the mind is: (1) concentrated; (2) purified; (3) bright; (4) unblemished; (5) rid of defilement; (6) malleable; (7) wieldy; and (8) steady; attained to imperturbability. [Trans.: see the above quotation describing the four jhānas followed by the threefold knowledge (*vijjā*), under the first main outline for the way of practice in which tranquillity precedes insight.]

<sup>96</sup> Vism. 373-6; VismṬ.: Iddhividhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Abhiññākathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>97</sup> E.g.: M. I. 163-6, 240.

By completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception he enters and abides in the extinction of perception and feeling; and having seen with wisdom, his taints are completely destroyed.

A. IV. 437-8.

This passage lists the sequence of practice and realization but does not include the circumstances or intermediate details. The reader should see this as a list of stages, not as the description of a single event. Compare it with a passage from the Pali Canon that provides more detail:

By completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception a monk enters and abides in the extinction of perception and feeling. When a monk both attains to and emerges from that attainment, his mind becomes subtle and pliant; and with his mind subtle and pliant, immeasurable concentration has been well-developed by him. {457}

With this immeasurable concentration that is well-developed, he directs his mind to whatever mental state is realizable by direct knowledge, and he attains the ability to witness these states whenever the necessary conditions obtain. If he wishes: ‘May I wield the various kinds of psychic power ... may I hear both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human ... may I in this very life enter and dwell in the taintless liberation of mind ... he achieves the capacity of realizing that state by direct knowledge, whenever the necessary conditions obtain.

A. IV. 421; cf.: D. II. 71.

In the second passage the ‘entering upon the extinction of perception and feeling’ and the ‘destruction of the taints’ are separated. The attainment of *saññāvedayita-nirodha* is a supportive condition, bestowing a suitable level of concentration to the mind. Afterwards, ‘by seeing with wisdom’ a person dwells in the taintless liberation of mind. These passages corroborate the fact that the two earlier outlines (for the way of practice in which tranquillity precedes insight) have essentially the same meaning.

**D.** As can be seen from the previous three points addressing various misunderstandings, the two main outlines describe a single way of practice from different angles. The first outline emphasizes the practice and highest realization that results from applying well-developed concentration to accomplish ‘supreme knowledge’ and insight. The second outline describes intermediary stages of tranquillity meditation along with the true purpose of tranquillity: the final stage of insight. In this sense, the previous three points have already addressed the misunderstanding that the two formulas describe two distinct ways of practice.

**E.** Points two and three have already touched upon the subject of time in reference to practice and realization. In the first outline, the Buddha’s gradual attainment of the three *vijjā* occurs in the three ‘watches’ of a single night. But in the case of other practitioners, the attainment of each *vijjā* or each *abhiññā* can happen either in quick succession or separated by months or years.<sup>98</sup>

The second outline describing the Buddha’s concentrative attainments clearly indicates that a period of time elapses between each attainment. Examples of the same outline describing the attainments of other practitioners, however, do not mention time, which can give the impression that these attainments occur during a single time period. In fact, there is no uniform period of time that these attainments occur – it will vary from person to person.<sup>99</sup> The two outlines merely describe the different levels of attainment – they do not necessarily define the time involved. {458}

<sup>98</sup>If one follows the outline described in the *Visuddhimagga* (pp. 385-428), the attainment of each stage takes a long time. Ven. Anuruddha attained arahantship long after attaining the ‘divine eye’ (see: A. I. 281-2; AA. I. 191). Ven. Mahānāga Thera attained arahantship sixty years after attaining psychic powers (*Vism.* 634-5).

<sup>99</sup>Once one has accessed a higher concentrative attainment one is able to enter previous (lower) attainments up to that higher attainment in a sequential, connected way. If one has attained the highest concentrative attainment one can enter all attainments, from beginning to end, successively: e.g. one enters first *jhāna*, exits first *jhāna*, enters second *jhāna*, exits second *jhāna*, enters third *jhāna*, etc.



There are passages in the scriptures that confirm this fact, for example the story of Ven. Sāriputta in the Dīghanakha Sutta.<sup>100</sup> While the Buddha was giving a discourse on feeling (*vedanā*) and other topics in the Boar's Cave on Mount Vulture Peak to the wanderer Dīghanakha, Sāriputta was standing behind the Buddha, fanning him. Reflecting on this Dhamma teaching, Sāriputta realized arahantship. This occurred after Sāriputta had been ordained for two weeks. Looking at this sutta in isolation, one may have the impression that Sāriputta had not reached any attainments to add to his 'opening of the eye of Dhamma' (stream-entry) two weeks previous to this occasion; instead, at this moment, he realized complete awakening (arahantship). But by reading the Anupada Sutta one sees that during these two weeks Sāriputta was developing insight in conjunction with *jhānas* (*yuganaddha-samatha-vipassanā* – tranquillity and insight in unison) without interruption, from the first *jhāna* to the extinction of perception and feeling. This reveals that he had realized the fruit of non-returning before listening to the Dīghanakha Sutta.<sup>101</sup>

One last question that should be addressed is: can arahants develop tranquillity meditation and increase concentrative attainments or psychic powers after being enlightened? Those who use insight as a vehicle (*vipassanā-yānika*) have not previously attained *jhāna*, but at the moment of path-realization concentration becomes firm and they access the first *jhāna*. Afterwards, they can access the first *jhāna* ('fruit of attainment' – *phala-samāpatti*) in order 'to abide in happiness in the present', whenever they wish. The question here is whether they can develop higher levels of *jhāna*. The sub-commentaries claim they can. Their state of mind is conducive to refining and strengthening concentration. They probably develop *samatha* to promote a 'happy abiding in the present' (*ditṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). (See Note 8.14)

<sup>100</sup>M. I. 497-8.

<sup>101</sup>M. III. 25; MA. IV. 91 concludes: *Having developed tranquillity and insight in unison, Sāriputta realized the fruit of non-returning and accessed the attainment of extinction (nirodha-samāpatti); having emerged from this state, he realized arahantship.* Ven. Sāriputta was conversant with the attainment of extinction, which prepared his mind for the breakthrough in insight and the realization of arahantship; cf.: MA. III. 208.

## NOTE 8.14: ABIDING

CompT.: Vīthimuttaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Kammacatukkavaṇṇanā mentions a non-returner who was a bare-insight practitioner (*sukkhavipassaka*), and who generated a concentrative attainment at the moment of death so as to be able to take birth in the ‘Pure Abodes’ (*suddhāvāsa*).

DA. III. 1007 defines ‘concentrative meditation for a happy abiding in the present’ (at D. III. 222-3) as both the ‘fruit of jhāna attainment’ (*phalasamāpatti-jhāna*) and the jhānas that arahants subsequently develop.

PañcA. 107 describes arahants who access consecutive levels of concentrative attainment unattained by them before.

A. I. 242-3 describes how at the moment of the ‘opening of the eye of Dhamma’ the noble disciple abandons the first three fetters (realizes stream-entry). Later, ‘the eye of Dhamma’ occurs again and both greed and ill-will are abandoned (realization of non-returning). This disciple then enters the first jhāna. If he dies at such a time no fetters exist that would lead him back to this world. From one angle it appears in this sutta that the disciple attained first jhāna after realizing non-returning, but from our earlier explanations one must interpret this as accessing a jhāna previously attained.

The same most likely holds true in regard to supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). For two reasons, however, arahants do not spend a lot of effort trying to attain new powers: first, they do not seek special psychic powers for their own advantage, and second, the benefits to others are not enough to warrant the difficulty and time required to develop them, as described in the Visuddhimagga. (See Note 8.15) {459} Arahants are more likely to use the time and effort to teach others, which is called the ‘miracle of teaching’ (*anusāsani-pāṭihāriya*) and which the Buddha praised as the greatest of all miracles.<sup>102</sup> This is superior to concerning oneself with mundane psychic powers, which are potentially harmful and lead ordinary people to be fascinated in a mysterious and obscure world that lies beyond their ability to understand and causes them to neglect more important activities.

<sup>102</sup>See: D. I. 212-3; DA. II. 390.

## NOTE 8.15: DIFFICULTY OF PSYCHIC POWERS

Vism. 371-426 (especially 375-6) illustrates the difficulty of developing psychic powers (probably based on Ps. I. 111-15):

Now the *kaṣiṇa* preliminary work is difficult for a beginner and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it. The arousing of the sign is difficult for one who has done the preliminary work and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it. To extend the sign when it has arisen and to reach absorption is difficult and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it. To tame one's mind in the fourteen ways after reaching absorption is difficult and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it. The application of supernormal power after training one's mind in this way is difficult and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it. The rapid attainment of *jhāna* after application is difficult and only one in a hundred or a thousand can do it.

Normally, people seek protection in external conditions or divine powers, which opposes fundamental Buddhist principles. Arahants who do not wield mundane psychic powers still possess what the Buddha called a 'noble power' (*ariya-iddhi*): they are able to look at unendearing, repulsive people and things as endearing and not repulsive. Similarly, they can see attractive, alluring people and things as impermanent, conditioned, and unworthy of attachment. This is a greater power than walking on water, diving into the ground, or flying through the air, which the Buddha said are not 'noble', carry risks, and do not lead to liberation.<sup>103</sup>

These mundane psychic powers are not the essence of Buddhism and they are not an indication of a person's value. One can find evidence of these powers before the time of the Buddha and in other traditions. They are only considered excellent when applied by one who is pure and fully awakened. For ordinary people they can be as dangerous as they are helpful. A fully awakened person or even someone attained to a lesser stage of awakening, who has moral conduct and perfect 'right-view' (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), is superior to someone possessing the five mundane powers but devoid of these virtues. Most of the Buddha's arahant disciples are 'liberated by wisdom' (*paññā-vimutta*), without elevating to higher

<sup>103</sup>D. III. 112.

levels of concentrative attainment, and even many of the disciples ‘liberated both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*) did not generate the five mundane powers. {460}

## 8.5 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INSIGHT PRACTICE

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The contemplation of conditioned phenomena giving rise to clear understanding and to seeing things as they truly are is an essential ingredient to realizing path and fruit. Everyone who practises for the goal of Buddhism, whether they use tranquillity or insight as a vehicle, and regardless of which of the four modes of practice (tranquillity preceded by insight, etc.) they follow, must pass this stage of insight (*vipassanā*) meditation. Someone who uses insight as a vehicle will practise in this way from the beginning, whereas someone using tranquillity as a vehicle will apply this meditation in the final stages.

Drawing upon the previous section on tranquillity meditation, this contemplation is an extension of the earlier cited passage: *By seeing with wisdom the taints are completely destroyed*. In other words, it refers to ‘liberation by wisdom’ (*paññā-vimutti*). There are many standard definitions in the Pali Canon to describe this path of insight. Before looking at these definitions, let us examine some passages describing the Buddha’s enlightenment (which are also outlines of insight). This will reveal how a single event can be explained in many different ways:

When my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed existence.’

*Vin. I. 11; S. V. 422-3.*

When I directly knew as they really are the gratification (*assāda*), the danger (*ādinava*) and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, then I claimed to have awakened

to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... 'Now there is no more renewed existence.'

*S. III. 28.*

When I directly knew as they really are the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these six internal sense bases, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... 'Now there is no more renewed existence.'  
{461}

*S. IV. 7-8.*

When I directly knew as they really are the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these five spiritual faculties (i.e. faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom), then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... 'Now there is no more renewed existence.'

*S. V. 204.*

When I directly knew as they really are the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these six sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... 'Now there is no more renewed existence.'

*S. V. 206.*

Monks, concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit.... I too, monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, frequently dwelt in this abiding. While I frequently dwelt in this abiding, neither my body nor my eyes became fatigued and my mind, by not clinging, was liberated from the taints.

*S. V. 316-17.*

'Feeling (*vedanā*) is this way.' Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true

knowledge, and light.... ‘This is the origin of feeling’.... ‘This is the way leading to the origination of feeling’.... ‘This is the cessation of feeling’.... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of feeling’.... ‘This is the gratification in feeling’.... ‘This is the danger in feeling’.... ‘This is the escape from feeling’: thus monks ... there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

S. IV. 233-4.

‘This is the contemplation of the body in the body (kāye kāyānupassanā).’ Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.... ‘That contemplation of the body in the body is to be developed’.... ‘That contemplation of the body in the body has been developed’.... ‘This is the contemplation of feelings in feelings’.... ‘This is the contemplation of mind in mind’.... ‘This is the contemplation of phenomena (dhamma) in phenomena’.... ‘That contemplation of phenomena in phenomena has been developed’: thus monks ... light.<sup>104</sup>

S. V. 178-9.

‘This is the basis for spiritual power (iddhi-pāda) of enthusiasm.’ Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.... ‘That basis for spiritual power of enthusiasm is to be developed’.... ‘That basis for spiritual power of enthusiasm has been developed’.... ‘This is the basis for spiritual power of energy’.... ‘This is the basis for spiritual power of dedicated application of mind (citta)’.... ‘This is the basis for spiritual power of investigation’.... There arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.<sup>105</sup> {462}

S. V. 258.

<sup>104</sup>These are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

<sup>105</sup>Each sentence in this passage contains the phrase ‘volitional formations of striving’ in conjunction with each spiritual basis in question, e.g.: ‘This is the basis for spiritual power that possesses concentration due to desire and volitional formations of striving.’

Monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, it occurred to me: ‘Alas, this world has fallen into trouble, in that it is born, ages, and dies, it passes away and is reborn, yet it does not understand the escape from this suffering [headed by] aging-and-death. When now will an escape be discerned from this suffering [headed by] aging-and-death?’

Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘When what exists does aging-and-death come to be? By what is aging-and-death conditioned?’ Then, monks, through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is birth, aging-and-death comes to be; aging-and-death has birth as its condition....’

‘When what exists does birth come to be? ... does becoming come to be? ... does clinging come to be? ... does craving come to be? ... does feeling come to be? ... does contact come to be? ... do the six sense bases come to be? ... does mind-and-body come to be? ... Then, monks, the question occurred to me: ‘When what exists does consciousness come to be? By what is consciousness conditioned?’ Then monks, through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is mind-and-body, consciousness comes to be; consciousness has mind-and-body as its condition.’

Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘This consciousness turns back; it does not go further than mind-and-body. It is to this extent that one may be born and age and die, pass away and be reborn, that is, when there is consciousness with mind-and-body as its condition and mind-and-body with consciousness as its condition. With mind-and-body as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.’

‘Origination, origination’ – thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘When what does not exist does aging-and-death not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of aging-and-death come about?’ Then, monks, through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is no birth, aging-and-death does not come to be; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of aging-and-death....’

‘When what does not exist does birth not come to be? ... does becoming not come to be? ... does clinging not come to be? ... does craving not come to be? ... does feeling not come to be? ... does contact not come to be? ... do the six sense bases not come to be? ... does mind-and-body not come to be? ... Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘When what exists does consciousness not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of consciousness come about?’ Then monks, through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is no mind-and-body, consciousness does not come to be; with the cessation of mind-and-body comes cessation of consciousness.’

Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘I have discovered this path to enlightenment, that is, with the cessation of mind-and-body comes cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of mind-and-body; with the cessation of mind-and-body, cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

‘Cessation, cessation’ – thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

So too, monks, I saw the ancient path, the ancient road travelled by the Perfectly Enlightened Ones of the past.... It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention ... right concentration. I followed that path and by doing so I have directly known aging-and-death, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation. I have directly known birth ... becoming ... clinging



... craving ... feeling ... contact ... the six sense bases ... mind-and-body ... consciousness ... volitional formations, their origin, their cessation, and the way leading to their cessation. {463} Having directly known them, I have explained them to the bhikkhus, the bhikkhunīs, the male lay followers, and the female lay followers. This holy life, monks, has become successful and prosperous, popular, widespread, firmly established, well-proclaimed among devas and humans.<sup>106</sup>

*S. II. 104-107.*

There are many standard definitions for the realization of arahantship through insight by the Buddha's disciples. Some are similar to the passages presented above of the Buddha's enlightenment while others vary, but essentially they are the same: phenomena (most often the five aggregates or the twelve sense spheres) are divided into different parts and their true nature is examined according to the three characteristics: impermanence, *dukkha* and not-self. Many passages focus on the belief in self and emphasize the characteristic of not-self. Some passages trace the relationship between conditions in the context of Dependent Origination. From the angle of Dhamma practice, these passages all refer to one or more of the groups found in the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).<sup>107</sup> The outlines explaining particular ways of contemplation can be extremely helpful for insight practice if one can capture their meaning and not get confused by the technical language. Below are some examples of these outlines; the commentaries say the Buddha gave these teachings on different occasions depending on the disposition of the listener.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup>Beginning section also found at S. II. 10; on the difference between the Buddha and *paññā-vimutta* see: S. III. 66.

<sup>107</sup>The thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*: four foundations of mindfulness, four right efforts, four paths to success, four spiritual faculties, four spiritual powers, seven factors of enlightenment, and the Eightfold Path.

<sup>108</sup>See: SA. II. 262.

**A. CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE FIVE AGGREGATES**

Monks, form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, volitional formations are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent. Seeing thus, monks, the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment towards form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness. Experiencing disenchantment, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.'

Monks, form is subject to stress (*dukkha*).... Feeling.... Perception.... Volitional formations.... Consciousness is subject to stress.... Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment....

Monks, form is not-self (*anattā*).... Feeling.... Perception.... Volitional formations.... Consciousness is not-self.... Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.<sup>109</sup>

*E.g.: S. III. 21.*

The contemplation in this passage on the three characteristics is sometimes changed to similar contemplations, for example: 'Form is *Māra*',<sup>110</sup> 'feelings are hot embers', 'form is subject to arising and cessation', etc.<sup>111</sup> {464}

Monks, form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent is subject to stress (*dukkha*). What is subject to stress is not-self. What is not-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not

<sup>109</sup>An alternative translation for 'disenchantment' (*nibbidā*) is 'disengagement'; an alternative translation for 'dispassionate' (*virāga*) is 'disentangled'.

<sup>110</sup>Trans.: here, *Māra* is used to mean 'death' or 'deadly', in the sense of preventing people from reaching a higher goal.

<sup>111</sup>See: S. III. 71, 177, 195-8.

mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.

*S. III. 22, 82-3.*

Monks, the body is not-self. If the body were self it would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of the body: ‘May my body be this way; may it not be that way.’ But because the body is not-self, the body leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of the body: ‘May my body be this way; may it not be that way.’

Feeling is not-self ... Perception is not-self ... Volitional formations are not-self ... Consciousness is not-self. For if consciousness were self it would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of consciousness: ‘May my consciousness be this way; may it not be that way.’ But because consciousness is not-self, consciousness leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of consciousness: ‘May my consciousness be this way; may it not be that way.’

‘What do you think, monks, is the body permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, venerable sir.’

‘Is that which is impermanent stressful (*dukkha*) or easeful (*sukha*)?’

‘Stressful, venerable sir.’

‘Is what is impermanent, stressful, and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘What do you think, monks, are feelings permanent or impermanent?’ ... ‘is perception permanent or impermanent?’ ... ‘are volitional formations permanent or impermanent?’ ... ‘is consciousness permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, venerable sir....’

‘Is what is impermanent, stressful, and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Therefore, monks, you should see any kind of physical form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formation ... consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, coarse or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this is not I, this is not my self.” Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.’

*S. III. 66-8.*

Whatever kind of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formation ... consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, coarse or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: a bhikkhu inspects it, ponders it, and carefully investigates it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substantiality could there be in form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formation ... consciousness?

*S. III. 140-42.*

Monks, a monk sees as impermanent form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness which is actually impermanent: that is his right view. Seeing rightly, he experiences dispassion. With the destruction of delight comes the destruction of lust; with the destruction of lust comes the destruction of delight. With the destruction of delight and lust the mind is liberated and is said to be well liberated.

*S. III. 51.*

Monks, attend carefully to form. Recognize the impermanence of form as it really is. When a monk attends carefully to form and recognizes the impermanence of form as it really is, he experiences dispassion towards form. With the destruction of delight comes the destruction of lust; with the destruction of lust comes the

destruction of delight ... the mind is liberated and is said to be well liberated.

Monks, attend carefully to feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness. {465}

*S. III. 52.*

## **B. CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE SENSE SPHERES**

Monks, the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is impermanent. Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences dispassion.... The eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is subject to stress.... The eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is not-self.... Forms ... sounds ... odours ... tastes ... tactile objects ... mental phenomena are impermanent ... subject to stress ... not-self. Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.

*S. IV. 155-6.*

The contemplation in this passage on the three characteristics is sometimes changed to similar contemplations, for example: 'The eye is obscured', 'the eye is burning', and 'the eye is subject to destruction'.<sup>112</sup>

Monks, the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind is impermanent. What is impermanent is subject to stress. What is subject to stress is not-self. What is not-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment....

Monks, forms ... sounds ... odours ... tastes ... tangibles ... mental phenomena are impermanent. What is impermanent is subject to stress. What is subject to stress is not-self. What is not-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine,

<sup>112</sup>See: *S. IV. 19-21, 26-9.*

this I am not, this is not my self.’ Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.<sup>113</sup>

S. IV. 1-3.

‘What do you think, monks, is the body permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, venerable sir.’

‘Is that which is impermanent stressful or easeful?’

‘Stressful, venerable sir.’

‘Is what is impermanent, stressful, and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘What do you think, monks, is the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind ... eye-consciousness ... ear consciousness ... mind consciousness ... eye-contact ... mind-contact ... whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition ... whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition – whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant<sup>114</sup> – permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, venerable sir’....

‘Is what is impermanent, stressful, and of the nature to change fit to be regarded thus: “This is mine, this is I, this is my self?”’

‘No, venerable sir’....

‘Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.’<sup>115</sup>

S. IV. 48.

<sup>113</sup>This passage can be found with slight variation in many locations; see: S. IV. 151-5. At S. IV. 170 the contemplation is extended to cover the six kinds of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the six contacts (*phassa*), and the three kinds of feeling (*vedanā*) – pleasurable, painful and neutral.

<sup>114</sup>In the instruction to Ven. Rāhula, the section: ‘Whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition ... whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant’

Monks, the eye is impermanent. The cause and condition for the arising of the eye is also impermanent. As the eye has originated from what is impermanent, how could it be permanent?... {466}

The eye is subject to stress. The cause and condition for the arising of the eye is also stressful. As the eye has originated from what is stressful, how could it be easeful?...

The eye is not-self. The cause and condition for the arising of the eye is also not-self. As the eye has originated from what is not-self, how could it be self?

Seeing thus the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment. (The same for the remaining five sense bases and the six sense objects.)

S. IV. 129-32.

Monks, a monk sees as impermanent the eye ... ear ... nose ... mind ... sights ... sounds ... mental phenomena which are actually impermanent: that is his right view. Seeing rightly, he experiences dispassion. With the destruction of delight comes the destruction of lust ... the mind is liberated and is said to be well liberated.

S. IV. 142.

Monks, attend carefully to the eye. Recognize the impermanence of the eye as it really is. When a monk attends carefully to the eye and recognizes the impermanence of the eye as it really is, he experiences dispassion towards the eye. With the destruction of delight comes the destruction of lust ... the mind is liberated and is said to be well liberated.

Monks, attend carefully to the ear ... nose ... mind ... sights ... sounds ... mental phenomena.

S. IV. 142-3.

is changed to: *Anything included in feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness arisen with eye-contact as condition* (S. IV. 106-107).

<sup>115</sup>Slight variations of this passage are found at: S. IV. 24-5, 34, 43, 44-5, 54-5, 63-4, 135.

A certain bhikkhu approached the Blessed One ... and said to him: ‘Venerable Sir, is there one thing through the abandoning of which ignorance is abandoned by a bhikkhu and true knowledge arises?’

[The Buddha replied]: ‘When a bhikkhu knows and sees the eye ... forms ... the ear ... sounds ... the mind ... mental objects ... mind consciousness ... mind-contact ... whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition – whether pleasant or pain-ful or neutral – as impermanent, ignorance is abandoned by him and true knowledge arises.’<sup>116</sup>

S. IV. 49-50.

A certain bhikkhu approached the Blessed One ... [The Buddha replied]: ‘Here, bhikkhu, a bhikkhu has heard,<sup>117</sup> “Nothing is worth adhering to.”<sup>118</sup> The concept “nothing is worth adhering to” is [merely] his acquired knowledge. He studies (*abhiññā* – ‘directly knows’; ‘pays attention to’) everything; having studied everything, he fully understands (*pariññā*) everything. Having fully understood everything, he sees all signs differently.<sup>119</sup> He sees the eye differently, he sees forms differently ... whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition ... that too he sees differently. When a bhikkhu knows and sees thus, ignorance is abandoned by him and true knowledge arises.’ (Same for the remaining sense spheres, the six kinds of consciousness, the six contacts, and the three kinds of feeling.)<sup>120</sup> {467}

S. IV. 50.

<sup>116</sup> Slight variations are found at: S. IV. 30-32.

<sup>117</sup> *Suta*: ‘heard’, ‘studied’.

<sup>118</sup> *Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*.

<sup>119</sup> *Nimitta*: ‘signs’; discernible features of things. He sees things differently from when he was still subject to attachment.

<sup>120</sup> *Abhiññā*: ‘specific’ knowledge; ‘personal’ knowledge; knowledge through direct experience; *pariññā*: comprehensive knowledge; knowing the true nature of something; knowing the qualities and features of something.



**C. GENERAL INQUIRY**

‘Bhikkhus, when what exists, by clinging to what, do pleasure and pain arise internally?... When there is form, bhikkhus, by clinging to form, pleasure and pain arise internally. When there is feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, by clinging to consciousness, pleasure and pain arise internally.

‘What do you think, monks, is form (feeling, etc.) permanent or impermanent?’

‘Impermanent, venerable sir’....

‘Is that which is impermanent stressful or easeful?’

‘Stressful, venerable sir.’

‘But without clinging to what is impermanent, stressful, and subject to change, could pleasure and pain arise internally?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences disenchantment.’

*S. III. 180-81.*

There are many variations to this passage above, indicating that self-identity, personality view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), and other wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) stem from attaching to and misunderstanding the five aggregates.<sup>121</sup>

Bhikkhus, this Dhamma has been taught by me discriminately. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness have been taught by me discriminately. The Four Right Efforts ... the Four Bases for Success ... the Five Spiritual Faculties ... the Five Powers ... the Seven Factors of Enlightenment ... the Noble Eightfold Path has been taught by me discriminately. Bhikkhus, in regard to the Dhamma that has been thus taught by me discriminately, a reflection arose in the mind of

<sup>121</sup>S. III. 181-7.

a certain bhikkhu thus: ‘How should one know, how should one see, for the immediate destruction of the taints to occur?’....

Here, bhikkhus, the uninstructed worldling ... regards form (feeling, perception, etc.) as self. That regarding, bhikkhus, is a formation. That formation – what is its source, what is its origin, from what is it born and produced? When the uninstructed worldling is contacted by a feeling born of ignorance-contact, craving arises: thence that formation is born.

Thus, bhikkhus, that formation is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen; that craving ... feeling ... contact ... that ignorance is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen. When one knows and see thus, bhikkhus, the immediate destruction of the taints occurs.<sup>122</sup>

*S. III. 96-7.*

Bhikkhus, while a bhikkhu dwells mindful and clearly comprehending,<sup>123</sup> diligent, ardent, and resolute, if there arises in him a pleasant feeling, he understands thus: ‘There has arisen in me a pleasant feeling. Now that is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this very body. But this body is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen. So when the pleasant feeling has arisen in dependence on a body that is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen, how could it be permanent?’ He dwells contemplating impermanence in the body and in pleasant feeling, he dwells contemplating vanishing, contemplating fading away, contemplating cessation, contemplating relinquishment. As he dwells thus, the underlying tendency to lust in regard to the body and in regard to pleasant feeling is abandoned by him.... {468}

While a bhikkhu dwells mindful ... if there arises in him a painful feeling, he understands.... The underlying tendency to aversion in regard to the body and in regard to painful feeling is abandoned by him.

While a bhikkhu dwells mindful ... if there arises in him a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands.... The underlying

tendency to ignorance in regard to the body and in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is abandoned by him.

*S. IV. 211-12.*

#### **D. ALL-ENCOMPASSING CONTEMPLATIONS**

The Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita approached the Venerable Sāriputta and said to him: ‘Friend Sāriputta, what are the things that a virtuous bhikkhu should carefully attend to?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, a virtuous bhikkhu should carefully attend to the five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent, as subject to stress, as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as not-self.... When, friend, a virtuous bhikkhu carefully attends to these five aggregates subject to clinging, it is possible that he may realize the fruit of stream-entry.’

‘But, friend Sāriputta, what are the things that a bhikkhu who is a stream-enterer should carefully attend to?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, a bhikkhu who is a stream-enterer should carefully attend to these five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent ... as not-self. When, friend, a bhikkhu who is a stream-enterer carefully attends thus to these five aggregates subject to clinging, it is possible that he may realize the fruit of once-returning.’

‘But, friend Sāriputta, what are the things that a bhikkhu who is a once-returner should carefully attend to?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, a bhikkhu who is a once returner should carefully attend to these five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent ... as not-self. When, friend, a bhikkhu who is a once-returner carefully attends thus to these five aggregates subject to clinging, it is possible that he may realize the fruit of non-returning.’

<sup>122</sup>There are many variations to the phrase: *regards form (feeling, perception, etc.) as self* (see: S. III. 97-9).

<sup>123</sup>One practises the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

‘But, friend Sāriputta, what are the things that a bhikkhu who is a non-returner should carefully attend to?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, a bhikkhu who is a non-returner should carefully attend to these five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent ... as not-self. When, friend, a bhikkhu who is a non-returner carefully attends thus to these five aggregates subject to clinging, it is possible that he may realize the fruit of arahantship.’

‘But, friend Sāriputta, what are the things that a bhikkhu who is an arahant should carefully attend to?’

‘Friend Koṭṭhita, a bhikkhu who is an arahant should carefully attend to these five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent ... as not-self. For the arahant, friend, there is nothing further that has to be done and no repetition of what he has already done. However, when these things are developed and cultivated, they lead to a pleasant dwelling in this very life and to mindfulness and clear comprehension.’<sup>124</sup> {469}

S. III. 167-9.

<sup>124</sup>The following sutta (S. III. 169) is similar but changes the term ‘virtuous bhikkhu’ to ‘well-instructed bhikkhu’. S. V. 298-9 states that both a trainee (*sekha*) and one beyond training (*asekha*) should ‘enter and dwell in’ the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The four jhānas are usually developed by ‘trainees’ (and those lower than trainees), but can also be used by arahants for a ‘pleasant dwelling in this life’ and for mindfulness and clear comprehension (e.g.: M. III. 4; D. III. 222-3; A. II. 44-5; A. III. 323). Mindfulness of the body is similarly used for a ‘pleasant dwelling in this life’ (see: A. I. 43).

## 8.6 SYSTEMATIC OUTLINES OF MEDITATION PRACTICE

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The Buddha's teachings on ways to realize Nibbāna usually include the contemplations of phenomena as presented earlier in this chapter. When these teachings are presented systematically, then the stages of practice are usually presented in a broad, general sense. The most detailed and frequent systematic teaching outlines the 'holy life' or way of practice of a bhikkhu from the time of ordination up to the cessation of the taints.<sup>125</sup> A similar teaching given occasionally by the Buddha and his disciples is that of the fifteen ways of practice (*caraṇa*) and the three kinds of knowledge (*vijjā*).<sup>126</sup> Alternatively, one finds a group of gradual attainments, for example the seven purifications<sup>127</sup> or the nine purifications.<sup>128</sup> We can assume that the reason these teachings are presented in a general way is that the specific details of practice were transmitted through direct application, according to the methods particular teachers used to train their students. Minor details would have differed among different teachers. These styles of practice would have been passed down until the time of the commentators, who compiled and recorded some of them. The most prominent of these later texts is the Visuddhimagga.

The Visuddhimagga presents a gradual course of practice, both in regard to external activities as well as to the development of wisdom. In terms of wisdom, it outlines the stages of higher knowledge (*ñāṇa*). Its general framework follows the teaching on the three 'trainings' (*sikkhā*) and then expands these in terms of the seven purifications (*visuddhi*). The gradual development of insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) found in the Visuddhimagga is an expansion from material found in the Paṭisambhidāmagga.<sup>129</sup> Below is a summary of the systematic teaching found in the Visuddhimagga.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup>This teaching is found dispersed throughout the scriptures (e.g.: D. I. 62-84; A. V. 203; Pug. 56-7).

<sup>126</sup>D. I. 100; M. I. 354; Nd. II. 47.

<sup>127</sup>M. I. 149-50.

<sup>128</sup>D. III. 288.

<sup>129</sup>Ps. I. 1-2, 50, 75-6.

<sup>130</sup>Visuddhimagga: the Path of Purification (710 pages).

First, let us look at the meaning of some important terms:

*Visuddhi*: purity; gradual purification; qualities that purify beings, enabling a perfection of the threefold training and leading to the realization of Nibbāna. There are seven stages, to be discussed below.

*Pariññā*: comprehensive knowledge, of which there are three kinds:<sup>131</sup>

1. *Ñāta-pariññā*: familiarity; recognition; knowledge of specific attributes. For example, one knows ‘sensation’ (*vedanā*) and knows that it has the quality of ‘feeling’ sense impressions; one knows perception (*saññā*) and knows that perception has the function of designation. One knows ‘what things are’. {476}
2. *Tīraṇa-pariññā*: investigation; one applies a deeper level of wisdom, by knowing the universal characteristics of things: that they follow natural laws and are characterized by impermanence, stress, and nonself. For example, one knows that feeling and perception are unstable, of the nature to change, and not-self. One knows ‘how things are’.
3. *Pahāna-pariññā*: abandonment; knowledge that leads to letting go of attachment, to freedom, and to an absence of infatuation. One knows how to respond to and behave in relation to things. For example, knowing that things are impermanent, one abandons the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). One knows ‘how to act’.

*Vipassanā-ñāṇa*: insight knowledge; knowledge that gives rise to insight; knowledge that leads to a thorough understanding of phenomena and to the end of suffering. It is divided into nine kinds (see below).

The different kinds of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) below that are followed by numbers in parentheses are part of the more recently formed group

<sup>131</sup>Nd. I. 52; Vism. 606-607.

of sixteen kinds of knowledge (*soḷasa-ñāṇa*). They are used to verify a person's level of attainment.<sup>132</sup>

## PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE ACCORDING TO THE VISUDDHIMAGGA

### 1. *Training in Higher Morality (adhisīla-sikkhā)*

1. Purification of morality (*sīla-visuddhi*): good conduct; right livelihood; ethical conduct appropriate to one's social standing. The Visuddhimagga focuses primarily on the four moral standards for purity (*pārisuddhi-sīla*) for bhikkhus:

A. *Pāṭimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*: restraint and strict adherence in relation to the monastic code of discipline.

*Indriyasaṃvara-sīla*: restraint of the sense faculties; caution while receiving sense impressions in order to prevent unskillful mental states from possessing the mind.

*Ājīvapārisuddhi-sīla*: right livelihood.

*Paccayasannissita-sīla*: pure conduct in regard to the four requisites of life; using these requisites with wise reflection, not with greed.<sup>133</sup>

Apart from keeping moral precepts, it is recommended to undertake, as is suitable to one's personal disposition, some of the thirteen austere practices (*dhutaṅga*), which were permitted by the Buddha, in order to increase contentment, effort, and seclusion, to eliminate defilements, to purify one's moral conduct, to complement and fulfil one's other religious observances, and to support one's overall spiritual practice.

<sup>132</sup>Of these sixteen, only path-knowledge and fruit-knowledge are transcendent forms of knowledge; the remaining fourteen are mundane. Note that the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha adds 'investigative knowledge' (*sammasana-ñāṇa*) (#3) to the list of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), resulting in a group of ten; see: Comp.: Kammaṭṭhānaparicchedo, Vipassanākammaṭṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo.

<sup>133</sup>Also known as *paccayaapaṭisevana-sīla*.

## 2. Training in Higher Mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*; concentration)

2. Purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*): to develop the quality and ability of the mind until there is adequate concentration to act as a basis for insight. The Visuddhimagga says this extends from access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) up to attainment concentration of the eight jhānas. It presents ways of developing concentration up to the attainment of the five mundane supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). {477}

## 3. Training in Higher Wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*)

### A. Knowledge of Conditions (*ñāta-pariññā*)

#### Recognition of the Noble Truth of Suffering:

3. Purification of views (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*): knowledge of the true nature of the body and mind which removes the misapprehension of self-view. This level of purification is also called the ‘definitive knowledge of mind and body’ (*nāmarūpapariccheda-ñāṇa*) (1).<sup>134</sup> Here, one knows that all existing things fall under the category of either mind (*nāma*) or matter (*rūpa*; ‘body’), and one is able to distinguish through one’s own experience what is mind and what is matter. For example, when seeing an object one knows that the sense base of the eye, the light, the visual form, and the colour are aspects of materiality, while the eye-consciousness or the act of seeing is an aspect of mentality.

#### Recognition of the Noble truth of the Origin of Suffering:

4. Purification of knowledge leading to the end of doubt (*kaṅkhāvitarāṇa-visuddhi*): one accurately knows the conditionality of mind and body in line with Dependent Origination, the law of

<sup>134</sup>It is also called *saṅkhāra-pariccheda* and *nāmarūpa-avaṭṭhāna*.



kamma, the process of cognition, the three ‘cycles’ (*vaṭṭa*),<sup>135</sup> or any other perspective revealing that all conditioned things originate from conditioning factors and are interdependent. This knowledge brings to an end doubt about the three periods of time: the past, the present, and the future. It is also called the ‘knowledge of conditioning factors of mind and body’ (*nāmarūpapaccayapariggahāñāṇa*) (2).<sup>136</sup> The commentaries refer to someone with this knowledge as a ‘little stream-enterer’ (*cūḷa-sotāpanna*): his or her destiny is assured as one progressing in the Buddha’s teaching.

### *B. Thorough Knowledge of the Three Characteristics (tīraṇa-pariññā)*

#### **Recognition of the Noble Truth of the Path:**

5. Purification of knowledge regarding Path and not-path (*maggāmaggañāṇadassana-visuddhi*): the investigation of material and immaterial phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*) in light of the Three Characteristics. For example, one reflects on the nature of form as being impermanent (*anicca*), subject to stress (*dukkha*), and nonself (*anattā*), and then reflects in a similar manner on the four immaterial aggregates: feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness. This investigation extends to all groups of phenomena, for example the twelve sense spheres (*āyatana*), the twelve factors of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the three realms (*bhava*), the four jhānas, the four unbounded states (*appamaññā*), and the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*), all of which fall under the category of the five aggregates, until one discerns the arising and passing away of conditioned phenomena. This investigation gives rise to ‘incipient’ insight (*taruṇa-vipassanā*). At this point the ten ‘defilements of in-sight’ (*vipassanūpakilesa*) may also arise, causing a person to believe falsely that he is enlightened or leading a person to attach to these mental qualities. This misunderstanding results in misdirected practice. If one

<sup>135</sup>The three *vaṭṭa*: (1) round of defilements (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*); (2) round of kamma (*kamma-vaṭṭa*); (3) round of results (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*) – Vism. 581.

<sup>136</sup>It is also known as *dhammaṭṭhiti-ñāṇa*, *yathābhūta-ñāṇa* and *sammāḍassana*.

possesses mindfulness and clear comprehension, however, then one is able to distinguish the correct path and avoid getting stuck in these defilements. It is at this point that one reaches the purification of knowledge regarding Path and not-path. {478}

There are some complicated passages in the Visuddhimagga on this level of purification. The level of insight required to generate this purification is called ‘inductive insight’ (*naya-vipassanā*): a person contemplates by using a method of investigation described in the Pali Canon. For example, one may reflect that a particular form (*rūpa*), past, present or future, internal or external, etc., is impermanent without exception. It is also called ‘contemplation by groups’ (*kalāpa-sammasana*).<sup>137</sup> The knowledge arising at this stage of purification is sometimes called ‘investigative knowledge’ (of mind and body in light of the three characteristics): *sammasana-ñāṇa* (3).

When this investigative knowledge becomes strong and one begins to see the rising and falling of all things – to see the transitory nature of things, that every object exists dependent on conditioning factors and ceases to exist when these factors are absent – the ‘knowledge of birth and decay’ (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) gradually comes about. But this knowledge is new and at this stage is called ‘incipient insight’ (*taruṇa-vipassanā* or *taruṇavipassanā-ñāṇa*). A person possessing this incipient insight is called a ‘beginner of insight’ (*āradha-vipassaka*) and is susceptible to the ‘defilements of insight’, for example luminosity in the mind, which tend to distract and obstruct practitioners. With proper discernment one is able to pass beyond these defilements and complete this stage of purification.

### C. Knowledge Resulting in Liberation and the Abandonment of Ignorance (*pahāna-pariññā*)

<sup>137</sup>The sub-commentaries claim that *kalāpa-sammasana* is an Indian term and *naya-vipassanā* is a Sri Lankan term, but that these two terms are synonymous (VismṬ.: *Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Sammasanañāṇakathāvaṇṇanā*). They constitute an opposite method to ‘contemplation in order (of a list of factors)’: *anupadadhamma-vipassanā*. Ven. Ñāṇamoli translates *naya-vipassanā* as ‘inductive insight’ and *kalāpa-sammasana* as ‘comprehension by groups’.

6. Purification of Knowledge of the Way of Practice (*paṭipadāñānadassana-visuddhi*): this refers to the highest level of insight endowed with the nine stages of ‘insight-knowledge’ (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), beginning with the knowledge of birth and decay and the subsequent release from the defilements of insight, up to the final stages of insight: to full awakening. These are the nine stages of insight-knowledge:

- A. Knowledge of birth and decay (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa* or *udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) (4): the clear seeing of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates. The understanding that all things are impermanent and unable to sustain their original state, and that they are not subject to control by desire. Everything that is subject to arising is subject to cessation. In each moment of cognition a person here discerns the origination of ‘mind’ (*nāma-dhamma*), ‘body’ (*rūpa-dhamma*), and the act of ‘knowing’ (‘the one who knows’), and sees the simultaneous cessation of all these qualities. This insight is powerful (*balava-vipassanā*) and dispels the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), the perception of inherent happiness (*sukha-saññā*), and the perception of self (*atta-saññā*). {479}
- B. Knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa* or *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*) (5): when one is able to see this birth and decay in a more continuous, uninterrupted way, one begins to focus on the end point, on cessation. One reflects that all things are subject to dissolution.
- C. Knowledge of the fearfulness of the appearance of conditions (*bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa* or *bhaya-ñāṇa*) (6): by contemplating dissolution, to which all things are subject, one sees that all conditioned things, regardless of which realm of existence they are found, are terrifying since they offer no safety and must come to destruction.
- D. Knowledge of disadvantages (*ādinavānupassanā-ñāṇa* or *ādinava-ñāṇa*) (7): when one sees that all things are subject to decay and offer no safety, one reflects on the disadvantages, flaws, and inherent unsatisfactoriness of things.

- E. Knowledge of disenchantment (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa* or *nibbidā-ñāṇa*) (8): when one recognizes the disadvantages of conditioned things, one becomes disenchanted with them and does not indulge in them.
- F. Knowledge of the desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*) (9): with the arising of disenchantment, one wishes to escape from conditioned phenomena.
- G. Reflective knowledge (for seeing the Path): *paṭisaṅkhānupassanā-ñāṇa* or *paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa* (10): with the wish to escape, one resumes the investigation of conditions in light of the three characteristics to find a way to gain freedom.
- H. Knowledge of equanimity regarding all formations (*sāṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) (11): when one investigates conditioned things, one sees their true nature and develops equanimity towards them. One is neither delighted by nor averse to conditions. One sees Nibbāna as a ‘way of peace’ (*santi-pada*). One lets go of attachment to conditioned things and gravitates towards Nibbāna. This knowledge is also known as ‘pinnacle insight’ (*sikhāpatta-vipassanā*), because it reaches the highest goal, or ‘generative insight’ (*vuṭṭhānagāmini-vipassanā*), because it links a person to the Path, which is the way out of attachment.
- I. Compatible knowledge (for realizing the truth): *saccānulomika-ñāṇa* or *anuloma-ñāṇa* (12): when one has developed equanimity and one is intent on Nibbāna, knowledge favourable to realizing the truth follows. This is the final stage of insight-knowledge.
- Following from ‘compatible knowledge’ is ‘lineage knowledge’ (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*) (13): knowledge that marks the transition point between an ordinary person and an awakened person. From this point path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) arises, which leads to awakening. Lineage-knowledge does not fall into either stage of purity, neither the previous stage of ‘purification of knowledge of the way of practice’ nor the following stage of ‘purity of knowledge and vision’, but rather it falls in

between. However, it is still considered to be a distinct level of insight since it is part of the insight process.

7. Purity of Knowledge and Vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*): this purity follows from ‘lineage knowledge’ and is equivalent to path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) (14). The arising of a particular path-knowledge is followed by a corresponding ‘fruit-knowledge’ (*phala-ñāṇa*) (15), depending on the level of awakening. As stated above, it is this purity that enables a person to be enlightened and reach the highest goal of Buddhism. {480}

With realization through path- and fruit-knowledge, reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*) (16) arises, which reflects on path and fruit, on abandoned defilements, on remaining defilements, and on Nibbāna (arahants do not reflect on remaining defilements). This reviewing knowledge concludes the process of realizing a particular stage of enlightenment.

## 8.7 APPENDIX 1: JHĀNA

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The jhānas will be discussed in more detail in the section on right concentration,<sup>138</sup> but since they have been mentioned here I will provide some basic information.

The four jhānas – the standard group found in the suttas – are the four fine-material jhānas. In the Abhidhamma these four jhānas are expanded into five jhānas. The fifth jhāna is equivalent to the fourth in the original quartet. (The quartet is called *jhāna-catukkanaya*, the quintet *jhāna-pañcakanaya*.)

Jhāna (‘focused attention’, ‘meditation’) is a state of heightened concentration, of the mind being one-pointed on an object. There are different levels of this concentration based on refinement, depth, and strength. These levels can be determined by the mental qualities present during these periods of concentration. These qualities are: applied thought

<sup>138</sup>Chapter 18.

(*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). The four fine-material jhānas have the following qualities:

1. First jhāna: applied thought, sustained thought, bliss, joy, and one-pointedness.
2. Second jhāna: bliss, joy, and one-pointedness.
3. Third jhāna: joy and one-pointedness.
4. Fourth jhāna: equanimity and one-pointedness.

The jhānas higher than these are the formless jhānas (*arūpa-jhāna*). The formless jhānas have the qualities of equanimity and one-pointedness, but are increasingly more refined depending on the objects of concentration. For more detail, see the section on *vimokkha* (levels 4-7).<sup>139</sup> {425}

The term jhāna can be used in a broad sense for ‘focus’, ‘examination’, or ‘pondering’. Sometimes it is used in a negative sense for an activity criticized by the Buddha. For example, it can be a way of harbouring the five hindrances – lust, malice, despondency, agitation and doubt – in the heart. To allow these hindrances to gnaw away at the mind in a state of brooding is also called jhāna.<sup>140</sup> Jhāna is also used in the verb form for animals, for example an owl staring at a mouse or a fox hunting for fish.<sup>141</sup> Sometimes it is used in the context of *vipassanā* meditation meaning ‘investigation’ or ‘reflection’. The commentaries occasionally divide jhāna into two types: the focusing of an object in *samatha* meditation (*ārammaṇūpanijjhāna* = 8 *jhāna-samāpatti*), and the reflection giving rise to insight into the three characteristics (*lakkhaṇūpanijjhāna* = *vipassanā*). Even path and fruit can be called jhāna since these are referred to as ‘eradicating defilements’ and ‘focusing on the unsubstantiality (*suññatā*) of Nibbāna’.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup>See chapter 7.

<sup>140</sup>M. III. 13-4.

<sup>141</sup>M. I. 334.

<sup>142</sup>See: AA. II. 41; PsA. I. 183; DhsA. 167. Cf.: Ps. II. 44-5.

## 8.8 APPENDIX 2: IS IT POSSIBLE TO DEVELOP INSIGHT OR TO BECOME ENLIGHTENED IN JHĀNA?

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{481} There is much debate as to whether it is possible to develop insight or to apply wise reflection while in jhāna. Those people who claim it is not possible tend to refer to the ‘factors’ of jhāna: in the first jhāna a person possesses applied and sustained thought (*vitakka* and *vicāra*), while in higher jhānas a person has at most bliss, joy and one-pointedness, so in this case how can someone be engaged in thinking or reflection? In fact, these factors of jhāna are simply used as criteria for determining whether one has attained jhāna and for determining the level of jhāna. It is not implied that these are the only mental qualities present in jhāna.

In fact, the mind is endowed with many qualities while in jhāna, as is verified in the suttas and the older texts of the Abhidhamma. For example, M. III. 26-7 describes the mental qualities associated with every level of jhāna, from the first jhāna to the sphere of nothingness, including: enthusiasm (*chanda*), determination (*adhimokkha*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Similarly, Dhs. 31 and 75 describe the numerous qualities present at each level of jhāna, especially in ‘transcendent’ jhāna,<sup>143</sup> including: the five spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, the complete set of eight factors of the Noble Path, and both tranquillity and insight. Some later commentaries<sup>144</sup> expand upon the passages at PsA. I. 132, Vism. 148-9 and NdA. I. 133, and make it clear that concentration and wisdom act in unison in ‘the mind of jhāna’ (*jhāna-citta*). {482}

The reason that applied and sustained thought are absent in higher jhānas is because the mind is firmly established and greatly empowered. It is not necessary to turn attention (*vitakka*) to objects in the mind or to sustain attention (*vicāra*) on these objects. The reflection present in the mind excels these modes of attention. The Visuddhimagga describes the development of insight in this way:

<sup>143</sup>DhsA. 213 says this refers to momentary attainment-concentration.

<sup>144</sup>Dhs. 60; VinṬ.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Paṭhamapaññatinidānavaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Pathavikaṣiṇaniddesavaṇṇanā, Tividhakalyāṇavaṇṇanā.

One whose vehicle is serenity should emerge from any fine-material or immaterial jhāna, except the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc., the jhāna factors consisting of applied thought, etc.

*Vism.* 557.

One can interpret the phrase ‘should emerge ... and he should discern’ as describing one particular mode of practice, since the sub-commentary of this text explains:

The term ‘one whose vehicle is serenity’ here is a name for one who abides in jhāna or abides in access-concentration and is practising insight meditation.

*VismṬ.: Diṭṭhivisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Nāmarūpapariggahakathāvaṇṇanā.*

There is disagreement among the sub-commentaries as to whether it is possible to develop insight in jhāna or whether one must first exit from jhāna. Apart from AA. IV. 195 and the *VismṬ.*,<sup>145</sup> the only other passage giving evidence of developing insight while in jhāna is DA. II. 512, which refers to arahants who are liberated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*):

There are five kinds of persons liberated by wisdom: the pure-insight practitioner and those who dwell in one of the four jhānas, for example the first jhāna, and realize arahantship.

All remaining passages describe first exiting from jhāna, especially when referring directly to the development of insight. The descriptions are similar, for example:

Having dwelled in and emerged from jhāna, one reflects on the factors of jhāna and associated qualities; Having dwelled in jhāna and emerged from this attainment, one investigates all conditioned phenomena; Having emerged from the attainment, one reflects on

<sup>145</sup>Ibid.



the factors of attainment; Having emerged from jhāna, one reflects on the qualities of jhāna.<sup>146</sup>

*VinA. II. 430, 433.*

Taking these passages as a whole, the commentarial opinion is generally that if one enters jhāna one must first exit in order to develop insight. Since there is no clear explanation in the commentaries and sub-commentaries, it is difficult to definitively settle the various arguments, but it is possible to strike some sort of compromise by connecting evidence from different sources.

The format for developing insight by emerging from jhāna and contemplating conditioned phenomena comes from secondary texts of the Tipiṭaka. A clear example is the interpretation of this passage in the Suttanipāta:

When a person knows the factors giving rise to the sphere of nothingness and knows the binding power of delight, then he clearly discerns the sphere of nothingness.<sup>147</sup>

*Sn. 216.*

The Cūḷaniddesa, a secondary text, explains the phrase ‘he clearly discerns the sphere of nothingness’ as: *He enters and emerges from the sphere of nothingness, and discerns the mind and mental constituents arising in that sphere of nothingness as impermanent, subject to stress, [etc].*<sup>148</sup> The commentaries of both texts offer a similar explanation.<sup>149</sup>

These explanations from secondary texts and sub-commentaries all follow the outline of the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma presents a detailed analysis of things and breaks the mind down into separate mind moments, describing the activity of the mind in relation to other

<sup>146</sup>Cf.: DA. II. 512; MA. I. 248; SA. III. 272; AA. II. 100; SnA. II. 593; NdA. [2/247]; Nd2A. 102; Vism. 286-7, 667.

<sup>147</sup>*Vipassati*: ‘discerns’, ‘develops insight into’.

<sup>148</sup>Nd. II. 42.

<sup>149</sup>SnA. II. 601; NdA. 70.

factors, for example the involvement with sense impressions. The Abhidhamma claims it is not possible to develop insight in jhāna because at the moment of concentrative attainment the mind is one-pointed on the ‘object of awareness’ (*ārammaṇa*) pertaining to jhāna. The objects of awareness involved in insight practice are separate and therefore one cannot develop insight during the same mind moment of jhāna.<sup>150</sup> One must first take attention away from the object of awareness (in jhāna) and focus on another object, which means emerging from jhāna.<sup>151</sup> This is not a big step: it simply requires an adjustment or interruption in the stream of awareness (of one-pointedness) and an entering into ‘subliminal consciousness’ (*bhavaṅga*), which is the equivalent to exiting jhāna.<sup>152</sup> {483}

Having emerged from jhāna, the mind immediately resumes the stability of ‘attainment concentration’ (*appanā-samādhi*) due to the strength of mind developed in jhāna. (People may misunderstand that exiting jhāna implies returning to a state of mental disturbance or confusion.) A person then uses attainment concentration to develop insight, by contemplating the factors present at the level of jhāna from which he has just emerged and seeing them in light of the three characteristics.<sup>153</sup> These factors become the objects of insight. (To speak in a comprehensive way, a person contemplates aspects of jhāna (*jhāna-dhamma*), things associated with jhāna (*jhānasampayutta-dhamma*), aspects of attainment (*samāpatti-dhamma*), things associated with attainment (*samāpattisampayutta-dhamma*), the mind and mental constituents arising in jhāna, or even all conditioned phenomena.)

The concentration of jhāna (and even more so of the higher psychic attainments) makes the practice of insight more effective and proficient, which is the special value of insight preceded by tranquillity meditation.<sup>154</sup> The commentaries use the expression ‘developing insight with

<sup>150</sup>AA. III. 143.

<sup>151</sup>VinA. I. 229.

<sup>152</sup>MA. II. 30; AA. III. 409; AA. V. 15; VbhA. 463; VinT.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā; [VinT. 4/137]; VismT.: Paññābhāvanānisaṃsaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>153</sup>Vism. 187-8, 371.

<sup>154</sup>Vism. 371.

jhāna as a basis' for this process of applying the strength of concentration derived from jhāna to contemplate conditioned reality. Jhāna here is called 'jhāna acting as foundation for insight',<sup>155</sup> and various terms are used according to the level of jhāna reached, e.g.: 'using first jhāna as foundation', 'using second jhāna as foundation', 'using the sphere of nothingness as foundation', 'insight with first jhāna as a basis', 'insight with second jhāna as a basis', 'insight with formless jhāna as a basis', etc. The higher the level of jhāna, the deeper and stronger the concentration applied for insight.

The wisdom gleaned from this insight practice can also be classified according to the level of jhāna, e.g.: 'the insight wisdom of first jhāna' or 'first jhāna insight-wisdom'.<sup>156</sup> The level of Path attainment (*magga*) is dependent on the level of jhāna used as a basis, except in the cases of the 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception' and the 'extinction of perception and feeling'. (On the relationship between *magga* and jhāna, see a divergent opinion at e.g. DhsA. 228 and Vism. 666-7, which was referred to earlier.)

We can see from the above that the teachings on developing insight while in jhāna and those on first exiting jhāna before practising insight are not contradictory. The first can be called the teaching from the suttas and is more general. In this teaching, the word 'jhāna' refers to both the actual state of jhāna and to the stability of mind generated by the power of jhāna. The expression 'developing insight in jhāna' refers to entering jhāna and then using the strength of jhāna to practise insight. The second can be called the teaching of the Abhidhamma and is more specific.<sup>157</sup> Here the definition of 'jhāna' is restricted to the process during which the mind is

<sup>155</sup> *Vipassanāpāḍaka-jhāna*, *vipassanāpāḍa-samāpatti*, *pāḍakajjhāna*, etc.; e.g.: DA. III. 804; MA. V. 24; PsA. I. 193; DhsA. 228; VbhA. 121; Vism. 666-8; VinA. I. 156 = MA. I. 124 = AA. II. 100 = VinA. I. 167 = DA. I. 223 = MA. III. 265 = AA. II. 263 = PañcA. 243; VinA. I. 244 = DA. III. 897, 1002 = MA. II. 87 = SA. I. 26 = NdA. I. 120 = VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā, Dibbacakkuṇṇānakathā; MA. II. 146 = NdA. II. 332 = VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍam, Bhikkhupadabhājanīyavaṇṇanā; MA. [2/468]; MA. IV. 160; [3/571]; VbhA. 413; MA. IV. 200; AA. I. 223; AA. II. 41; MA. I. 142; [1/257]; MA. II. 234.

<sup>156</sup> AA. IV. 206.

<sup>157</sup> For references to the sutta teachings (*suttanta-desanā*) as being 'general' (*pariyāya*) and the Abhidhamma teachings (*abhidhamma-desanā*) as being

one-pointed and focused on the meditation object, say the ‘mental image’ (*nimitta*) of breathing or of a *kasīṇa* object.

The Abhidhamma explains that the mind in *jhāna* is one-pointed on the object of awareness throughout. When the mind begins to apply wisdom for contemplation, the focus of awareness must move from that original object. The Abhidhamma distinguishes the state of mind strengthened by *jhāna* as a separate process, one of releasing the object of tranquillity and exiting *jhāna*, although they grant that the mind is still exceptionally concentrated. The practitioner uses this strength of mind to develop insight and turns to the *jhāna* just exited along with its attributes, e.g.: applied attention (*vitakka*), sustained attention (*vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), enthusiasm (*chanda*), and energy (*virīya*), as the objects of contemplation. This change of focus results in exiting *jhāna* and entering the ‘vital continuum’ (*bhavaṅga*). From this point on, one begins a new stage of meditation, of insight meditation (*vipassanā*). {484}

By making this distinction a new term was necessary to describe this process, since despite exiting *jhāna* the mind does not revert back to the state preceding *jhāna*. The commentators coined the expression ‘using *jhāna* as a foundation’. They also referred to the principle of the ‘vital continuum’ (*bhavaṅga-citta*) to define the exit or break from the state of *jhāna*.<sup>158</sup> From this evidence, we can conclude that the general statement ‘developing insight in *jhāna*’ is equivalent to the more specific statements found in the commentaries: ‘Having entered *jhāna*, one exits and contemplates conditioned phenomena’;<sup>159</sup> ‘Exiting the foundational *jhāna*, one contemplates phenomena’;<sup>160</sup> ‘Establishing the *jhāna* as a basis, one develops insight’;<sup>161</sup> ‘Having attained *jhāna*, one develops insight with

‘specific’ (*nippariyāya*), see: DhsA. 307; VismṬ.: Āruppaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-kathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>158</sup> In the Tipiṭaka, the term *bhavaṅga* or *bhavaṅga-citta* occurs only in the Paṭṭhāna of the Abhidhamma, e.g.: Paṭ. 159, 160, 169-70, 325-6. In the commentaries these terms are frequently used.

<sup>159</sup> E.g.: AA. II. 100.

<sup>160</sup> E.g.: Vism. 666-7.

<sup>161</sup> E.g.: VismṬ.: Cha-anussatiniddesavaṇṇanā, Buddhānussatikathāvaṇṇanā.

jhāna as basis’;<sup>162</sup> and: ‘Exiting concentrative attainment, one practises insight with a firmly established mind’.<sup>163</sup>

The essential message of the sutta teachings and the Abhidhamma teachings is the same: to apply the power of concentration generated in jhāna and thus to foster the optimum conditions for wisdom to discern the truth. By entering jhāna the mind is prepared for the next stage, of contemplation (*vipassanā*). Because of the reliance on jhāna, the commentaries call this process ‘insight with jhāna as a basis’ or ‘insight with jhāna as a cause’. This explanation is consonant with the frequently mentioned sutta passage: *When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright ... malleable, wieldy, steady ... I directed it to knowledge....*<sup>164</sup> With jhāna a person thus prepares the mind for engagement. This state of mind is called ‘resolute’ (*abhinīhārakkhama*), and it leads to ever loftier attainments. Based on sutta passages, the commentators attribute nine qualities to this state of mind. The mind is:<sup>165</sup>

1. composed (*samāhita*);
2. pure (*parisuddha*);
3. bright (*pariyodāta*);
4. clear and open (*anaṅgaṇa*);
5. free of blemish (*vigatūpakkilesa*);
6. malleable (*mudubhūta*);
7. fit for work (*kammanīya*);
8. steadfast (*thita*);
9. imperturbable (*āneñjappatta*).

In any case, someone who attains jhāna but does not use it as a basis for insight will only develop insight with the assistance of ‘access’ (*upacāra*)

<sup>162</sup>E.g.: Vism. 189–90; VismṬ.: Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā, Kāyagatāsatikathavaṇṇanā.

<sup>163</sup>E.g.: MA. I. 124; Vism. 371.

<sup>164</sup>E.g.: M. II. 93.

<sup>165</sup>NdA. II. 357; Vism. 373.

or ‘momentary’ (*khaṇika*) concentration. This will be similar to someone who develops insight without having ever attained *jhāna*.

### 8.9 APPENDIX 3:

#### IS IT POSSIBLE TO DEVELOP INSIGHT WHILE DWELLING IN THE REALM OF NEITHER-PERCEPTION-NOR-NON-PERCEPTION?

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The states of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) and the extinction of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*)<sup>166</sup> are classified as attainments in which one reaps the fruit of meditation practice; they are not used directly for the application of insight. The lower concentrative attainments, from the realm of nothingness and below, can be used for both experiencing the fruit of practice and for applying insight and reflection. These lower attainments are still clearly accompanied by perception and other mental qualities, as testified by the description of the realm of nothingness as the pinnacle of perceptual attainment.<sup>167</sup> The realm of nothingness is the highest attainment still accompanied by perception. It is called ‘the peak of perception’ (*saññagga*), because it is the highest mundane attainment that can be used for insight practice.<sup>168</sup> {485}

*Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* is exceptionally refined and is therefore referred to as possessing neither ‘perception’ nor ‘non-perception’. Another name for this state is the ‘attainment of residual formations’ (*saṅkhārāvesa-samāpatti*), because the conditioned attributes of this state are of a most subtle nature. In most cases, these attributes are insufficiently distinct or coarse for insight practice. Let alone developing insight while abiding in this state, it is almost impossible to contemplate the attributes even after exiting. It requires at least the level of wisdom of someone like Ven. Sāriputta, and even he was only able to contemplate

<sup>166</sup> Also called the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*).

<sup>167</sup> Nd. II. 24; cf.: S. II. 150-1; SA. II. 135; AA. IV. 196.

<sup>168</sup> DA. II. 372.

them as a group (*kalāpa-vipassanā*). Only Buddhas are capable of discerning and analyzing each individual attribute (*anupada-vipassanā*).<sup>169</sup>

The scriptures refer to the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*) as ‘bases for insight’,<sup>170</sup> ‘bases for the fruits of attainment’,<sup>171</sup> and collectively as a ‘basis for the attainment of cessation’.<sup>172</sup> This is not the case with the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, which does not function in an active way. This is seen clearly in relation to the attainment of cessation, for which the active attainment is the realm of nothingness; although the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is an essential intermediate stage, it acts more as a corridor.<sup>173</sup> Even if one has attained the gradual stages of concentration up to the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one will be unable to enter the attainment of cessation if one has not prepared the mind adequately between the realm of nothingness and the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. And one will have to return to the realm of nothingness to fulfil this prerequisite.<sup>174</sup>

From this we may conclude that the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is limited to experiencing the fruits of this particular attainment. When exiting this realm, one exits definitively: no mind states at this level of consciousness remain. In regard to insight practice, unlike other attainments of *jhāna*, one does not exit the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception to shift one’s focus of attention,

<sup>169</sup>See: M. II. 231-2; S. II. 150-1; DA. II. 372; MA. IV. 88; SA. II. 135; DhsA. 206-11; Vism. 335-7; VismṬ.: Āruppaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nevasaññānāsaññāyatanakathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>170</sup>E.g.: PsA. I. 194 = DhsA. 228 = Vism. 666-7; MA. II. 146, [2/468]; MA. IV. 160, [3/571]; AA. IV. 202; VinA. I. 244; VbhA. 413; NdA. I. 120; NdA. II. 332; VinṬ.: Pārājikakaṇḍam, Sikkhāsāḍḍhapaḍaḍḍhājanīyavaṇṇanā.

<sup>171</sup>E.g.: UdA. 186.

<sup>172</sup>E.g.: MA. II. 234.

<sup>173</sup>DA. II. 372.

<sup>174</sup>Vism. 707-708; confer the claim at DhsA. 230 that the Path arising for someone investigating the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is utterly different from the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception itself.

but rather one drops to a lower level of attainment: the realm of nothingness.<sup>175</sup> This is an exit from the attainment in all respects.

As a preliminary to insight practice, the suttas therefore use the expression ‘exiting the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception’. There is no specific mention of using the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception as a ‘basis for insight’. One can still use the expression ‘basis for insight’, as the mind is highly refined after exiting from the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, although technically the mind applies access-concentration associated with the realm of nothingness. Note also that the concentration in all the formless jhānas is of the level of the fourth jhāna; it is just increasingly more refined and removed from mental disturbances (*paccanika-dhamma*).<sup>176</sup>

The ‘extinction of perception and feeling’ (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) is clearly confined to experiencing the fruits of this particular attainment. It is not possible to develop insight while in this state, since no perceptions or feelings (along with other aggregates – *khandha*) accompany this attainment that can be a focus for contemplation. A unique characteristic of this state is that it is the only attainment (*samāpatti*) that is not classified as concentration (*samādhi*), a fact that corroborates the assertion that one must first exit this state to develop insight.<sup>177</sup> {486}

When exiting this state to practise insight one ought to abide in the highest level of concentration that can be used for this activity, that is, the state of nothingness. (One can use any level of concentration including ‘momentary-concentration’ – *khaṇika-samādhi*, which is not even a level of jhāna, since someone who has reached a higher level of attainment has mastery over lower levels.) In any case, although the ‘extinction of perception and feeling’ cannot directly be used to develop insight, accessing this attainment greatly refines the mind and has tremendous benefits for spiritual practice.

<sup>175</sup>The realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception does not have a focus of attention. Those who enter this state focus on the realm of nothingness to advance. By letting go of this focus they enter the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. See, e.g.: D. III. 265-6; Vbh. 245; DhsA. 208; Vism. 333-8.

<sup>176</sup>See: Dhs. 55-6; DA. II. 387, 514; VinT.: Catutthapārājikaṃ, Vinītavatthuvaṇṇanā.

<sup>177</sup>VbhA. 463.



## 8.10 APPENDIX 4: THE MIND-MOMENT AT REALIZATION OF PATH AND FRUIT

Several commentarial passages address the teaching that at the moment of realizing arahantship the mind must reach ‘attainment-concentration’ (*appanā-samādhi* = *jhāna*), even for someone who has never previously entered *jhāna*.<sup>178</sup> Following the model of the *Abhidhamma*, these passages outline the sequence of the mind’s activity at the moment of realizing path and fruit<sup>179</sup> for one who uses insight as a vehicle (*vipassanā-yānika*). This outline can be illustrated thus (the numbers in parentheses refer to distinct mind-moments):

(*Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*<sup>180</sup> → *bhavaṅga* →) *mano-dvārāvajjana*  
(mental apprehension) → (1) *parikamma* (preparation)<sup>181</sup> → (2)  
*upacāra* (approach) → (3) *anuloma* (adaptation) → (4) *gotrabhū*  
(maturation) → (5) *magga-citta* → (6-7) *phala-citta*<sup>182</sup> → *bhavaṅga*.

Alternatively:

(*Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa* → *bhavaṅga* →) *mano-dvārāvajjana* → (1)  
*upacāra* → (2) *anuloma* → (3) *gotrabhū* → (4) *magga-citta* → (5-6-7)  
*phala-citta* → *bhavaṅga*.

The process following from the first *bhavaṅga* and including maturation is called ‘sense-sphere impulsion’ (*kāmāvacara-javana*). As a pair, *magga-* and *phala-citta* are called ‘transcendent attainment impulsion’ (*lokuttara-appanājavana*).

<sup>178</sup>UdA. 33; PsA. I. 29; DhsA. 231; Vism. 669-70 and Comp.: *Vīthiparicchedo*, *Appanājavanavāro*.

<sup>179</sup>The ‘period of attainment apperception’ (*appanājavana-vāra*) in the course of the Path (*magga-vīthi*).

<sup>180</sup>This is the eighth level of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*).

<sup>181</sup>This stage is sometimes omitted.

<sup>182</sup>This stage has two mind-moments (unless *parikamma* is left out, in which case it has three mind moments). PsA. 29 and DhsA. 231 present an alternative outline which has two mind-moments of adaptation and a single moment of *phala-citta*, but this is refuted at Vism. 675.

Here is a broad outline of the sequence of the mind's activity for one who uses tranquillity as a vehicle (*samatha-yānika*):

*Bhavaṅga* → *ñāṇa-vīthi* (consciousness-process of knowledge) →  
*bhavaṅga* → *vipassanā-vīthi* (consciousness-process of insight)<sup>183</sup> →  
*bhavaṅga* → *magga-vīthi*<sup>184</sup> → *bhavaṅga*.

In any case, the knowledge and clear insight arising at the moment of awakening, which produces a profound transformation by dispelling mental defilement and altering personality, must be an experience that permeates the entire heart and mind.

## 8.11 APPENDIX 5: NON-RETURNERS AFTER DEATH

The Abhidhamma states that after death non-returners reappear in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsā*) and classifies the Pure Abodes as a realm of the fourth *jhāna*.<sup>185</sup> The Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī, however, explains that non-returners will appear in a realm corresponding to their particular level of *jhāna*; the only fixed rule is that the Pure Abodes are exclusively for non-returners.<sup>186</sup> This raises the doubt as to how the non-returners (e.g. those mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga* and *Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā*) who are pure insight practitioners (*suddhavipassanā-yānika* or *sukkha-vipassaka*) and do not attain the fourth *jhāna* can appear in the Pure Abodes.<sup>187</sup> The Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī responds to this doubt by saying: Although those non-returners are pure insight practitioners, at the time of death they invariably generate the attainments (*samāpatti*) because they have developed concentration completely.<sup>188</sup> In

<sup>183</sup>This is a very general presentation; in fact, there is a repeated dropping into sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) during this process of insight.

<sup>184</sup>The course of the Path (*magga-vīthi*) is identical (steps 1-7) to that shown above.

<sup>185</sup>Vbh. 425; Comp.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedo*, *Kammacatukkaṃ*; Comp.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedo*, *Bhūmicatukkaṃ*.

<sup>186</sup>CompT.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Kammacatukkavaṇṇanā*.

<sup>187</sup>See: *Vism.* 702 and *VismT.*: *Paññābhāvanānisaṃsaniddesaṇṇanā*, *Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā*.

<sup>188</sup>CompT.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Kammacatukkavaṇṇanā*.

any case, suttas of the Pali Canon confirm that non-returners who have reached any of the first four jhānas all reappear in the Pure Abodes.<sup>189</sup> Here too the commentaries explain that these non-returners attain the fourth jhāna before reappearing in the Pure Abodes.<sup>190</sup>

## 8.12 APPENDIX 6: ATTAINMENT OF CESSATION (NIRODHA-SAMĀPATTI)

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Do not be confused by the passage in the Visuddhimagga referring to those monks who are about to enter ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*), that states:

Let me dwell in bliss by being without consciousness here and now and ‘reaching the cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*) that is [similar to] Nibbāna.

*Vism.* 705.

The Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā explains this passage as: ‘Attainment of cessation is similar to attaining “Nibbāna with no remaining fuel” (*anupādisesa-nibbāna*).’<sup>191</sup> A person in this attainment has no perception and feeling and resembles someone who has died.<sup>192</sup> The above passage does not imply that ‘attainment of cessation’ is the same as Nibbāna; rather, one relies on *nirodha-samāpatti* in order to realize Nibbāna; it is one means of coming into contact with Nibbāna. It is normal for awakened people to regularly be in contact with Nibbāna. While abiding in ‘fruition attainment’ (*phala-samāpatti*), noble beings of all stages fix Nibbāna as their object of awareness.

A passage in the Aṅguttara Nikāya states:

<sup>189</sup> A. II. 128, 130.

<sup>190</sup> AA. III. 126.

<sup>191</sup> VismṬ.: Paññābhāvanānisamsaniddesavaṇṇanā, Nirodhasamāpattikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>192</sup> Trans.: *nirodha-samāpatti* is also known as the ‘cessation of perception and feeling’ (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*).

A monk attains the extinction of perception and feeling, and by seeing with wisdom the taints are destroyed. This is visible Nibbāna (*diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*) directly (*nippariyāya*).

A. IV. 454-5.

Here, ‘extinction of perception and feeling’ (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) is not Nibbāna but a basis for which to realize Nibbāna. Nibbāna is equal to the destruction of the taints.<sup>193</sup> Additional suttas state that the eight *vimokkha* (note that *nirodha-samāpatti* is a kind of *vimokkha*) are to be realized with the body,<sup>194</sup> while the end of the *āśava* (a definition of Nibbāna) is to be realized by wisdom.<sup>195</sup> A passage in the Saṃyutta Nikāya states:

For one who has attained the cessation of perception and feeling, perception and feeling have ceased. For a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed, lust, hatred and delusion have ceased.

S. IV. 217.

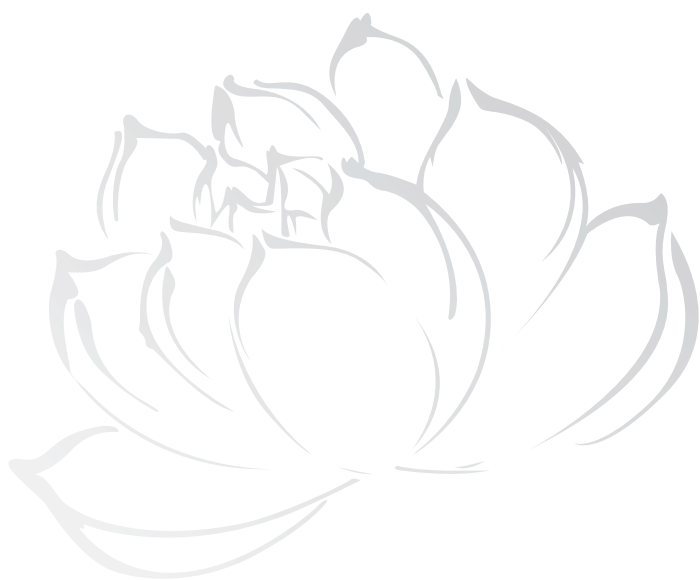
Note also that at the Buddha’s Parinibbāna he entered the progressive abidings of concentrative attainment (*anupubbavīhāra-samāpatti*), from the first jhāna up to the extinction of perception and feeling, but he did not enter final Nibbāna in *nirodha-samāpatti*.<sup>196</sup> He gradually returned to the first jhāna and then entered successive jhānas up to the fourth jhāna, at which point he attained final Nibbāna.

<sup>193</sup> AA. IV. 207 claims Nibbāna is the end of the defilements – *kilesa-nibbāna*.

<sup>194</sup> DA. III. 1022 and [AA. 2/469] say that the ‘mental body’ is meant here.

<sup>195</sup> D. III. 230; A. III. 221-2.

<sup>196</sup> D. II. 156; S. I. 158.





# SECTION V.

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## A NOBLE LIFE

### Chapter 9

### *The Supernatural and the Divine*

### Chapter 10

### *Buddhist Teachings on Desire*

### Chapter 11

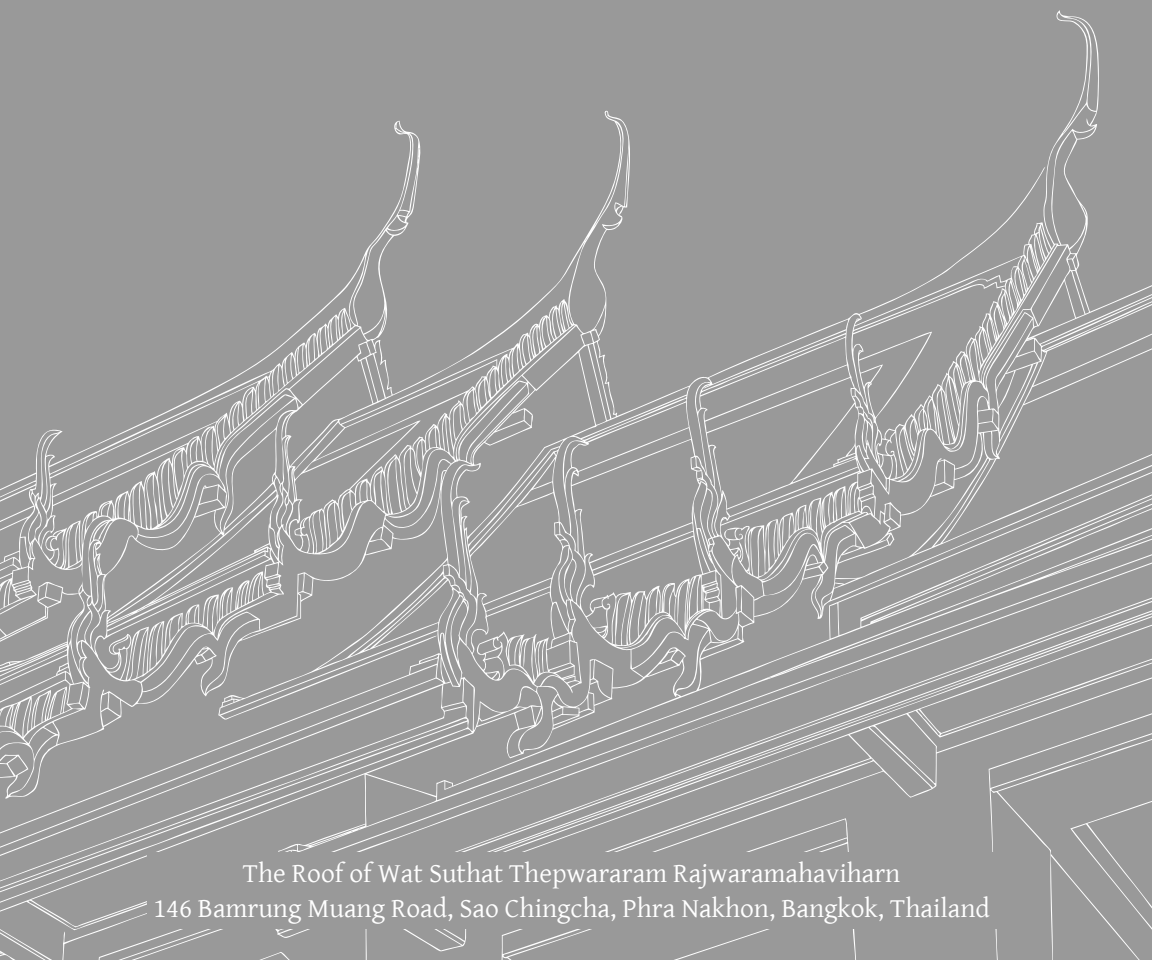
### *Happiness*

Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline: (1) does not create suffering for himself when he is not beset by suffering; (2) does not forsake genuine happiness; (3) does not indulge in that happiness (i.e. even genuine happiness); (4) strives in order to bring an end to the cause of suffering (i.e. strives in order to realize supreme happiness).

*M. II. 223*

Look here, Ānanda, there is another method... A monk should direct the mind on some inspiring sign. When he directs his mind on some inspiring sign, joy is born. When he is joyous, rapture is born. When the mind is infused by rapture, the body relaxes. When the body is relaxed, one experiences happiness. For one who is happy the mind becomes concentrated.

*S. V. 155-56*



The Roof of Wat Suthat Thepwararam Rajwaramahaviharn  
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## CHAPTER 9

# THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE DIVINE

### *The Supernatural and the Divine*

#### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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If one poses the question whether Buddhism affirms the existence of supernatural phenomena (see Note 9.1) and celestial beings, the answer based on literal evidence in the Tipiṭaka and other scriptures is unequivocally yes. Scriptural confirmation for this reply is extensive and abundant.<sup>1</sup> Having said this, it is difficult for people to reach an agreement or consensus on whether these things truly exist or not.

Many people feel that a belief in these things has harmful consequences, a viewpoint that has led some scholars to interpret these phenomena in a metaphorical way. It is not necessary here to examine these interpretations at length. Even if one accepts the literal interpretation that these things exist, the Buddhist teachings contain adequate safeguards to help prevent superstitious beliefs or an obsessive need to prove the validity of the supernatural.

Many people, from the ancient past to the present day, have believed in or feared ghosts, spirits, divine powers, the mystical, and the miraculous. Buddhism boldly asserts the existence of these things while declaring a

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 1: Supernatural Phenomena Recorded in the Scriptures.

## NOTE 9.1: THE TERM ‘SUPERNATURAL’

Trans.: note that I use the term ‘supernatural’ here in the sense of ‘exceeding the ordinary’, ‘miraculous’, ‘belonging to a higher realm’, or ‘an event that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature’. As the venerable author points out in chapter 4 of *Buddhadhamma* on Dependent Origination, the Buddhist teachings do not recognize a supernatural entity, as existing above nature and having power over it. In a similar vein, the term ‘supernatural’ here does not imply a reality outside the natural world or a power going beyond natural forces. In this sense, the term ‘supermundane’, although not a common word, may be more accurate in this context.

freedom for humans in relation to them. The Buddhist teachings set forth principles that help people benefit from their relationship to supernatural phenomena. At the very least, upholding these principles causes less harm than trying to discover incontestable proof for the existence or non-existence of such things. It is important to know what these Buddhist principles are and how to apply them to daily life.

Buddhism is not interested in the debate whether supernatural phenomena and divine beings truly exist or not, and it discourages people from wasting time trying to prove the existence of these things. Buddhism is interested rather in people’s attitude and proper conduct in relation to the supernatural. In Buddhism, it is less important to know whether gods, spirits, ghosts, psychic powers, or miracles exist than to know (assuming that these things do exist) what sort of bearing they have on human life and to know the proper relationship to them. {942}

Some people may counter that one cannot know how to properly relate to these things until one has first proven their existence. But it is precisely the obsessive desire to prove the existence (or non-existence) of these things that has led to so much unskilful behaviour in relation to them. And to this day no definitive proof has been found either way.

Supernatural phenomena, including psychic powers and divine beings, are unprovable: it is impossible to offer indisputable evidence for their existence or non-existence. Believers in these things are unable to convince non-believers of their existence, while disbelievers are likewise

unable to present clear-cut evidence to believers of their non-existence, whereby these latter people relinquish any lingering belief in their validity. Both parties abide on the level of faith or belief: they believe these things exist, or believe they do not exist, or they outright reject their existence. (Even if one has truly witnessed these things, one is unable to accurately share this realization with others.)

Apart from there being no undisputed proof that these things exist or do not exist, these things are elusive or evasive: occasionally an exciting trace of these things leads to a feeling of certainty in their existence, but as soon as one tries to capture the phenomenon, the feeling proves unsatisfactory. Even at times when a person feels convinced of these things' existence, doubts arise; the more one searches for them, the more elusive they become; the more elusive they are, the more fascinating they become. An obsession with supernatural phenomena may thus lead people to almost drift away from this world.

Efforts to prove the existence of such unverifiable and mysterious phenomena are a waste of time and energy and create all kinds of problems, both individual and social. As long as effort is being expended on the futile search for definitive proof, believers and disbelievers argue with one another, refute each other's theories, cause discord, and end up going their own ways. They are unable to modify their attitudes and behaviour because they are waiting for conclusive evidence, which never comes. No true consensus or unity is ever reached.

On a social or political level, a lack of consensus or agreement on these issues may lead to coercion or even persecution. Believers may then force non-believers into adopting a particular faith. Conversely, non-believers may prohibit believers from practising their beliefs, as is seen in some political ideologies that hold entirely to the scientific method. If government officials in such political systems think that people hold foolish or superstitious beliefs, they may force the people to abandon their beliefs and to adopt the state ideology (of repudiation of supernatural phenomena).

But this coercion does not solve the problem at its source; it does not ‘clear’ people from doubt;<sup>2</sup> force merely leads to a suppression of faith. {943} Such control can be maintained as long as the force or persuasion is strong, but as soon as these weaken, the suppressed faith sprouts, blossoms and spreads. And when this happens, the beliefs and practices may be as irrational, directionless, and harmful as before, without having been attended to and corrected.

From one perspective, the supernatural exists primarily as a set of beliefs in the minds of unawakened persons, and these beliefs are liable to fluctuation. Some people originally repudiate the supernatural and look upon believers with contempt, but after they have what they believe to be a mystical experience their perspective shifts completely and they become zealous believers. Without access to teachings clarifying a proper relationship to these things, they become more spellbound and preoccupied with them than those who believe from the beginning. Likewise, some people who have had a firm faith in these things later have an experience suggesting the object of their faith is unsatisfactory or uncertain, and as a consequence their faith is shaken or they become outright disbelievers.

This being the case, many people are caught up with the question whether these things exist or not, while at the same time they lack practical measures that help to prevent the harm in holding fixed beliefs and opinions. Buddhism emphasizes practical considerations: it teaches those things that every person can apply and benefit from, suitable to their individual level of maturity and ability. In reference to supernatural phenomena, Buddhism offers clear teachings: the emphasis is on one’s relationship to them and on knowing one’s reasons for adopting certain attitudes and behaviour in relation to them. In other words, it is not crucial to believe or disbelieve in these things; rather, a person should develop a proper relationship to them.

Both believers and non-believers can follow the Buddhist principles on this subject; if they do, their conduct in relation to questions of the supernatural will differ in only a negligible way. Furthermore, this conduct will

<sup>2</sup>*Na sodhenti maccaṃ avitīṇṇakaṅkhaṃ; Sn. 45.*

benefit both parties (of believers and disbelievers), because each side will develop mutual care and consideration. Believers will uphold their faith in a way that does not cause harm to themselves or others, while non-believers will respect believers and may be able to advise them on how to relate to the objects of their faith constructively.

This principle of balanced practice – of establishing an appropriate attitude and relationship to things that cannot be proven and need not be directly realized for spiritual fulfilment – is a unique characteristic of Buddhism, distinguishing it from other religions and philosophies, including modern ideologies.<sup>3</sup>

When based on these proper principles, there is no harm in searching for proof of supernatural phenomena. If people have this special interest and do not cause trouble to others, then we can maintain an open mind to such a pursuit. It can be seen as similar to research in other fields of knowledge. {944}

Because matters concerning the supernatural are unprovable, people's attitude and relationship to these things is crucial. And because these things exist primarily as a set of beliefs in people's minds, the particular belief in either the existence or non-existence of these things is of minor importance.

In sum, the existence or non-existence of supernatural phenomena, including divine beings and psychics powers, have little bearing on the key teachings and tenets of Buddhism. Even though miracles and divine beings are claimed by the scriptures to exist, the practice and highest realization of Buddhism is possible without a person having any engagement with these things.

In relation to this subject the Buddha said:

*The Buddha:* What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Whether I perform miracles, which are qualities of supreme persons, or not, does the

<sup>3</sup>This principle is included in the booklet titled 'Criteria for Analyzing the Meaning and Value of Buddha-Dhamma', which I hope to include as a separate chapter in future editions of *Buddhadhamma*.

Dhamma that I have taught to reach the goal lead to the total destruction of suffering?

*Sunakkhatta:* Lord, whether the Lord performs miracles, which are qualities of supreme persons, or not, the Dhamma that the Blessed One has taught to reach the goal leads to the total destruction of suffering.

*The Buddha:* What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Whether I make known that which is considered the origin of the world or not, does the Dhamma that I have taught to reach the goal lead to the total destruction of suffering?

*Sunakkhatta:* Lord, whether the Lord makes known that which is considered the origin of the world or not, the Dhamma that the Blessed One has taught to reach the goal leads to the total destruction of suffering.<sup>4</sup> {945}

*D. III. 3-4.*

## 9.2 MIRACLES AND PSYCHIC POWERS

### A. INTRODUCTION

Although psychic powers are classified as expressions of ‘higher knowledge’ (*abhiññā*),<sup>5</sup> psychic powers of all kinds, including the ‘divine ear’, clairvoyance, telepathy, and recollection of past lives, are mundane forms of higher knowledge. They are connected to mundane phenomena, belong to the domain of unawakened beings, and remain under the sway of mental defilement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Compare with the Buddha’s teachings at M. I. 428-32 on those things to be explained and those things to be left unexplained.

<sup>5</sup>Also translated as ‘supernormal power’ or ‘supreme knowledge’. In Pali, psychic powers (*iddhi*) may be referred to as a ‘wonder of psychic power’ (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*), ‘form of psychic power’ (*iddhi-vidhi*), or ‘manner of psychic power’ (*iddhi-vidhā*).

<sup>6</sup>Trans.: there are five forms of mundane supreme knowledge: (1) magical powers, including the ability to become invisible, to project mind-made images of oneself, to pass through solid things, to walk on water, to fly through the air, etc.; (2) divine ear; (3) telepathy; (4) recollection of past lives; and (5) clairvoyance.

People achieved these mundane forms of higher knowledge even before the time of the Buddha; they are not dependent on the arising of Buddhism. Psychic powers do not comprise the essence of Buddhism and they are not necessary for reaching its goal.

The essence of Buddhism, and that which accompanies the arising of Buddhism, is knowledge leading to the cessation of suffering and mental impurity. This knowledge, classified as the sixth (and final) form of higher knowledge, is called 'knowledge leading to the end of the taints' (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). It is a transcendent form of knowledge (*lokuttara-abhiññā*), exclusive to awakened beings. It leads unawakened people to deliverance and purity, to freedom from worldly constraints, and to complete realization as a 'noble being' (*ariya-puggala*).

The mundane forms of higher knowledge can decline, whereas transcendent supreme knowledge is unshakeable. Achieving transcendent supreme knowledge is superior to achieving all five of the mundane forms of higher knowledge, but achieving the mundane forms in addition to transcendent supreme knowledge is considered outstanding and a sign of perfection. Transcendent supreme knowledge is essential for a truly virtuous life; mundane forms of higher knowledge are not essential, but rather enhance a person's personal qualities.<sup>7</sup>

### B. THREE KINDS OF MIRACLES

The Buddha classified psychic powers as one of the three kinds of miracles (*pāṭihāriya*):<sup>8</sup>

1. *Iddhi-pāṭihāriya*: the miracle of performing psychic powers.
2. *Ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*: the miracle of mind-reading.
3. *Anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*: the miracle of instruction: the teaching of truth, which leads to true insight and fulfilment.

<sup>7</sup>Detailed explanations of the forms of higher knowledge (*abhiññā*), along with scriptural references, are presented in chapter 7 on awakened beings.

<sup>8</sup>D. I. 212-15; D. III. 220; A. I. 170; Ps. II. 227-8.

Here is how these miracles are described in the Pali Canon:

1. The miracle of performing psychic powers: There are some who perform various kinds of supernormal power: having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one; he appears and vanishes; he goes unhindered through a wall, through a rampart, through a mountain as if through space; he dives in and out of the earth as if it were water; he walks on water without sinking as if it were earth; he flies through the air like a bird; with his hand he touches and strokes the sun and the moon, so powerful and mighty; he exercises mastery with his body even as far as the Brahma world. {946}
2. The miracle of mind-reading: Here, a monk reads the minds of other beings, of other people, reads their mental states, their thoughts and considerations, and declares: ‘This is how your mind is, this is how it inclines, this is in your heart.’<sup>9</sup>

There are some who by means of a sign, declare: ‘This is how your mind is, this is how it inclines, this is in your heart.’ And however many such declarations he makes, they are exactly so and not otherwise. Another does not make his declarations by means of a sign, but after hearing voices of humans, of spirits or devas declares: ‘This is how your mind is, this is how it inclines, this is in your heart’ ... or by hearing the sound of a person’s applied and sustained thoughts as he thinks, declares: ‘This is how your mind is, this is how it inclines, this is in your heart’ ... or by mentally penetrating the mind of someone in a thought-free state of concentration, knows clearly the mental volitional formation in that person’s mind, and knows that after this volitional formation he will have this train of thought. And however many such declarations he makes, they are exactly so and not otherwise.

*D. III. 103-104; Ps. II. 227-8.*

<sup>9</sup>Kevaddha Sutta: D. I. 213.



The marvel of mind-reading (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*) appears similar to telepathy (*cetopariya-ñāṇa* or *paracitta-vijānana*), but it differs in that the former is still at the level of intuitive perception; it has not yet reached the level of ‘direct knowledge’ (*ñāṇa*).

3. The miracle of instruction: Here, a monk gives instruction as follows: ‘Reflect in this way, do not reflect in that way; pay attention in this way, do not pay attention in that way; you should abandon this, and dwell in the attainment of that.’

In the Kevaddha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya this passage is followed by a description of the Buddha appearing in the world and teaching the Dhamma, which instils faith in people, leading them to go forth as renunciants, develop good conduct, sense restraint, mindfulness and clear comprehension, seek solitude, develop the jhānas, and attain the six forms of higher knowledge, ending with knowledge of the destruction of the taints and the realization of arahantship. All of these results of teaching are examples of the ‘miracle of instruction’.

Here are the literal meanings of the Pali words mentioned above:

- *Pāṭihāriya* (‘miracle’): to ‘beat back’, ‘drive away’, or ‘destroy’ something that is unfavourable or hostile.
- *Iddhi* (‘psychic power’): ‘achievement’, ‘accomplishment’.
- *Ādesanā* (‘mind-reading’): to ‘indicate’, ‘reveal’, ‘point out’, ‘make clear’.
- *Anusāsani*: ‘repeated instruction’.

Applying these definitions, the Paṭisambhidāmagga explains the three kinds of miracles in a new way. It states that all virtuous qualities, like renunciation, lovingkindness, jhāna, insight into selflessness, and the path of arahantship are *iddhi-pāṭihāriya* in the sense that they lead to specific achievements and eliminate negative qualities like sensual desire, ill-will, and other mental defilements. All virtuous qualities are

*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya* in the sense that they only arise in the presence of a clear heart and unclouded mind. And virtuous qualities are *anusāsani-pāṭihāriya* because the teachings have emphasized their proper application, cultivation, development, and balance.<sup>10</sup> Although these are not common explanations for these miracles, they offer a thought-provoking perspective.

### C. PSYCHIC POWERS ARE NOT ESSENTIAL

The householder Kevaddha once went to the Buddha and asked him to perform a miracle:

Lord, this city of Nāḷandā is rich, prosperous, populous, and full of people who have faith in the Blessed One. It would be well if the Lord were to request some monk to perform a superhuman miracle. In this way the citizens of Nāḷandā would come to have even more faith – would come to have boundless faith – in the Blessed One.

The Buddha replied: Kevaddha, this is not the way I teach the Dhamma to the monks, by saying: ‘Go, monks, and perform superhuman feats for the white-clothed laypeople.’ {947}

The Buddha goes on to say that of the three kinds of miracles, he disfavours psychic powers and mind-reading, because he sees their potential harm: when hearing about these things, those who believe in their validity become further convinced, while those who are skeptical deny their validity. They may claim that a monk who performs these feats has resorted to using a magical charm (*gandhārī*), a mind-reading charm (*maṇikā*), or some other trick. This disparity of opinion is followed by arguments and disagreements.

The Buddha then explains the meaning and value of the miracle of instruction, saying that it can be applied and its benefits realized by everyone, until one reaches knowledge of the destruction of the taints, which is the goal of Buddhism.

<sup>10</sup>Ps. II, 227-8.

He gave an example of a monk who was highly skilled in psychic powers and who wanted to know where the four great elements cease without remainder.<sup>11</sup> This monk travelled to the celestial realms in search of an answer to this question, pressing on until he arrived at the Brahma realms. But finally, unable to get an answer, he returned to the human realm in order to ask the Buddha to explain the true nature of the world. This story shows how psychic powers are limited, often ineffective, and not the essence of the Buddhist teachings.<sup>12</sup>

On another occasion the brahmin Saṅgārava mentioned to the Buddha a conversation occurring among the king's courtiers in the palace on the following subject:

Formerly there were fewer monks, but there were more who displayed miracles of supernormal power transcending the human level. But now there are more monks, but fewer who display miracles of supernormal power transcending the human level.

The Buddha replied by explaining the three kinds of miracles. He then asked Saṅgārava which one of these three appeals to him as the most excellent and sublime. Saṅgārava answered that a knowledge and realization of the miracles of psychic powers and mind-reading is restricted to those who perform them; this knowledge cannot be transferred to others. From the outside, they appear as having the nature of a magician's trick. Therefore, the miracle of instruction is superior and more sublime. The recipients of this instruction can reflect on, apply, and realize these teachings, leading to the end of suffering.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Trans.: he had the following doubt: Where are the four great elements – earth, water, fire and air – extinguished without remainder? For more on this story, see chapter 6 on Nibbāna.

<sup>12</sup>See the Kevaddha Sutta: D. I. 211-23.

<sup>13</sup>See: A. I. 170-72.

#### D. NOBLE PSYCHIC POWERS

Another passage in the Pali Canon describes two kinds of psychic powers:<sup>14</sup>

1. Psychic powers that are not ‘noble’: psychic powers accompanied by mental defilement and acting as a ‘basis for suffering’ (*upadhi*), i.e. psychic powers as normally understood and as discussed earlier. Here, through determined effort, a renunciant attains liberation of the mind (*cetovimutti*) and performs various supernormal feats, like projecting mind-made images, walking through walls, flying through the air, diving into the earth, or walking on water.
2. ‘Noble’ psychic powers: psychic powers free from mental defilement and not acting as a basis for suffering. In this case a monk exercises self-mastery over his perceptions and is able to control his responses to sense impressions. He can view a repulsive object as not repulsive; for instance, he can look at a person whose face is disfigured and relate to this person with kindness and friendship. And he can view an attractive object as unattractive; for instance, he can see a charming, enticing body as repugnant. Or he can remain equanimous, relinquishing both the attractive and the repugnant, for example while reflecting on things in an unbiased way and seeing into their true nature. {948}

This passage confirms that psychic powers as normally understood – the ability to perform amazing and fantastic feats – are neither praised in Buddhism nor are they the essence of Buddhism. In Buddhism, the highest form of psychic power is the ability to control one’s responses to sense impressions and to develop mental self-mastery. This form of power causes no harm to oneself or others.

Those who exercise the former kind of psychic powers may not be able to exercise the latter, and they occasionally apply their psychic abilities to indulge their defilements. The latter kind of psychic powers, however,

<sup>14</sup>D. III. 112-13; explained at Ps. II. 212.

fosters wholesome qualities, eradicates defilement, and keeps the mind from being seduced by greed, hatred and delusion.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that the Buddha established a training rule forbidding monks from revealing psychic powers to laypeople also confirms that he did not encourage their use.<sup>16</sup>

As stated above, psychic powers are a form of mundane attainment, which enhance the attributes of those who have attained transcendent knowledge, helping them to better perform their activities and assist other human beings. The Buddha referred to someone who is endowed with the three kinds of miraculous gifts as a ‘fully accomplished one’, ‘one who has reached the goal’, ‘one who is supreme among gods and humans’.<sup>17</sup> {949}

As stated earlier, however, the miracle of instruction is the principal and constant factor, while the remaining two miracles are supplementary. When there is a good reason to perform the miracles of psychic powers and mind-reading, they should be applied merely in the early stages, preparing the way for the miracle of instruction. Instruction is the goal and consummation, as will be discussed at more length below.

<sup>15</sup>For the objective of this form of practice, see: A. III. 169. This kind of psychic power is a form of ‘deliverance of mind by way of lovingkindness’ (*mettā-cetovimutti*), by which the person has reached the level of ‘radiant liberation’ (*subha-vimokkha*). It can arise by developing the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) accompanied by lovingkindness (S. V. 119), by developing the four factors of mindfulness (S. V. 294-6), or by developing concentration (S. V. 317-8). A person who practises in this way is sometimes called a ‘noble one with developed faculties’ (M. III. 302).

<sup>16</sup>Vin. II. 112. The commentaries (see: VinA. VI. 1203) claim that the Buddha only forbade *vikubbanā-iddhi* (‘powers of transformation’, e.g. transfiguring oneself into different forms, creating mind-created objects for others to see, speaking while remaining invisible, or revealing only half of one’s body); he did not forbid *adhiṭṭhāna-iddhi* (‘governing powers’, e.g. revealing oneself as many, walking on water, or diving into the earth); this interpretation, however, seems to not be favoured.

<sup>17</sup>A. I. 292; A. V. 326-7.

### E. DANGERS OF PSYCHIC POWERS

Psychic powers can be harmful both for people who possess them and for those associating with these people. Unenlightened people who possess these powers may be intoxicated by them:<sup>18</sup> they may become conceited, feeling superior and denigrating others; they may become obsessed with the material gains and honours accruing from such powers; they may become dishonest; or they may use these powers for evil purposes, as in the case of Ven. Devadatta.

At least, the attachment to or delight in psychic powers prevents a person from realizing higher spiritual qualities and from cleansing the mind from impurities. And because the psychic abilities of unawakened persons are subject to decline, the anxiety around protecting these powers is an obstacle, which interferes with wise reflection and the effective application of insight. Psychic powers are thus classified as obstacles to insight meditation (*iddhi-palibodha*), which should be removed or eliminated by one who is developing wisdom.<sup>19</sup>

There is a high likelihood that people associating with a person who has psychic powers may also be harmed. The primary danger is that these people will become victims. Someone possessing (or pretending to possess) psychic powers may boast of these powers in order to seek personal gain.

Note that those people who practise correctly and who have aptitude in this area only exercise psychic powers in those circumstances when they deem them appropriate as a channel leading to proper instruction. For if not to offer Dhamma teachings, why would someone display such powers other than to seek personal fame or material gain?

It is thus important to remember that psychic powers should always be accompanied by proper instruction. If someone reveals or claims to have psychic powers without these powers being a bridge leading to the

<sup>18</sup>*Iddhi-mada*. This intoxication falls under the same category as being intoxicated by knowledge, moral conduct, jhāna, etc.; see: Vbh. 345-6.

<sup>19</sup>Vism. 89-90, 97.

## NOTE 9.2: LEADING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

This subject includes sacred and magical objects, occult powers, and those things the Buddha referred to as the base or ‘beastly’ arts (*tiracchāna-vijjā*). The base arts are forms of knowledge that bar the way to heaven and to Nibbāna, or external teachings that do not accord with the goal of Buddhism. They mostly involve divination, prophesying, and the treatment of disease, which for a bhikkhu are considered faulty and harmful from a moral point of view if he practises these arts to make a living or to seek personal gain.

*Tiracchāna-vijjā* are distinct from *iddhi-pāṭihāriya*. *Tiracchāna-vijjā* are discussed at D. I. 9-12 and mentioned repeatedly in the *Sīlakkhandhavagga* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. There are precepts forbidding the learning and teaching of these arts at, e.g.: Vin. II. 140; Vin. IV. 306; explained at, e.g.: DA. I. 131; Nd1A. II. 402.

‘miracle of instruction’, their behaviour can be considered incorrect.<sup>20</sup>  
{950}

They may have bad or deceitful intentions, they may be seeking personal gain, or they may simply have a deluded understanding of psychic powers. This same principle can be applied in the case of sacred objects or amulets: someone who uses such objects when relating to people, without providing any form of teaching – without leading them to the development of wisdom, to an understanding of the truth, and to a gradual freedom from these objects – is practising incorrectly and leading people in a wrong direction. (See Note 9.2)

Even if a person does not fall victim to someone who claims to possess psychic powers, a fascination or preoccupation with these things runs counter to two important Buddhist principles:

First, Buddhism teaches the path to liberation. Because psychic powers are not of essential importance to Buddhism – they are not directly related to the goal of Buddhism and do not help people to be free from mental

<sup>20</sup>In a similar context, the Buddha was highly critical of people who use their moral precepts and religious practices to influence people while seeking fame, praise, or material gain.

defilement – a fascination with these things tends to be a waste of time and energy, which could be used to practise the Dhamma.

Second, those people who associate with someone claiming psychic or sacred powers generally wish for help from supernatural or divine forces, say for good luck or wealth. This behaviour is inconsistent with a central tenet of Buddhism, which is a teaching of action (*kamma-vāda*), a teaching of activity (*kiriya-vāda*), and a teaching of effort (*viriya-vāda*): Buddhism teaches people to seek results through determined, deliberate action in line with cause and effect.

The wish for results through supplication to divine or supernatural forces can lead to inactivity or laziness. It leads to a lack of effort, a lack of urgency to undertake necessary tasks or to avoid harm, and it contradicts the principle of heedfulness.

If one takes an interest in psychic powers it is better that one develops these powers oneself (although this still may be a waste of time), because the wish for results from others' powers or from divine forces is a reliance on external things and makes a person more dependent on them. Instead of leading to more independence, this reliance on external things makes a person less grounded and more confused; a person's resourcefulness, inner strength, and self-confidence is diminished. The reliance on external things contradicts another basic principle of Buddhism, which teaches self-reliance – being a refuge unto oneself. Buddhism teaches the path to liberation, which at the end transcends faith and leads to pure wisdom. The Path begins with dependence on the wisdom of the Teacher,<sup>21</sup> who is a 'spiritual friend' (*kalyāṇamitta*). Eventually, one can abandon even this form of dependence and stand on one's own two feet, without the support from a teacher.<sup>22</sup> {951}

<sup>21</sup>Trans.: the Buddha.

<sup>22</sup>Note that the principle of self-reliance needs to be balanced by the principle of respect or veneration for the Dhamma. Note also that a truly liberated person heeds the teachings and is highly disciplined. Heeding the teachings and the principle of faith are not identical. Heeding the teachings or a disciplined compliance to the teachings can stem from faith or from wisdom; arahants practise in accord with the teachings and keep the standards of discipline out of wisdom.



## F. PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO PSYCHIC POWERS

Regarding how the display of psychic powers affects people in general, let us look at the conduct of the Buddha and his disciples, who were exceptionally skilled in psychic powers. As mentioned earlier, the Buddha clearly disfavoured the miracles of performing psychic powers and mind-reading, but consistently supported and applied the miracle of instruction; instruction lies at the heart of the Buddha's activities. There were instances, however, when the Buddha performed psychic powers.

By looking at these occasions, we can conclude that the Buddha only exercised psychic powers when he was subduing (or 'taming') those who possessed these powers – those who gave great import to these powers or who with arrogance felt superior to others – so that they would abandon their infatuation with them. He performed psychic powers to subdue psychic powers, to encourage a person who was fascinated in or conceited about them to realize their limitation, and to see things that are superior to them – to study and recognize things which the Buddha revealed through the miracle of instruction. This is similar to the aforementioned principle of applying psychic powers in conjunction with instruction, but here the application is limited to those who are intoxicated by psychic powers and who express a stubborn pride when encountering the Buddha, for example in the story of subduing the god Brahma.

There are some stories of the Buddha's chief disciples combining the display of psychic powers with instruction, to people who were fascinated with these powers, for example the story of Ven. Sāriputta instructing Ven. Devadatta's disciples with the miracle of mind-reading, and similar stories of Ven. Mahā Moggallāna exercising psychic powers.

There are a few stories of monks revealing psychic powers to help people, but there is not a single instance in the Pali Canon of monks exercising these powers as a consequence of people's request for them.<sup>23</sup> There were instances when people made this request because they wanted to witness these powers, but the Buddha established a training

<sup>23</sup>For references to the display of psychic powers in the scriptures, see Appendix 1.

rule forbidding monks from displaying such powers to laypeople, as mentioned earlier.

In everyday life, people must live with other human beings and live under ordinary circumstances. Rather than relying on invisible, external forces, which have no direct connection to people, Buddhism emphasizes how it is better to train and discipline oneself, to develop knowledge and skill so that one can solve problems using ordinary, rational methods and reach success through righteous means. The Buddha defined the ability leading to success as a ‘power’ (*iddhi*), which accords with the Buddhist teachings. This ability is twofold: material power (*āmisā-iddhi*) and spiritual power (*dhamma-iddhi*), the latter being the leading principle.<sup>24</sup> {952}

There are two primary points revealing the limitations of psychic powers, along with all forms of sacred or supernormal forces, revealing that these powers are not of essential importance to Buddhism, are not related to the goal of Buddha-Dhamma, are unnecessary for walking the Buddhist path, and offer no true security or safety:

1. From the perspective of wisdom, supernatural powers cannot directly give rise to wisdom, to the penetration of truth, and to an understanding of phenomena as they really are. An example of this limitation is the story of the monk who possessed psychic powers and went in search of an answer throughout all realms of existence until he arrived at the realm of Brahma, who claims to have created the world, yet this monk’s quest was in vain. A similar story describes the rishi who unsuccessfully travelled in search of the end of the universe until he died.<sup>25</sup>
2. From the perspective of the mind, psychic powers are unable to truly eliminate mental defilements or to end suffering. When the mind is confused, depressed, agitated, or overwhelmed by greed,

<sup>24</sup> *Āmisā-iddhi* (material success or prosperity; materiality as a creative force) and *dhamma-iddhi* (success or prosperity by way of the Dhamma; spiritual prosperity; the Dhamma as a creative force; power of righteousness); see: A. I. 93-4. Having a beautiful physical appearance, long life, good health, and being attractive are also called forms of ‘achievement’ (*iddhi*); see: D. II. 177; M. III. 176.

<sup>25</sup> D. I. 215-6; S. I. 61-2; A. II. 47-8.

hatred and delusion, these powers are unable to lead to freedom; even if one suppresses these negative states of mind through the power of *jhāna*, this solution is only temporary. Whenever one exits the state of concentration and faces ordinary life, the defilements return to disturb and harass, and to cause suffering. Even worse, psychic powers may be used to serve the defilements, as happened in the case of Ven. Devadatta.<sup>26</sup>

### 9.3 DIVINE BEINGS

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#### A. HUMAN BEINGS AND DIVINE BEINGS

Most of the material in the preceding section on miracles and psychic powers also applies to the subject of divine beings (*devatā*). (See Note 9.3) People generally take an interest in divine beings for practical reasons: they wish and pray for help from divine beings, who possess special powers, in the same way as they seek help from other forms of supernatural powers. The aforementioned principles, especially on the advantages and potential harm of supernatural powers, are therefore relevant to the subject of divine beings. There are, however, some additional matters for consideration.

Generally speaking, all forms of divine beings up to the highest levels of Brahma gods are companions in birth, old age, suffering and death, companions in the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*). Moreover, as is the case with human beings, the majority of these divine beings are unawakened beings (*puṭhujjana*), possessing mental defilements. Although some divine beings are enlightened, most of them realized enlightenment in a previous life as a human being. Although divine beings are ranked as superior to human beings in spiritual qualities, the celestial realms and the human realm are so similar that they are both classified as a ‘happy destination’ (*sugati*). {553}

<sup>26</sup>Vin. II. 184-5; if people have extremely bad thoughts, their psychic powers may degenerate, because these powers rely on *jhāna* to act as a foundation, and to enter *jhāna* a person’s mind must be pure, bright, and free from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

## NOTE 9.3: DIVINE BEINGS (DEVATĀ)

The words *deva* or *devatā* encompass all divine beings, including Brahma gods. Divine beings are categorized into three groups:

1. devas of the sensual sphere; those beings attached to sensuality; the abodes of these beings are sometimes referred to as the ‘six heavens connected to sensuality’ (*chakāmāvacara-sagga*): the realm of the Four Great Kings (*cātummahārājikā*), the realm of the Thirty-Three gods (*tāvatiṃsā*); the realm of the Yāma gods (*yāmā*); the realm of the contented gods (*tusitā*); the realm of the gods who rejoice in their own creations (*nimmānaratī*); the realm of gods who lord over the creation of others (*paranimitavasavattī*);
2. divine beings of the fine material plane (*rūpa* Brahmas), of which there are sixteen levels; and
3. divine beings of the formless plane (*arūpa* Brahmas).

Comp.: *Vīthimuttaparicchedo*, *Paṭisandhicatukkaṃ*.

In some respects divine beings have an advantage over human beings, while in other respects human beings have the advantage. On one occasion the Buddha compared the residents of India (*Jambudīpa* – ‘Land of the Rose-apple Trees’) with the gods of *Tāvatiṃsā* heaven, and claimed that the gods are superior to humans in three aspects: divine age, divine beauty, and divine happiness, while humans are superior to the gods in three aspects: courage, mindfulness, and the practice of the holy life (i.e. the practice of the noble path – *ariya-magga*).<sup>27</sup>

Normally, humans consider themselves inferior to divine beings and want to be reborn in heaven, but divine beings consider rebirth as a human being to be a ‘happy destination’, as confirmed by the Buddha: *The human state, monks, is the devas’ reckoning of a good destination.*<sup>28</sup> When a divine being is about to pass away, the other devas invoke a blessing so that this being may take birth as a human, since the human realm is a place where one can choose to perform wholesome, virtuous deeds and

<sup>27</sup> A. IV. 396–7.

<sup>28</sup> It. 76–8.

give oneself fully to Dhamma practice (of course, one can also give oneself fully to unwholesome actions).<sup>29</sup>

The Buddha considered birth as one of the gods, who live an exceptionally long time, as a wasted opportunity for practising the holy life.<sup>30</sup> One can even call such a birth bad luck. Divine beings experience undiluted happiness, which tends to lead to heedlessness and to weakly established mindfulness. The human realm contains a mixture of happiness and suffering, and it offers a wide range of experiences and lessons. If a human being knows how to properly direct attention he or she will gain understanding, develop mindfulness that is agile and alert, develop self-discipline, and progress in the ‘noble qualities’ (*ariya-dhamma*).<sup>31</sup>

The human realm lies between the heavenly realms and the ‘unhappy destinations’ (*apāya*), for instance the hell realms. The unhappy destinations are inhabited by beings who are evil or of base spiritual qualities. Although some of these beings can be considered good, they have fallen into these realms because unskilful deeds have borne fruit and dragged them down. The celestial realms are inhabited by beings who are comparatively virtuous. Although some of these beings are of bad character, they were born in heaven because wholesome deeds lifted the person up.

The human realm which lies in the middle is like a road junction – a place for both divine beings and beings from states of perdition to pass through. It is a place where beings from all realms of existence come to produce *kamma*. It is where evil beings better themselves and prepare for heaven, where virtuous beings commit evil deeds and prepare for hell, and where wise beings stop producing *kamma*, disentangle themselves, propagate the Dhamma, and find freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>A. IV. 225–6.

<sup>31</sup>Cf.: AA. IV. 187.

There are four levels of unhappy destinations. Beings in each distinctive level possess a similar degree of unwholesome qualities (*pāpa-dhamma*).<sup>32</sup> The celestial realms contain many different levels with ascending degrees of refinement; beings in each level possess a similar degree of virtue. Only the human realm is a centre for both vice and virtue of all hues: it contains evil people who resemble the beings from the deepest recesses of hell; it contains virtuous, refined people, similar to the highest Brahma gods; and it contains beings who have transcended all states of existence and whom even the gods venerate. {954}

The spiritual qualities and general capabilities of humans and divine beings are very similar, but human beings possess a greater opportunity for spiritual development and self-improvement. Generally speaking, devas are superior and more proficient than humans, but when humans elevate themselves by spiritual cultivation, they are equivalent to or even surpass the gods in virtue and ability (although from the perspective of Dhamma, it is not encouraged to view this as a competition).<sup>33</sup>

## B. OBSOLETE FORM OF RELATING TO THE DIVINE

Religions existing in India before the time of the Buddha were polytheistic, but their adherents also believed in a chief God, who created the world and all phenomena. It was not considered possible for human beings to be superior to this God. People related to the gods through prayer and entreaty, seeking ways to please and favour them, for example through hymns of praise, worship, propitiatory offerings, and sacrifice. Alternatively, people used other forms of supplication, by pressuring the gods into taking an interest, provoking them until they were worried and forced into lending a helping hand or appeasing the supplicants. This latter method employed various religious and ascetic practices of self-mortification and self-punishment. In sum, there are two traditional ways of relating to divine beings:

<sup>32</sup>The four ‘states of perdition’ (*apāya-bhūmi*): hell (*niraya*), the animal realm (*tiracchānayoni*), the ghost realm (*pittivisaya*), and the realm of demons (*asurakāya*).

<sup>33</sup>On the subject of higher knowledge and vision of the devas (*adhidevaññadassana*) see Appendix 5.

1. Through prayer and supplication; through offerings, worship, and sacrifice, similar to the pleadings of a child with its parents. Sometimes this behaviour turns into an effort to flatter or bribe the higher powers.
2. Through coercion, compelling the devas through various ascetic practices or religious rituals to act according to one's wishes. This resembles a child who, punching and biting, tries to force his parents to pay attention and satisfy his desires.

Both ways boil down to a search for personal gain and involve dependence on an external force. When the Buddha began teaching, he encouraged abandoning these two ways of practice, and it is this abandonment of them that distinguishes Buddhism on this subject of divine beings. By abandoning these practices, Buddhism is able to offer a more rational approach, to point clearly to the advantages and harm of different ways of acting, and to establish a new, more appropriate relationship to the divine. {955}

### C. HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DEPENDING ON DIVINE BEINGS

Reliance on divine beings has similar limitations and creates similar obstacles to those described above in relation to psychic powers. From the perspective of wisdom, devas, like human beings, are on the whole still ignorant of the truth. This is evident from the story of the monk (mentioned earlier) who travelled through the various heaven realms asking a question, which even the highest Brahma could not answer, and the story of the Buddha subduing the Brahma named Baka.

From the perspective of the mind, devas are similar to human beings in that most of them are unawakened – they still have a degree of mental defilement and suffering; they are still spinning in the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vatṭa*). Examples for this are the god Brahma, who despite his elevated spiritual qualities still heedlessly considers himself immortal,<sup>34</sup> and Indra (King of the Tāvātimsā heaven), who is intoxicated with divine

<sup>34</sup>S. I. 146–7.

treasures.<sup>35</sup> People seek help from Indra, but Indra himself is not without greed, hatred, delusion, and fear.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the dependence on divine beings conflicting with the principles of achievement through perseverance and effort, of self-reliance, and of liberation, as mentioned earlier in the section on psychic powers, there are many other harmful consequences to such behaviour:

- It is not only human beings who are harmed when they give propitiatory offerings to and curry favour with devas. Because most devas are unenlightened, they too suffer harm when they become enamoured with praise and attached to offerings, and increasingly want more of these things. In this way, both humans and devas become preoccupied with worship and the effects of worship, abandoning or neglecting their personal responsibilities, and falling into carelessness and decline.
- Some devas, when they become infatuated with offerings and praise, look for ways to increase a sense of obligation and dependence in people. For this end, they may lure people by satisfying some of their wishes so that the people have increased expectations and make more offerings, or they may even deliberately cause a crisis so that people will feel the need to turn to them.
- When acquisitive devas become obsessed with personal gain, virtuous devas who help people without seeking personal advantage become weary and stay away (customarily, devas do not wish to trouble themselves or intervene in the affairs of human beings).<sup>37</sup> Good people are then deprived of help and encouragement. As devas keen on personal gain only help when they receive an entreaty or a sacrificial gift, more people are then convinced that good deeds do not lead to good results, but that it is evil deeds that lead to good results. This causes social confusion.

<sup>35</sup>M. I. 253-4.

<sup>36</sup>S. I. 219.

<sup>37</sup>For devas, the world of human beings is dirty and smells repulsive; see: D. II. 325-6; KhA. 117; SnA. I. 180.



- When virtuous devas stay away this gives even greater opportunity for acquisitive devas to seek personal advantage. For example, when people make entreaties to a specific deity whom they worship, covetous devas will come and deceive people by pretending to be that specific deity. People will not know better because this matter is beyond their reach of comprehension. The deceitful, impersonating devas will then cause the people to be more fascinated and beguiled by the supernatural. {956}

#### D. PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVINE

From these remarks we see that those people who receive assistance from divine beings do not need to be good, and that good people do not necessarily receive assistance from such beings. This is because, for the most part, both humans and devas are unawakened and may practise incorrectly; they then cause well-ordered systems in the world to be disturbed and weakened.

Following are a few more observations on the subject of a proper relationship to divine beings. First, devas are unable to unilaterally and decisively control human circumstances or to determine the destiny of human beings. Although it is generally understood that devas have superior powers to humans, when humans develop themselves they are able to equal or surpass the devas, as mentioned earlier. The deciding factor for who is superior lies with an individual's spiritual qualities and effort, which is confirmed by this story in the Jātaka Tales:

Two kings from neighbouring kingdoms were preparing for battle. One of the kings consulted with a rishi, who had psychic powers. This rishi was able to converse with Indra, who informed him that the king's army would be victorious. The king therefore heedlessly let his soldiers rest and entertain themselves. The other king, having heard the prediction of his own defeat, redoubled efforts to strengthen his army. In the ensuing battle, the army of this second king gained victory. Indra, who was blamed, then uttered this divine maxim: *'The perseverance and effort of human beings, the devas are unable to thwart.'*

People often give honour and respect to the divine spirits that dwell in their houses, but from one perspective these spirits are simply guests. If the owner of the house is very virtuous, for example he or she is a ‘noble disciple’ – secure in spiritual qualities and has progressed from a reliance on faith to steadfast wisdom – the house devas do not have control over the owner but rather must obey and respect him or her.

This is illustrated in the story of the deva who lived in the archway of Anāthapiṇḍika’s house (Anāthapiṇḍika did not construct a special dwelling for this deva). When Anāthapiṇḍika lost his wealth, the deva came to him and suggested that he stop giving alms. Anāthapiṇḍika considered this advice unrighteous and drove the deva away. The deva was unable to find a new residence and thus went to Indra for help. Indra instructed the deva on how to properly ask forgiveness from Anāthapiṇḍika; on following this instruction the deva was given permission to return to his original dwelling.<sup>38</sup>

The accusations made by devas towards a person should not be taken as ultimate criteria for the person’s faults or wrongs, because there are many examples of devas disparaging good people. The deva mentioned in the story of Anāthapiṇḍika above was referred to as having wrong view or as ‘blind and foolish’. This deva was unhappy that, when the Buddha or his disciples visited the house, he would have to descend to the ground, and so when Anāthapiṇḍika became poor, the deva urged him to stop associating with the Buddha, but his plan came to nothing.

Some devas out of mischief instil a sense of mutual suspicion in people.<sup>39</sup> Some forest devas are unhappy when monks go and live in the forest to practise the Dhamma, because these virtuous people with superior spiritual qualities have entered their domain, which makes them feel frustrated and inconvenienced; they therefore look for ways to make life uncomfortable for them.<sup>40</sup> Under these circumstances, the Buddha recommended that the monks solve this problem by responding with goodness and spreading lovingkindness. {957}

<sup>38</sup>DhA. III. 10; JA. I. 227.

<sup>39</sup>See the story of Ven. Koṇḍadhāna at AA. I. 260; DhA. III. 52.

<sup>40</sup>E.g.: KhA. 232; SnA. I. 193; DhA. I. 313.

In the case that devas made proposals and suggested a person act in a particular way, if these requests were deemed inappropriate or unrighteous, the Buddha's disciples who had a true understanding of his teachings remained resolute and under no circumstances allowed themselves to be persuaded by these suggestions, regardless of whether the devas threatened them or promised rewards.<sup>41</sup>

Third, some devas behave badly; they are hostile and repeatedly impede the spiritual development of human beings. One should not only refrain from soliciting or relying on these devas, but one should outright subdue or conquer them with virtue. If people develop themselves well they are able to overcome these devas.

An important example of this kind of deity is Māra.<sup>42</sup> Māra dwells in Paranimmitavasavattī – the sixth and highest heaven of the sense sphere. He likes to obstruct and harass others when they perform good deeds, especially when someone tries to free himself from sensuality (*kāma*); in such a case Māra fears that the person will transcend his domain, and in this case the person must confront Māra to pass beyond.<sup>43</sup>

Māra has enormous power; even Indra flees and hides away at the outskirts of the universe when Māra appears, and Brahma also avoids him.<sup>44</sup> Occasionally, Māra goes to disturb the Brahma worlds, which are fine-material spheres and higher than Māra's normal realm of existence.<sup>45</sup> The Buddha therefore said: *Of all powerful beings, Māra is the greatest.*<sup>46</sup> Although Māra has such great power, a person who is well-trained in moral conduct, concentration and wisdom can conquer him with his virtue, and such a person of supreme spiritual qualities is revered by the devas all the way to the Brahma realms.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup>E.g.: the story of Pabbhāravāsī-Tissa Thera: DhA. IV. 170.

<sup>42</sup>Here, the discussion of Māra conforms to the scriptural stories of Māra as a being, not to the figurative or metaphorical meanings of this word.

<sup>43</sup>Māra's domain or empire = *māra-dheyya*; see: MA. I. 34; SnA. I. 44.

<sup>44</sup>See: JA. I. 71; [BvA. 521].

<sup>45</sup>See: M. I. 330-31.

<sup>46</sup>A. II. 17.

<sup>47</sup>See: It. 75; Thag. verse 628; Thig. verse 365.

These words are not meant to encourage a feeling of contempt or insensitivity in regard to divine beings, but rather to increase understanding and help establish a proper relationship to them.

#### E. BUDDHIST RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVINE

Based on an understanding of the nature of divine beings and the harm in relating to them improperly, Buddhism teaches to abandon all dependence on and supplication to them, whether in the form of prayer or through coercion. Buddhism teaches a new form of relationship, one of friendship, lovingkindness, and mutual respect. We should consider that we are all companions in suffering and in the round of rebirth, and that on the whole humans and devas exist at a high spiritual level. Humans and devas should not disturb or interfere with each other, each making effort to fulfil their individual responsibilities.

This relationship of non-disturbance and non-harm between humans and devas is clearly depicted in the many stories from the scriptures, especially in the Jātaka and Dhammapada commentaries. {958} In these stories we see devas assisting human beings, but the nature of and reasons behind this assistance differs from that found in earlier traditions. Here, the devas help from their own initiative, prompted by their own sense of goodness; they do not help because people ask and they neither expect nor desire such entreaty. Those people who receive help act virtuously and judiciously in an ordinary, independent fashion; they do not expect to be helped and they do not seek such assistance. The cause for this assistance is the goodness or good actions of human beings; it is not a result of supplication or a form of reward.

In the scriptures, the chief deity who offers such assistance to human beings is Sakka, also known as Indra,<sup>48</sup> king of the devas. The principle of assistance by Sakka, which conforms to the Buddhist principle of ‘active engagement’ (*kamma*), evolved from the principle of divine power espoused by pre-Buddhist religious doctrines.<sup>49</sup> Although this principle is not yet purely in accord with the Buddhist teachings, it has evolved in a

<sup>48</sup>Trans: Pali: Inda.

<sup>49</sup>On the assistance and provocation by Indra, see Appendix 2.

## NOTE 9.4: PRAYER WITHOUT EFFORT

In today's world it appears that people rely heavily on supplication and prayer. This would be acceptable if they first made effort, but it is often the case that people make no effort before soliciting divine beings. The devas in turn wait for a petition before descending and they help those who offer the supplication, regardless of whether the people are good or bad. Under such circumstances, one can assume that the devas who come are acquisitive, disingenuous, or meek, getting tied up with human affairs until both parties are corrupted.

distinctly Buddhist direction and has been incorporated into the Buddhist tradition. The core of this principle is that virtuous human beings act based on their own mindfulness and wise judgement in as steady and determined a way as they are able; they do not wait for, expect, or request assistance from divine beings. Virtuous devas are eager to assist good people based on their own sense of virtue. When good people are in trouble, virtuous devas feel compelled to help. (See Note 9.4)

Here, human beings behave well without expecting assistance from divine beings, and devas offer assistance without expecting human entreaty. Those people who are still concerned with the principle of divine power can reflect on this saying: 'The responsibility of human beings is the effort to do good; the responsibility of heaven is to assist good people; fulfil your responsibility to the best of your ability.'<sup>50</sup>

If people do not make effort to develop goodness, but are caught up in supplicating the devas, and if the devas are not interested in helping good people, but rather help only those who make entreaties, both parties act irresponsibly. When humans and devas lack virtue and act irresponsibly, they both face ruin according to a law of nature that governs both the human realm and heaven. {959}

Here is a concluding passage by the Buddha on this subject of the divine:

<sup>50</sup>The original saying is translated as: 'The effort to do good is the virtue of human beings; the assistance of good people is the virtue of heaven', but using the term 'responsibility' emphasizes practical application.

Abstention from fish and meat, life as a naked ascetic, shaving of the head, life as a matted-hair ascetic, smearing [the body] with ashes, wearing rough leopard skins, fire worship, undertaking religious practices in order to become a god, ascetic practices of this world, propitiatory offerings, sacrifices, seasonal sacred observances: none of these things purify a person who has not overcome doubt.<sup>51</sup>

*Sn. 44-5.*

## 9.4 CONCLUSION

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### A. THREE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The community of Buddhist disciples is comprised of many individuals who begin their spiritual journey from different starting points and are walking on different stages of the same path, leading to the same destination. These individuals are at different levels of development in the ‘noble teaching’ (ariya-dhamma). By acknowledging this diversity among people, one is able to provide individuals with suitable assistance for their specific circumstances.

In relation to the subject of divine beings, this journey or development consists of three stages:

1. a dependence on and solicitation to divine beings;
2. a friendly coexistence with divine beings; and
3. a receiving of honour and veneration from divine beings.

Level one can be considered a pre-developmental stage; level two signals the beginning stage of joining a Buddhist or ‘noble’ community; and level three is the stage of development of a person who has reached the goal of Buddhism.

<sup>51</sup>The phrase ‘undertaking religious practices in order to become a god’ is based on the interpretation at SnA. I. 291; the Pali term used here is *amarā*, meaning: ‘immortality’, i.e. the state of a divinity.

## NOTE 9.5: RESPECT FOR DEVAS

Thai Buddhists in the past who believed in devas would inform the devas or the guardian spirits before acting in a way that might trouble them. This behaviour can be taken as evidence for an adaptation from the propitiation of devas by the brahmins to a Buddhist way of practice.

It seems, however, that the propitiation of devas is proliferating in Thailand, despite the warning by Buddhist leaders to abandon this behaviour. This probably results from not knowing the proper relationship to devas as taught in Buddhism. Consequently, the two factions of those who believe in devas and those who deny the existence of devas engage in disputes. Despite these disputes, there are always those who maintain their belief in devas, and those who speculate about the belief in devas. These believers often do not know any way to behave towards the divine other than through supplication.

To be called a Buddhist, one must pass beyond the stage of reliance on devas to the stage of friendly coexistence. One will then conduct one's life by making effort based on reasoned judgement. One ceases relating to devas as powerful beings who need to be petitioned and flattered, and instead one considers devas as virtuous companions with whom one should maintain mutual kindness and respect. (See Note 9.5) In this respect, humans and devas should not overly associate with one another, interfere in each other's affairs, or conspire together to cause harm to anyone.

In regard to psychic powers (including sacred or occult powers), spiritual development also consists of three stages: (1) dependence; (2) development of psychic power; and (3) complete freedom.

The first stage consists of a fascination in and reliance on external, supernatural powers. A person at this stage wastes time and effort and lacks reasoned judgement. This stage can be considered 'pre-developmental' or 'ignoble'.

The second stage consists of developing the ability to master psychic powers. These powers are used to support wholesome actions, for example by helping people who are in danger, and to assist in the 'miracle of instruction'. {960} At this second stage auspicious or sacred objects are

used to provide encouragement and reassurance.<sup>52</sup> They act as reminders, strengthening people's resolve to perform good actions and increasing self-confidence. Although one can say that this stage is the beginning of a Buddhist way of life, the Buddha did not promote the development of psychic powers because it can easily drag one back to the first stage.

In the third stage, a person is free. Here, one does not rely on supernatural forces or other external factors to provide encouragement, because one's mind is steadfast. One has control over one's mind and lives free from anxiety. At the very least one's confidence in the Triple Gem is complete and this provides one with security. A person who has reached this stage truly understands the principles of Buddhism. People should hasten to progress to the third stage, recollecting the teaching in the suttas describing the attributes of an excellent lay follower:

*He is not superstitious and believes in kamma;  
He seeks results from kamma,  
Not from auspicious powers.*

A. III. 206.

## B. STAGE OF FREEDOM

The most important task in helping people to develop through these stages is to offer teachings, and traditionally the principal spiritual teachers in Buddhist communities have been the bhikkhus. The speed and extent of spiritual development depends on both the teacher and the student. Teachers have different levels of skill in teaching; likewise, students' capabilities and spiritual faculties vary.

The aim of teaching is for people to reach the third stage, of freedom. If the teacher is skilled at teaching and the student is ready, it may only require one meeting between the two to lead the student from the first

<sup>52</sup>The term 'sacred object' (Thai: *sing sak-sit* – สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์) is ambiguous, with an overly wide breadth of meaning. Of the things that fall under this category, those that are permissible by the Buddha are probably the things called *maṅgala* ('auspicious' or 'blessed' objects or ceremonies). The use of this term *maṅgala* provides a well-defined boundary and corresponds to the practice of Dhamma.



stage of dependency to the third stage of freedom. The greater the skill of the teacher, the faster the student's development.

Usually, to lead students out of established ways of thinking and to help them progress, a teacher must connect to them at their present level of development, or he must provide them with something familiar in order to establish trust. When the teacher lacks special powers for establishing confidence, then he must personally guide the students from their present level of spiritual development to higher levels.

In the context where the monks are the primary teachers, it is natural that they have different abilities in regard to teaching. It is most probably for this reason that concessions were made to the monastic discipline, in which it became acceptable to incorporate aspects of the second stage, of skilful engagement with supernatural phenomena. The principle behind such concessions is to use those things that people attach to, as a starting point when providing instruction. The first step in this process is to dislodge these things from their original place of importance and to steer the person in a more suitable direction. At the same time, these things can be used constructively, as a way to spark interest in people, while leading them to eventually pass beyond them. {961}

This way of practice is evident in the training rule laid down by the Buddha concerning stepping on ceremonial cloth. At one time, Prince Bodhi (Prince Bodhirājakumāra) had just finished building a palace and he invited the Buddha along with the community of monks to have a meal there. The prince ordered that white cloth be spread on the first step of the stairway leading into the palace. When the Buddha arrived he refrained from stepping on the cloth and consequently the prince had the cloth removed, after which the Buddha entered. Later, the Buddha laid down a rule forbidding monks from stepping on such cloth.

On another occasion a woman who had just had a miscarriage invited the monks to her house and having laid down a cloth she asked the monks to step on it as a blessing. The monks, however, refused to do so. The woman was upset and publicly criticized the monks. When this story reached the Buddha he amended the training rule, allowing monks to step

## NOTE 9.6: CEREMONIAL CLOTH

Vin. II. 127-9; M. II. 91. The commentaries (VinA. VI. 1209; [MA. 3/299]; DhA. III. 133) explain that Prince Bodhi had no children and had the cloth laid down with the determination that if the Buddha stepped on the cloth this would augur the birth of a child. The Buddha knew that the prince would not have children and therefore did not step on the cloth. He laid down the training rule to help future generations of monks. In the time of the Buddha there were many monks who could read people's minds and they could respond according to the thoughts of the lay donors, while later monks would not have this gift and would not know how to respond appropriately. The laypeople would therefore accuse them of not being adept like the monks of old. The Buddha laid down the training rule to protect these later monks.

The commentaries go on to explain that in the case of a woman who has had a miscarriage or who is just about to give birth, the request to step on cloth is made for a blessing and is thus permissible. In the first instance, the request was made as a vow and a form of prophesy, while in the second instance the request was made as a form of blessing.

A simple explanation for why the Buddha refrained from stepping on the cloth at the palace is that he was acting out of good manners. When he arrived at the palace he had not yet washed his feet and he did not wish to spoil the cloth (there is a sub-clause in the rule allowing monks to step on the cloth if they have washed their feet). In the case of the woman, the Buddha allowed monks to step on the cloth because she specifically requested that they do so as a blessing.

on ceremonial cloth as a blessing when requested to do so by laypeople. (See Note 9.6)

This allowance by the Buddha is probably the origin why monks in more recent times have acquiesced to the requests by laypeople to perform auspicious ceremonies, produce amulets, and engage with other sacred objects (see Note 9.7), to the extent that in some periods of time this involvement seems to have exceeded what is appropriate.<sup>53</sup> {962} In any

<sup>53</sup> Some scholars claim that this acquiescence or permissive attitude is both a characteristic and a weak point of Buddhism. It is true that acquiescence without setting down firm principles and boundaries is detrimental, but Buddhism does take a strong position and lay down clear boundaries on issues such as supernatural phenomena. The problem lies with whether we understand the Buddhist standpoint correctly. Granted, even with well-defined principles, the

## NOTE 9.7: AUSPICIOUS OBJECTS

Auspicious objects (*maṅgala*) differ from supernatural powers, but from a practical perspective, for example in relation to their advantages and disadvantages and to the correct relationship to these things, they have many similarities. Supernatural powers entail an exceptional ability by the person who possesses them.

Auspiciousness, however, can be derived from different sources: one may believe that the auspicious person or object possesses some kind of sacred or supernatural power; one may believe that the person or object is a medium or channel for some mystical power; or one may believe that the person or object possesses a virtue, happiness, or purity that bestows holiness or blessedness, as many Buddhist laypeople believe is the case with the bhikkhus.

Auspicious objects are closely associated with the 'base arts' (*tiracchānavijjā*; 'pseudo-knowledge', which is distinct from supernatural powers), because many people believe that these base arts are the origin of good fortune. If a monk performs these base arts to seek material gain this is considered wrong livelihood and immoral conduct (as defined by the teaching on 'great morality' – *maḥā-sīla*).

case, if monks understand the spirit of the training rule mentioned above, of conducting auspicious ceremonies only when specifically requested to do so by laypeople, then any harm or immoderate behaviour will be avoided.

Similar concessions can be made in relation to divine beings. The second stage of development can be incorporated by allowing Buddhists to honour devas, especially in the context of a society in which devas are traditionally worshiped. Even oblations to devas are supported in the suttas, but with the stipulation that these offerings are given out of kindness or with a sense of service, not as supplication or with the wish for a reward.<sup>54</sup>

act of acquiescence has some harmful consequences. In any case, the benefits from the Buddhist standpoint on this subject of the supernatural have been explained earlier in this chapter.

<sup>54</sup>E.g.: A. II. 68; A. III. 45-6.

When one goes to live in a new place, one should first offer support to those virtuous people in the surrounding area and then establish the mind in generosity, sharing whatever merit one has accrued with the local celestial beings. Having received this tribute, the devas will respond with kindness:

*Whatever devas there are who receive this offering [of respect],  
They will respect him in turn.  
Having received honour from him,  
They will likewise honour him.  
They care for him as a mother cares for her child.<sup>55</sup>*

*Vin. I. 229-30; D. II. 88-9; Ud. 89.*

In any case, the kindness reciprocated by the devas is unsolicited; the person who offers respect need not petition for it. Our duty is simply to establish a heart of kindness and to share whatever goodness we have with others. Someone who understands this principle will think of the devas with benevolence. When one performs meritorious deeds, one shares this merit with them. There is no harm in this behaviour; it will merely enhance the quality of the mind and spread goodness and peace throughout the world. Even when one is unable to pass beyond the second stage, if one maintains this principle of kindly coexistence and does not fall back to currying favour with divine beings, one's behaviour will automatically remain within wholesome boundaries and prevent one from causing harm. In addition, one's mind will be enhanced.

<sup>55</sup>There are two important points concerning the making of offerings (*bali*) to devas as referred to in these scriptural passages: (1) the Buddha gave these teachings to brahmins, whose custom it was to make sacrificial offerings to divine beings; and (2) it was the belief at that time that whenever people built an important house or building, devas would on their own accord come and dwell in these buildings. People did not build a special place (e.g. a spirit house) for these devas and they did not perform a ritual of inviting the devas.

### C. PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUPERNATURAL

In sum, the Buddhist way of practice in relation to supernatural powers, divine beings, and auspicious phenomena is not complicated. If one's behaviour is in line with Dhamma then one can conduct one's life normally.

In Thai society it is common to hear about divine beings, sacred objects, and miracles. One may wonder whether these things exist or not, and if they exist how one should relate to them. In this context, one should develop self-confidence, stop fretting about these questions, and undertake the practice that is correct in all circumstances – a practice that can be perfected in one's own mind. {963}

In relation to divine beings, one should act with kindness, goodwill, and respect. One should develop gentleness, wishing that all beings – including devas – who are companions in this world, be happy. In society, one meets both kinds of people: those who believe in and rely on devas, and those who disbelieve and look down with contempt on both devas and those who believe in them. Members of both factions are often in conflict with one another. If one has the opportunity, one should encourage members of both groups to find the middle ground of expressing kindness, both to devas and to each other.

While engaged in personal activities, one should make the utmost effort to act in accord with the law of cause and effect. If one is still concerned about divine assistance, one may consider that if one possesses sufficient goodness, and if virtuous and benevolent devas do indeed exist, then one may leave such assistance up to them: the devas themselves will decide and act on their own initiative. For one's own part, one performs one's duties to the best of one's ability – to the extent that one's mindfulness and wisdom permits – and one thus grows in wisdom and virtue, so that one reaches the third stage of development, at which stage one reaches complete freedom and is worthy of the devas' veneration.

Rather than acting virtuously with the express wish that devas will revere us, or taking up an unyielding stance in relation to devas, which is a form of conceit, we should do good for our own sake and for our own reasons. The ensuing respect is up to the devas to show from their

own volition, because devas possess the virtuous quality of respecting goodness in others.

As for psychic powers (*iddhi*) and auspicious powers (*maṅgala*), we should maintain the same attitude, the only difference being to change the response of kindness to a personal proficiency in such powers. The initial psychic powers that we should develop are perseverance and reasoned discernment, which lead to a fulfilment of our responsibilities. Similarly, the auspicious powers we should develop are those virtues and skills which enhance our lives and lead to peace and happiness.<sup>56</sup>

Monks, who are normally the spiritual leaders in a Buddhist community, should be very cautious when dealing with supernatural phenomena. Those monks who are proficient in teaching may be able to lead people to higher levels of spiritual development quickly. But some monks, although they teach people to abandon their former beliefs, stop at this point and do not teach them how to give rise to wisdom and to see the path ahead. These people then have neither faith nor wisdom, and drift around aimlessly – a risk both to themselves and to society.

Those monks who are not adept at teaching and who use people's attachments to supernatural phenomena as a starting point for instruction should be aware of several points.<sup>57</sup> As for psychic powers, the Buddha laid down a clear rule forbidding monks from exhibiting such powers to laypeople. And as for sacred objects or ceremonies, to begin with, monks should determine not to use these things as a means for making a living or seeking material gain, which is wrong livelihood and a stain on moral conduct. {964}

<sup>56</sup>See the Maṅgala Sutta: Kh. 2; Sn. 46.

<sup>57</sup>One problem in the present day is that monks who are skilled at teaching do not show much consideration for those monks who still rely on special enticements when teaching the laypeople. And these latter monks tend to be unreceptive to teachings that lead to freedom from defilement, being caught up in the domain of supernatural phenomena (not to mention those monks who are caught up in seeking material gain). As a result there is no point of contact between these different groups of monks, causing confusion, disharmony and even contention in the lay community.

There are several important considerations that have a direct bearing on the subject of teaching:

First, the involvement with supernatural phenomena or sacred objects is for the purpose of helping people become free from them. For example, a monk uses psychic powers to free people from a reliance on such powers.

Second, at whatever point a teacher begins to teach, he or she must continually lead the student forward from that point until the goal of freedom is reached. One must not regress to former levels of practice. The fascination with supernatural phenomena should decrease or at least not increase; the teacher should not encourage a preoccupation with these things. The teacher helps the student to reduce his or her fascination with these things and to understand their limitations; in this way the student completely passes beyond the first stage, of dependence on them. Apart from this, one should remember the Buddha's allowance for monks to participate in auspicious ceremonies only when specifically asked by laypeople, which helps to further delineate the suitable boundaries for involvement with these things.

Third, whenever there is an opportunity, the teacher should offer teachings that lead to complete deliverance from mental impurity and the round of rebirth; these teachings will hasten and help direct the student's spiritual development.

For those people who are developing from the first stage (of dependence) to the second stage (of self-mastery), a teacher should establish the following limitations as to the amount of concessions or compromises he or she makes:

1. The practice should not be one of prayer to or dependence on external, supernatural forces (i.e. the teaching should be one of self-reliance and independence).
2. The practice should not lead to an obsession with supernatural phenomena or to an expectation that outside forces will intervene and therefore there is no need to act (i.e. the teaching should emphasize individual effort in line with the law of cause and effect).

#### D. UNSTINTING SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

When these limitations on teaching have been set down, the way of practice regarding supernatural phenomena can be outlined as follows:

- It is permissible to become involved with supernatural phenomena, including sacred objects and auspicious ceremonies, but one gives them a new meaning: one enables people to develop power within themselves: spiritual power (*dhamma-iddhi*), ‘noble power’ (*ariya-iddhi*), and the blessings arising from Dhamma practice. For monks, the most basic form of involvement in the auspicious ceremonies of laypeople is to use these ceremonies as a means of encouragement (i.e. to support goodness) and to promote effort. Supernatural phenomena should not interfere in the making of wise and reasonable effort.
- The relationship to divine beings is one of friendly coexistence. Concessions are made to allow making offerings (*bali*)<sup>58</sup> to devas in the sense of offering respect or assistance (not as a propitiatory offering, a supplication, or a request for favours).<sup>59</sup> {965}

The more concessions one makes in this area of supernatural phenomena, the more important it is to be cautious. Lay Buddhists should especially take care in this regard. Monks should continually remind the lay community of the hazards of attaching to these things, because due to the busyness of their lives the laity have less opportunity to be immersed in Dhamma teachings and can easily be led astray.

Every individual engaged in Dhamma practice should be aware that he or she is still in the developmental stages of spiritual practice. At any given time one should remember at what stage one presently is. One should reflect in this way: ‘Even if at this current time I am still captivated by the subject of devas and blessings, I hope that one day I can reach the stage of complete freedom.’ In a nutshell, one should reflect: ‘I must progress, not stagnate.’

<sup>58</sup>*Bali* includes the sharing of merit with devas.

<sup>59</sup>For more on offerings to devas (*devatā-bali*) see Appendix 6.



The word ‘progress’ has a special importance for the initial stage of Buddhist practice,<sup>60</sup> because there is always the risk of falling away from the Buddhist community and reverting back to ‘ignoble’ ways. At this initial stage there are many things that are shared between the Buddhist way of practice and the teachings of pre-Buddhist religions, and in some cases, as in the case with auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) and spiritual offerings (*bali*), these things are essentially the same. The difference lies only in the guidelines governing interaction with these things and the range of application.

If one is careless and forgets the proper relationship to supernatural phenomena, one may easily revert back to a contrary position and fall away from the true Buddhist community (I fear this is the case for many people). For this reason, it is very important that the concept of ‘progress’ is added to one’s reflections on the proper manner of behaviour in relation to the supernatural.<sup>61</sup>

Whenever people reach stage three (of freedom) then they are truly safe, because they enter the ‘noble’ community: they have reached the level of stream-entry or a higher level of realization. At this stage people do not hesitate or revert back to a former stage; because they have reached the heart of the Triple Gem and have confidence in the law of causality, they only move forward, to the point of unshakeable faith. They do not rely on external conditions, for example sacred objects or divine powers, for security, and they have no serious defilements that would cause them to do evil or give rise to major problems. They have experienced a refined happiness that springs from inner peace and establishes them in faultless conduct. These excellent qualities of virtue, joy, and freedom, which are impervious to external influences, induce the devas to honour and pay respect to these individuals and engender a life of blessings: supreme blessings abide within these noble beings.

Of all living beings, humans have the greatest aptitude for being trained. They are able to train their bodies and their minds, and are

<sup>60</sup>Trans.: for ‘Buddhist practice’ here the author uses the term *ariya-dhamma*: ‘the Dhamma of the noble ones’.

<sup>61</sup>On an asseveration of truth (*sacca-kiriya*) as a positive solution for those who still wish for assistance from external forces, see Appendix 3.

able to accomplish the most refined, elaborate and astonishing things.<sup>62</sup> To waste time expecting assistance from supernatural or divine powers is heedless and neglectful behaviour, allowing one's human potential to slip away in vain. As a consequence one will not develop on the noble path. On the other hand, people who are diligent and careful, who hasten to train themselves without delay, will acquire both psychic and divine powers and will reach the supreme state, an achievement that neither supernatural powers nor divine beings can provide. {966}

## 9.5 APPENDIX 1: SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES

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Following is a list of occasions recorded in the Pali Canon in which the Buddha displayed psychic powers:

- subduing Uruvela-Kassapa, the leader of the matted-hair ascetics;<sup>63</sup>
- subduing Baka Brahma;<sup>64</sup>
- subduing another Brahma;<sup>65</sup>
- correcting the wrong views of Sunakkhatta and refuting the claims of the naked ascetic Pāṭikaputta;<sup>66</sup>
- subduing the bandit Aṅgulimāla;<sup>67</sup>
- inspiring awe in a group of monks so that they would come to receive teachings;<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup>There are many scriptural terms referring to training and discipline, e.g. *dama*, *bhāvanā*, *vinaya*, *vinīta*, and *sikkhā*, but unfortunately in more recent times the meanings of some of these words (in the Thai language) have deviated from their original connotations.

<sup>63</sup>Vin. I. 24-33. *Damana* ('subduing', 'taming') is derived from the verb *dameti*, meaning to 'train': to dispel pride and to lead a person to a correct way of practice; in this context it does not mean to punish or chastise.

<sup>64</sup>M. I. 326-30; S. I. 142.

<sup>65</sup>S. I. 144.

<sup>66</sup>D. III. 6-26.

<sup>67</sup>M. II. 99.

<sup>68</sup>S. III. 92-3.

- permitting only certain people to see the ‘marks of a Great Man’;<sup>69</sup>
- extending lovingkindness and taming the fierce elephant Nālāgiri;<sup>70</sup>
- and confronting the yakkha<sup>71</sup> Ālavaka.<sup>72</sup>

Occasions recorded in the commentaries include the ‘twin miracles’ and refuting the claims of heretical teachers,<sup>73</sup> and taking five hundred monks to admire the Himalayas in order to dispel their thoughts of former lovers.<sup>74</sup>

Here is a list of occasions recorded in the Pali Canon in which disciples of the Buddha displayed psychic powers:

- Ven. Piṇḍola-Bhāradvāja taking up the challenge to rise in the air and bring down a sandalwood bowl from a high pole;<sup>75</sup>
- Ven. Mahā Moggallāna subduing Māra;<sup>76</sup>
- Ven. Pilinda-Vaccha rescuing two kidnapped daughters belonging to his lay-supporters;<sup>77</sup>
- Ven. Pilinda-Vaccha turning King Bimbisāra’s palace into gold to vindicate a falsely accused family;<sup>78</sup>
- Ven. Dabba-Mallaputta using his finger as a lamp to shine the way when taking monks to their dwellings at night;<sup>79</sup>

<sup>69</sup>D. I. 105-106, 109; M. II. 135, 147; Sn. 108.

<sup>70</sup>Vin. II. 195. This is an indirect display of psychic powers.

<sup>71</sup>Trans.: *yakkha*: a class of non-human beings. The term can be translated as ‘spirit’, ‘demon’, ‘deity’, ‘ogre’, etc.

<sup>72</sup>S. I. 213-14; Sn. 31-32. This is an indirect display of psychic powers.

<sup>73</sup>DA. I. 57; DhA. III. 199; JA. IV. 263. These events refer to passages at: Ps. I. 2-3, 125; Vin. II. 111.

<sup>74</sup>JA. V. 415.

<sup>75</sup>Vin. II. 111. This is the occasion prompting the Buddha to lay down the precept forbidding monks from displaying psychic powers to laypeople.

<sup>76</sup>M. I. 333.

<sup>77</sup>Vin. III. 67.

<sup>78</sup>Vin. III. 249-50.

<sup>79</sup>Vin. II. 75-6; Vin. III. 158-9.

- Ven. Sāgata displaying powers to the laity;<sup>80</sup>
- Ven. Sāgata subduing the nāga (divine serpent) in the hermitage of the matted-hair ascetics;<sup>81</sup>
- Ven. Devadatta inspiring Prince Ajātasattu;<sup>82</sup>
- Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna redeeming Ven. Devadatta's disciples, by using psychic powers and mind-reading combined with the miracle of instruction;<sup>83</sup>
- Ven. Mahaka causing a cool wind to blow along with gentle rain to assist senior monks who were overcome by heat;<sup>84</sup> {967}
- Ven. Mahā Moggallāna causing the Vejayanta Palace to shake in order to stir up a sense of urgency in Indra king of the gods;<sup>85</sup>
- Ven. Mahā Moggallāna causing the mansion of Migāra's mother to shake in order to caution arrogant monks;<sup>86</sup> and
- Ven. Abhibhū, chief disciple of the Buddha Sikhī, teaching the Dhamma while remaining invisible and making his voice heard through the thousandfold world system.<sup>87</sup>

Occasions recorded in the commentaries are numerous, including:

- Ven. Cullapanthaka creating one thousand mind-produced images of himself;<sup>88</sup>

<sup>80</sup>Vin. I. 180. His powers were so impressive that he had to perform them in front of the Buddha while declaring the Buddha as his teacher, so that the laity were prepared to listen to the Buddha's instructions.

<sup>81</sup>Vin. IV. 109. This story is connected to the precept forbidding monks from drinking alcohol.

<sup>82</sup>Vin. II. 184-5.

<sup>83</sup>Vin. II. 200.

<sup>84</sup>S. IV. 289-90. Upon request, Ven. Mahaka then created a fire for the layman Citta to see.

<sup>85</sup>M. I. 253-4.

<sup>86</sup>S. V. 270.

<sup>87</sup>S. I. 155-6; A. I. 226-7; Ps. II. 210.

<sup>88</sup>AA. I. 209, 216; DhA. I. 239; Vism. 387 (referring to Ps. II. 207).

- Ven. Mahā Moggallāna subduing the nāga king Nandopananda;<sup>89</sup>
- Ven. Puṇṇa saving his brother the naval merchant from destruction by angry spirits;<sup>90</sup>
- the novice Saṅkicca saving thirty monks by volunteering to be sacrificed by bandits;<sup>91</sup>
- the novice Sumana subduing a nāga;<sup>92</sup> and
- Ven. Sundarasamudda fleeing through the air to escape a courtesan.<sup>93</sup>

There are canonical stories of other individuals performing psychic feats, for example:

- Brahmas with right view subduing Brahmas with wrong view;<sup>94</sup>
- the rishi Rohitassa crossing the entire ocean in one stride;<sup>95</sup>
- and Indra taking upon the likeness of a weaver in order to offer almsfood to Ven. Mahā Kassapa.<sup>96</sup>

There are many such stories in the commentaries, mostly involving devas, yakkhas, *vidyādhara* (a form of celestial being), and ascetics. Indra plays an important role in these stories (especially in the Jātaka tales), occasionally disguising himself and often assisting or testing virtuous people.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>89</sup>JA. V. 126; Vism. 398-401.

<sup>90</sup>MA. V. 84-92; an addendum to M. III. 270. There is a story of the Buddha travelling to the Sunāparanta country, the birthplace of Ven. Puṇṇa, where he left two footprints. [The Burmese identify this country with an area near Pagan.]

<sup>91</sup>DhA. II. 240. The bandits were converted to Buddhism and were ordained as monks.

<sup>92</sup>DhA. IV. 120.

<sup>93</sup>DhA. IV. 194.

<sup>94</sup>S. I. 146.

<sup>95</sup>S. I. 61-62; A. II. 47. At such speed, he travelled for one hundred years and died before reaching the world's end.

<sup>96</sup>Ud. 29-30.

<sup>97</sup>DhA. III. 178; JA. IV. 186; ItA. I. 85. On one occasion Indra transformed himself into a mouse and bit through the rope that Cīncā-māṇavikā was using to simulate pregnancy.

Some of the canonical references to psychic powers are general, for example:

- psychic powers are one cause for earthquakes;<sup>98</sup>
- the use of psychic powers is one way to demonstrate the significance of mental volitional actions;<sup>99</sup>
- a person with psychic powers can see a log of wood as being earth or water;<sup>100</sup> and
- a person who is governed by public opinion hastens to practise the Dhamma, fearing that ascetics, brahmins, and devas with psychic powers may read his mind.<sup>101</sup>

#### 9.6 APPENDIX 2: ASSISTANCE AND PROVOCATION BY INDRA

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Indra's assistance does not stem entirely from his own sense of goodness, but appears also to be his duty, because in many instances his throne heats up as a warning and thus forces him to act. This matter of Indra's throne heating up demonstrates a transition from earlier, pre-Buddhist ideas of people pressuring the gods through the undertaking of religious austerities, to the Buddhist principle of effectuating change through the power of virtue. In this period of transition, Indra is still influenced by coercion through ascetic practices. {968}

In the scriptural stories describing the way of coercion, Indra's conduct is that of competition and a vying for power, for example his attempts to disturb the ascetic practices of people, which obviously does not accord with the Buddhist way of practice.<sup>102</sup> There are, however, many stories in which Indra's conduct accords (to various degrees) with a Buddhist way

<sup>98</sup>D. II. 108.

<sup>99</sup>M. I. 377-8.

<sup>100</sup>A. III. 340-41.

<sup>101</sup>A. I. 148-9.

<sup>102</sup>E.g.: Lomasakassapa Jātaka: JA. III. 514; Alambusā Jātaka: JA. V. 152; Naḷinikā Jātaka: JA. V. 193.

of practice.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, as depicted in these Jātaka tales, Indra does not offer assistance easily. Most often he begins by testing people to see whether they are truly virtuous and upright.

The Mahājanaka Jātaka in particular describes the Buddhist way of practice. This story recounts how, when a ship broke apart in the middle of the ocean, almost all the passengers cried out in fear and petitioned the gods for help.<sup>104</sup> The Bodhisatta alone did not cry out or beg for help from the devas. Instead, he used sound judgement and made maximum effort to escape the danger. In the end, Maṇimekhalā the guardian deva of the ocean offered assistance by her own initiative in keeping with the devas' responsibility.

Besides checking up on people himself, Indra also has an entourage of guardian spirits who help to inspect and report back on people's behaviour.<sup>105</sup>

### 9.7 APPENDIX 3: ASSEVERATIONS OF TRUTH: A VIABLE SOLUTION FOR PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON SUPERNATURAL POWERS

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A practical solution for those at beginning stages of spiritual development – those who are still fascinated by or dependent on supernatural powers – is to apply the traditional Buddhist method of an 'asseveration of truth' (*sacca-kiriyā*). This involves invoking the truth or referring to the truth as a governing power: to direct attention to the goodness one has previously performed and accumulated, or to simply reflect on the truth of one's present state of being, and then to apply the truth as a power for dispelling danger, when all other avenues for addressing the danger are exhausted.

<sup>103</sup> E.g.: Mahāsuvarāja Jātaka: JA. III. 490; Kaṇha Jātaka: JA. IV. 7; Akitti Jātaka: JA. IV. 236; Suruci Jātaka: JA. IV. 318; Sīvirāja Jātaka: JA. IV. 401; Sambulā Jātaka: JA. V. 88; Kusa Jātaka: JA. V. 278; Temiya Jātaka: JA. VI. 1; Vessantara Jātaka: JA. VI. 568; the story of Ven. Cakkhupāla: DhA. I. 17; the story of a novice: DhA. IV. 176.

<sup>104</sup> JA. VI. 34. This story depicts one of the final ten lifetimes of the Bodhisatta.

<sup>105</sup> A. I. 142-3; AA. II. 232.

This method of practice is considered to be close to a truly Buddhist way of practice; it does not undermine the making of effort and it is not an entreaty to an external creative power. On the contrary, this practice increases confidence in one's own virtue and effort and it leads to greater strength of heart. Moreover, one does not need to get mixed up with sacred objects or sacred ceremonies, which lead to complication and complexity. {969}

The Buddhist commentaries, especially the Jātaka tales, contain many stories involving an asseveration of truth (many of these stories verge on the fantastic, but this is normal for literary texts), for example:

- verifying the true parents of a child (JA. I. 135.);
- turning reeds hollow so that a tribe of monkeys can drink safely (JA. I. 172; MA. III. 178.);
- a baby bird wishing to escape a forest fire (JA. I. 213.);
- helping to win at dice (JA. I. 293., Aṇḍabhūta Jātaka);
- healing a child who was bitten by a snake (JA. IV. 30.);
- saving a boat from angry seas (JA. IV. 142.);
- releasing birds from captivity (JA. IV. 341.);
- after sacrificing an eye, having the eye grow back (JA. IV. 410; referred to at Miln. Chapter 8, Sīvirañño Cakkhudāna-paṇhā.);
- saving a prince who will be sacrificed in place of his father (JA. V. 25, in this story there is some reliance on devas.);
- a wife citing her faithfulness and thus healing her husband from leprosy (JA. V. 94.);
- a queen asking for a son (JA. VI. 1.);
- escaping from imprisonment after being falsely accused (JA. VI. 30.);
- curing a son after he was struck by a poisoned arrow (JA. VI. 91.);
- saving a royal husband who is about to be sacrificed (JA. VI. 219., Candakumara Jātaka);
- a courtesan making the River Ganges flow backwards (Miln. Chapter 8, Sīvirañño Cakkhudāna-paṇhā);



- King Asoka asking for a branch from the Great Bodhi Tree without needing to cut it (VinA. I. 93.);
- escaping from the punishment of being crushed by an elephant after being falsely accused of theft (DA. III. 712; at JA. I. 201, however, it is claimed that this escape resulted from the power of lovingkindness);
- a child remembering his mother's devotion and honesty in order to escape from a stampeding buffalo (MA. I. 200; SA. II. 147; DhsA. 100.);
- Ven. Aṅgulimāla wishing for the wellbeing of a woman who is about to give birth (MA. III. 336; referring to M. II. 103.);
- King Mahākappina crossing a river on horseback (SA. II. 245; AA. I. 321.);
- a queen crossing a river on horseback (DhA. II. 124.);
- using flowers as an augury and sending forth an invitation to the Buddha (AA. I. 265.);
- curing a child who was bitten by a poisonous snake (AA. II. 249.);
- curing a husband from illness (AA. III. 349; in the Pali Canon, however, it is claimed that the recovery resulted from listening to a Dhamma talk offered by the wife at A. III. 297.);
- and divining whether beings who are truly 'worthy of offerings' exist or not. (AA. IV. 181. [Trans.: a person worthy of offerings' = *dakkhineyya-puggala*; this term refers to awakened beings.]

The practice of making asseverations of truth is a measuring stick for the stability of ethical conduct in society. A decrease in this tradition of asseverations of truth may point to a decline in social ethics, because when people lack virtue giving rise to self-confidence, they are likely to revert back to a dependence on and supplication to supernatural phenomena like divine powers. It is probably because of such a weakness in ethical conduct that we see the persistence and prevalence of primitive forms of religious practice today, for example the making of propitiatory offerings, supplication, curses and spells.

## 9.8 APPENDIX 4: WAS THE BUDDHA HUMAN OR DIVINE?

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When followed and correctly understood, the Buddhist guidelines concerning divine beings enables Buddhists to live harmoniously with those people who still worship divinities, while at the same time they enable Buddhists to safeguard their own principles. Some people raise the objection that such an open-minded stance puts Buddhism at a disadvantage, because people generally lack self-confidence and are disinclined to use their critical faculties, and for this reason they are easily converted to a religious teaching of supplication to divine powers. {970} This may indeed be a weak point requiring consideration, but problems are more likely to stem from whether people have followed the Buddha's guidelines and continue to improve their understanding of them or not. Because people are easily led astray, it is even more important that Buddhists are careful to protect and maintain their principles.

It is acceptable for Buddhist laypeople to join in the veneration (but not entreaty) of divine beings, but they should not bestow on these divine beings a power that is greater than the human potential inherent in every person. However elevated a divine being may be, it is the ideal human being – the Teacher<sup>106</sup> of devas and human beings – who is supreme. If one feels uneasy with the thought that the divinity that one has previously worshipped would venerate a human being, one can look at the Buddha from a different perspective: as someone who has developed himself to the highest degree and transcended the state of being either a god or a human, as borne out by the following story from the Pali Canon (this passage contains a play on words; I have retained the idiomatic expressions for the reader to consider):

At one time, while the Buddha was on a journey travelling alone, a brahmin who was travelling on the same road was amazed when he saw the symbol of a wheel set within the Buddha's footprints. The brahmin followed the footprints and saw the Buddha sitting

<sup>106</sup>Trans.: the Buddha.

peacefully at the foot of a tree by the side of the road; he went up to him, and asked:

‘Shall your reverence be a deva?’ The Buddha replied:

‘No brahmin, I shall not be a deva.’

‘Then your reverence shall be a gandhabba?’<sup>107</sup>

‘No, I shall not be a gandhabba.’

‘Then shall your reverence be a yakkha?’

‘No, brahmin, I shall not be a yakkha.’

‘Then shall your reverence be a human being?’

‘No, brahmin, I shall not be a human being.’

‘Now when I asked whether your reverence shall be a deva or a gandhabba or a yakkha or a human being, you replied, “I shall not.” What, then, shall your reverence be?’

‘Brahmin, those taints whereby, if they were not abandoned, I may become a deva, a gandhabba, a yakkha, or a human being – these taints are abandoned by me, cut off at the root ... destroyed so that they are no more subject to arise in the future. Just as, brahmin, a blue, red, or white lotus, though born and grown in the water, rises up and stands unsoiled by the water, so, brahmin, though born and grown in the world, I have transcended the world and dwell unsoiled by the world. Consider me, O brahmin, a Buddha.’<sup>108</sup>

*A. II. 37-8.*

<sup>107</sup>Trans.: *gandhabba*: a class of demi-gods belonging to the heaven of the Four Great Kings, described as celestial musicians.

<sup>108</sup>Trans.: on the play on words, Bhikkhu Bodhi has this to say: ‘The brahmin’s question uses the future tense *bhavissati*, but it is difficult to tell whether he actually intended the question to refer to the Buddha’s future or used the future form simply as a polite mannerism. Possibly there is a word play going on, the brahmin using the future in the polite sense, the Buddha deliberately speaking as if the future was literally intended.’ *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, © Buddhist Publication Society, p. 291.

## 9.9 APPENDIX 5: DIVINE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE AND VISION

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The Aṅguttara Nikāya states that the Buddha could declare having realized the unsurpassed, supreme enlightenment when he had perfected the eightfold series of higher knowledge and vision of the devas (*adhideva-ñāṇadassana*):

1. to perceive the devas' auras;
2. to see the devas' forms;
3. to converse with the devas;
4. to know to which group the devas belong;
5. to know that the devas pass away from here and are reborn there according to the fruits of kamma;
6. to know the devas' nourish-ment and to know their experiences;
7. to know the devas' lifespan; and
8. to know whether he had formerly dwelt among these devas.<sup>109</sup>

*Adhideva-ñāṇadassana* may also be translated as 'knowledge and vision of one who surpasses the devas' or 'knowledge and vision leading one to surpass the devas', because it leads a person to know the devas better than the devas know themselves (e.g. Brahma does not know his own age and mistakenly believes he is immortal).<sup>110</sup> *Adhideva-ñāṇadassana* is a facet of the divine eye and is a necessary characteristic of the perfectly enlightened Buddha, along with the other 'powers and knowledge of the Tathāgata' (*tathāgata-balañāṇa*), but it is not necessary for the attainment of arahantship.<sup>111</sup> From the ancient times, even before the time of the Buddha, people have had a deep-seated respect for divine beings. To show the distinction of human beings, it was therefore necessary to show how humans can surpass the devas.

<sup>109</sup> A. IV. 304-305.

<sup>110</sup> Cf.: Nd. II. 55; Nd2A. 94; SnA. II. 607.

<sup>111</sup> See: MA. III. 328.

## 9.10 APPENDIX 6: OFFERINGS TO DEVAS

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Offerings to devas (*devatā-bali*) are one of five kinds of righteous offerings that the Buddha recommended for laypeople.<sup>112</sup> The other four are: aid for relatives (*ñāti-bali*), welcome gifts for guests (*atithi-bali*), the making of merit in honour of the departed (*pubbapeta-bali*), and support of the Crown, e.g. the payment of taxes (*rāja-bali*). *Bali* is one of only few words originally used in Brahmanism that the Buddha adopted (i.e. that were accepted into the Buddhist teachings) without having its meaning changed (in this case the meaning changed only slightly). There are other words like *yañña* and *tapa* which were used but their meanings were changed considerably. This is because *bali* originally has had the meaning of offering sacrifice as a form of assistance or support (as well as respect). In Brahmanism, these offerings (*bali*) were made to devas, spirits, human beings, and even to birds and other animals. The offerings consisted of rice, buttermilk, flowers, scented oil, incense, sandalwood, betel, spices, etc. There is a passage in the Ratana Sutta urging the devas to cultivate lovingkindness towards and protect those people who make offerings.<sup>113</sup> The commentaries explain that the sharing of merit (*pattidāna*) – to have other beings take part in the act of goodness – is one (Buddhist) definition for *bali*, and the fact that the Canon advocates this form of offering demonstrates how people assist the devas. The devas who receive these offerings should have gratitude and protect people in return.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup>A. II. 68; A. III. 45-6.

<sup>113</sup>Kh. 3-4; Sn. 39.

<sup>114</sup>KhA. 169; SnA. I. 278.



# CHAPTER 10

## THE BUDDHIST TEACHINGS ON DESIRE

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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People sometimes express the following doubts and criticisms about Buddhism:

‘Buddhism teaches one to abandon craving and to be free from desire. If people are without desire and don’t seek personal gains and wealth, how can the nation develop? Buddhism opposes progress.’

‘Nibbāna is the goal of Buddhism and the practice of Dhamma is for reaching Nibbāna, but Buddhists should not desire Nibbāna, because if they do then they have craving and their practice is incorrect. If people have no desire, how can they practise? Buddhist teachings are contradictory and they teach to do the impossible.’

These doubts and criticisms seem to touch upon the entire scope of the Buddhist teachings, from the everyday life of householders to the practice for realizing Nibbāna, from the mundane to the transcendent. But in fact, they do not have a direct bearing on Buddhism at all. They stem from a confused understanding, both of human nature and of the Buddhist teachings.

These misunderstandings are prevalent even amongst Buddhists. They are connected to matters of language and terminology. In particular,

people have heard that Buddhism teaches one to abandon *taṇhā* (‘craving’), which is often translated as ‘desire’. For whatever reason, they are not able to distinguish between these various terms and end up equating craving with desire; they believe that all forms of desire are forms of craving. Moreover, they believe that Buddhism teaches to abandon all desire – to be devoid of desire.

Furthermore, other Pali terms with similar connotations may have been translated in other ways (i.e. not as ‘desire’). When the discussion of desire comes up, people may then forget to refer to these other terms for comparison.

For a clear understanding of Buddhism, this misunderstanding needs to be rectified. To begin with, craving (*taṇhā*) is a form of desire, but not all desire manifests as craving. There exists a positive form of desire, which is essential for Dhamma practice and spiritual cultivation.

Before examining this subject in more detail, let us examine some of the mechanisms of human activity. {972}

## 10.2 MECHANISMS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

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One doubt frequently expressed is based on the belief that people’s actions must always be accompanied by desire; people act according to desire. If there were no craving or desire as a catalyst, people would not act. Surely, they would remain inert, listless, and apathetic.

To begin to reply to this doubt, all human actions, even the action to refrain from acting, requires some movement or activity in the mind. To be alive entails such movement and activity. Here, we can examine the mechanisms functioning behind such activity.

Human beings are not like the leaves and branches of trees, which sway in the breeze, affected solely by external conditions. Humans act prompted by internal conditions. When the physical body is healthy and ready for activity, the mind begins to be aware of what lies in front and behind, above and below, nearby and far away, along with the surrounding



location of various objects. In short, one has an understanding of the possible avenues for movement and activity.

With this initial understanding, one must then decide which direction to move and how to act. The mental factor that controls or dictates this decision-making process is intention (*cetanā*).

Here, in this process, intention is affected by an impetus or motivation, which one can call 'desire'. When one desires to go somewhere, obtain something, or perform an action, intention chooses to fulfil this desire.

What is desire? On a basic level, desire stems from likes and dislikes. Whatever agrees with one's eyes, ears, tongue, mind, etc., one wishes to obtain and consume. Whatever is disagreeable to the senses one wishes to escape from or get rid of. Intention makes decisions according to these likes and dislikes. This form of desire, based on preferences and aversions, is referred to as 'craving' (*taṇhā*).

In sum, there are various factors involved in this activity: knowledge (*paññā*; 'intelligence', 'wisdom') helps to reveal and discern the various objects in one's surrounding environment; craving (*taṇhā*) wishes to obtain or get rid of particular objects; and intention (*cetanā*) chooses to act according to these desires.

Yet there is another element to this process. Living beings possess deeper, more fundamental needs and desires when it comes to action or non-action. They wish to exist, to survive, to be safe, to be healthy and happy, and to live in an optimal state. They wish to exist in a state of fulfilment.

Here one may ask whether such fulfilment is found by merely relying on a knowledge of one's surrounding sense objects, a craving to either consume or evade such objects, and an intention which propels actions in accord with the whispered suggestions by this very craving. {973}

Wisdom itself will answer that this is not enough. If one encounters some food that has been made to look appetizing by adding various chemical colorants, craving will want to consume it. But if one indulges craving, it is as if one drops poison into one's food and one will suffer from obesity or some other ailment. This knowledge is insufficient and

untrustworthy. It may claim to be wisdom (*paññā*), but in fact it is merely an expression of not-knowing (*aññāṇa*), i.e. of ignorance (*avijjā*).

Take the example of a student:

Counterfeit wisdom may say, ‘Not far from here is a place of amusement and entertainment where one can really be wild and unconstrained.’ Craving, wishing to have fun, then grabs hold of this appealing prospect. It whispers, ‘Don’t go off to school and tax yourself listening to some tiring subject.’ It then prods intention, which decides to skip school and engage in some form of excess or debauchery.

When wisdom has been developed as true understanding, besides being aware of one’s surroundings, one also knows how to bring about goodness, proficiency, and happiness. One knows what is beneficial and what is harmful, what to promote and what to avoid. One has an understanding of causes and effects, knowing that specific actions will have both short-term and longterm consequences.

In the case of the student, he knows that if he goes off to a place of vice and indulgence, he will only derive momentary pleasure, but in the long run his body, his family, and his intelligence will suffer. If, on the other hand, he perseveres in his studies all aspects of his life will improve.

Craving acts as the agent, hankering for this and that, while this bogus wisdom only has a dim understanding of these proceedings. Craving grabs hold of agreeable aspects and tells intention to seek gratification. This cycle, however, will never lead to true wellbeing.

When wisdom appears, it knows that following the stream of craving will lead to eventual danger and affliction, and the mechanism of ignorance-craving-intention is interrupted or abates.

Wisdom investigates and discerns the interrelationship between things. It knows, for instance, that happiness is based on good health. It recognizes that, in order to maintain good health, one should eat certain foods, exercise, set up a certain environment, maintain certain daily routines, cultivate the mind, allocate one’s time well, etc.

These things recommended by wisdom are of no interest to craving, which only seeks personal gratification, delight, ostentation, and distinction. And anything that is irritating or offensive, it wishes to escape from or eliminate.

It may appear that without the enticements by craving, there is no alternative motivating force prompting intention and instigating actions suggested by one's understanding of surrounding circumstances. The functioning of life is impeded.

Yet there exists an alternative motivating force. In this context, people possess another innate need or desire. In everyday life, however, sense impressions by way of the five senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) tend to stand out. When one encounters a sense impression and feels either comfort or discomfort, delight or aversion, these feelings take precedence, leading to liking and disliking. {974} This is the path of craving. Craving wishes to acquire those things that are agreeable and to evade or eliminate those things that are disagreeable. Intention then steers life in this direction. If one leads a shallow or superficial life, resembling the life of an animal, one may aimlessly follow the promptings of craving until one's dying breath.

For human beings, however, who have the potential for excellence and distinction, craving is not the sole motivating force. As mentioned above, we possess a more profound need or desire, namely: the desire for goodness, for a healthy life, for righteousness, for true and lasting happiness, and for fulfilment and integrity. This wish does not extend only to ourselves. Whatever one encounters and engages with, one wishes for that thing to reach its optimal state of completeness. And this wish is not a detached sentiment; one also wishes to actively help bring about this fulfilment and completeness.

This alternative motivation, which is inherent in everyone, is referred to in Pali as *chanda* ('wholesome desire', 'wholesome enthusiasm').

Here, the direction of one's life changes course. One begins to develop the quality of one's life. Wisdom (*paññā*) discerns what is harmful and what is beneficial in one's surroundings, and recognizes the path to true fulfilment. Wholesome desire (*chanda*) aspires to this fulfilment and

wishes to bring it about. And intention (*cetanā*) initiates the effort to move in this positive direction.

When people develop themselves in this way, the cycle of ignorance-craving-intention (*avijjā-taṇhā-cetanā*) is loosened or weakened. This cycle may also be referred to as ignorance-craving-unwholesome action (*avijjā-taṇhā-akusala kamma*).

It is replaced by the sequence of wisdom – wholesome desire – intention (*paññā-chanda-cetanā*), or wisdom – wholesome desire – wholesome action (*paññā-chanda-kusala kamma*), which eventually develops into the way of life of awakened beings.

When true wisdom comes to the fore, counterfeit wisdom (i.e. ignorance) retreats. Those things recommended by wisdom for promoting health and wellbeing are likely to be disagreeable in regard to craving. Craving likes to be indulged by ignorance. When wisdom appears, craving cannot sustain itself. This is where wholesome desire has an opportunity.

When wisdom points out that true fulfilment is possible, and that specific things are valuable for one's life and should be cultivated, wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*) takes over this matter from wisdom. It then persuades intention to direct the necessary actions to reach such fulfilment.

In sum, there are these two distinct kinds of desire: craving (*taṇhā*) and wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*).

There is another important element to this process. In the cycle of ignorance and craving, as soon as a feeling of pleasure or displeasure arises, along with the desire to obtain or consume, a sense of self appears to act as the delegate or representative. A 'consumer' or 'owner' is born. This then creates the duality between such a consumer or owner and those objects desired and consumed. (Following on from this is the arising of a sense of 'you', of 'him', 'of them', etc, who threaten, obstruct, compete, etc.) {975}

On a deeper level, one wishes for this so-called self to be stable, so that one can continue to consume things. And one wishes for it to be powerful, so that one is ensured of obtaining and consuming things to the greatest degree, without any interference. At the same time, if one

encounters unpleasant, undesirable things, one wishes to escape from or eliminate them. And if one finds the situation unendurable, one may react by desiring some form of self-annihilation.

The dual process of wisdom and wholesome desire is the opposite. The desire for things to exist in the optimal state of goodness and integrity requires no sense of self to intervene. There is no need for an owner, a consumer, a desirer, etc. One acts simply in accord with nature.

To sum up once again, there are these two kinds of desire acting as motivating forces for people to act:

1. Craving (*taṇhā*): the desire to consume and to acquire; the desire for self-gratification; the desire for oneself to exist or not exist in some particular way; selfish desire.
2. Wholesome desire (*chanda*): the delight in witnessing the fulfilment and integrity of things; the desire to help bring about such fulfilment; the desire for things to be complete in themselves.

Wholesome desire includes the wish for self-fulfilment and self-integrity. For example, one wishes for one's body to exist in a state of good health. In this case, one wishes for the various organs of the body to exist in their own natural state of wellbeing. (How does this desire compare with the craving for physical beauty and attractiveness? This question invites the wise inquiry from discriminating individuals.)

### 10.3 CONTRASTING ASPECTS OF CRAVING AND WHOLESOME DESIRE

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#### A. NON-ACTION AS A FORM OF ACTION

As mentioned above, people act according to their knowledge and understanding, which may simply be at the level of responding to sense stimuli, or it may develop into true wisdom, which is able to determine what is appropriate and inappropriate.

In many circumstances, however, instead of initiating an action, people pause, baulk, or stop short. In this case, the hesitation, passiveness, or inaction is a form of action, and it may be a potent form of action at that. As will be explained below, craving (*taṇhā*) initiates actions that are prerequisites for acquiring objects of gratification or for protecting the stability of one's cherished sense of self. Here, the term 'action' includes non-action.

There are many reasons why craving may initiate non-action. For example, one may refrain from acting because by acting one would be deprived of some pleasure that one is currently experiencing, or because one would encounter some kind of trouble or adversity.

Even in the case that acting in a particular way would be truly beneficial for one's life, craving may urge one to refrain from acting out of fear of hardship or deprivation. {976}

When people develop wisdom and generate wholesome desire as a motivating force, they perform actions they recognize as appropriate and valuable, even though by acting they will face discomfort and be resisting the urge by craving to refrain from acting. Conversely, craving may prompt acting in order to obtain some pleasure, but wisdom, by discerning that such action will damage one's quality of life, will urge one to refrain.

When people's wisdom increases but refined forms of craving remain, these two qualities become intertwined and profit from one another. The behaviour of wise individuals is thus more complicated than that of other people. The important issue here is which factor gains the upper hand: does craving or wisdom direct proceedings?

If one applies continual wise reflection, wisdom takes the leading role and becomes increasingly sharper. It ushers in wholesome desire as the driving force for directing one's life, to the extent that craving ceases.

Here one can see that by removing the factor of craving from the equation, human actions still proceed. Moreover, they are enriched.

Formerly, one relied on craving to help protect the sense of self. Now, wisdom guides one's life and paves the way for wholesome desire. As a consequence, one is released from the clutches of craving.

## **B. MEANS AND ENDS: CRAVING AS A MOTIVATING FORCE**

When one gets to the heart of the matter, one recognizes that craving (*taṇhā*) in fact is not a genuine motivation for action, because the act itself is not the priority for craving.

As mentioned above, craving desires to consume and acquire things that provide one with pleasure. Wholesome desire (*chanda*), on the other hand, wishes for true completion and fulfilment of all things with which one engages. This dichotomy provides for complexity in regard to action and non-action.

For example:

Sarah is endowed with wholesome enthusiasm. She sees the interior of a house and wants it to be clean (she wishes for this dwelling to exist in a state of completeness). If it is dirty, she wishes for it to be clean and picks up a broom to sweep the floor. She derives joy and contentment both from sweeping (which is the cause for the desired result) and from witnessing a clean space (which is the direct result from sweeping).

Harry has no interest or delight in cleanliness, but he does have a sweet tooth. His mother suggests that he helps with the chores, but he doesn't respond. She thus says, 'If you sweep the house, I will buy you some sweets.' When he hears this, Harry picks up a broom and sweeps. In fact, Harry does not desire cleanliness. He only sweeps because this action is a means by which he can get some candy.

Harry derives no pleasure from sweeping (he may even find it irritating) and he is not determined to do a good job (his mother may need to constantly supervise him). This is because sweeping is the cause for a clean house, which is not the result he desires. {977} His happiness will have to wait until he gets the sweets.

To reiterate, craving does not desire the thing or state that is the direct result of an action. Craving urges action only in the case when it is a

necessary prerequisite for obtaining desired objects. If there is another way to obtain the desired objects without needing to make effort, craving will prompt one to avoid acting and choose the path of inaction instead. Craving is more often a motivation for *inaction* than it is for action.

When craving leads to an avoidance of action, it may manifest in the form of laziness, whereby one clings to pleasurable sensations. Alternatively, it may manifest in the form of fear, say by being afraid of encountering some form of discomfort while performing an action or being anxious of losing self-importance.

When inaction is needed for craving to get what it wants, that is, increased sensual pleasure or reinforced self-importance, craving urges such inaction, without considering whether positive effects derived from acting may be forfeited.

Here are more examples: a child refuses to go to school because he knows that his mother will then increase his allowance for sweets (this is a clear case of inaction being a potent form of action); a man finishes work early in order to drink alcohol and gamble; someone receives a bribe in order to refrain from work that should be done; out of laziness, one pays someone else to do some tasks that one should attend to oneself. In this case, one forfeits the satisfaction and delight that is connected to the fruits of one's own labour.

Positive action is initiated by wholesome desire (*chanda*) stemming from wisdom, which recognizes what is truly valuable and what should be done. Wisdom rouses wholesome desire for bringing these things to completion.

Even in the case when craving initiates action, there are perils, because the preconditions mentioned earlier establish the following equation: craving urges action out of delight for the pleasure derived from such action. The more one acts the more pleasure one receives; the more pleasure there is the more one desires; the more one desires the more one acts. In many occasions people keep acting until the positive results of these actions are squandered.



Wholesome desire, on the other hand, initiates action out of delight for its positive and wholesome effects. The more one acts the more these positive effects increase and the more delight one experiences; the more delight one has the more one acts. One continues acting until the goodness and integrity reaches completion. The action fully corresponds with its objective.

In sum, craving more often than not urges inaction, and even when it initiates action, these actions are hazardous and lead to more harmful effects than beneficial ones. One should thus abandon craving and, instead, foster wisdom and cultivate wholesome desire. {978}

#### 10.4 FORMAL BASIS FOR THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIRE

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##### A. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TERM *CHANDA*

As mentioned earlier, the confusion surrounding the meaning of desire, which is viewed in an overly restrictive sense by associating all desire with craving, stems from an erroneous and inadequate understanding of some key Pali terms.

There are many Pali terms denoting desire, and some of these terms are complex both in terms of their definitions and how they are used in speech and writing. This complexity invites confusion.

First, let us distinguish and clarify some of these difficult terms.

The Pali word which is used in both a general sense, covering the entire spectrum of desire, and in a technical sense, referring specifically to wholesome desire, is *chanda*.

*Chanda* may be translated in many different ways, including: will, desire, delight, enthusiasm, zeal, contentment, satisfaction, aspiration, yearning, wish, love, and passion. At this point, let us simply refer to it as ‘desire’.

Drawing from different sources, the commentaries mention three kinds of desire (*chanda*):<sup>1</sup>

1. *Taṇhā-chanda*: desire as craving (*taṇhā*); unwholesome desire.
2. *Kattukamyatā-chanda*: the desire to act; the wish to act. Occasionally, this term is used in a neutral sense, applicable to both wholesome and unwholesome contexts, but generally it is used in a positive, wholesome sense.
3. *Kusaladhamma-chanda*: desire for virtuous qualities; wholesome desire for truth. It is often abbreviated to *kusala-chanda* (love of virtue; aspiration for goodness) or *dhamma-chanda* (love of truth; aspiration for truth).

**Taṇhā-chanda:**<sup>2</sup> the term *chanda* in this context is a synonym for craving (*taṇhā*), in the same way as the terms *rāga* ('lust') and *lobha* ('greed').<sup>3</sup> This form of *chanda* is found frequently in the Pali Canon, including in the term *kāma-chanda* ('sensual desire'), which is the first of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and is equivalent to *kāma-taṇhā* ('craving for sensuality').<sup>4</sup> {979} *Chanda* in this context is usually used on its own, but sometimes it is used together with synonyms, for example in this passage by the Buddha:

<sup>1</sup>See: Nd1A. I. 17, 62; PsA. I. 117-19; DhsA. 370; VismṬ.:  
Pathavikasiṇaniddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭhamajjhānakathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.:  
Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā,  
Taṇhāpaccayā-upādānapadavithārakathāvaṇṇanā. These three terms –  
*taṇhā-chanda*, *kattukamyatā-chanda* and *kusaladhamma-chanda* – are most often  
used in commentarial passages to distinguish specific forms of desire in  
different contexts. In the Pali Canon the single word *chanda* is used in different  
contexts and one must distinguish the specific form of desire oneself.

<sup>2</sup>E.g.: MA. IV. 94; SA. I. 62; SA II. 280, 307; SA. III. 258.

<sup>3</sup>Besides these terms, there are many other synonyms for *taṇhā*, e.g.: *anunaya*,  
*nandi*, *icchā*, *māyā*, *paṇidhi*, *sineha*, *āsā*, and *abhijjhā*; see: Dhs. 189-90, 201; Vbh.  
145.

<sup>4</sup>*Kāma-chanda* can also be translated as 'sensual pleasure' or 'lustful desire'.

With the relinquishment of desire (*chanda*), lust (*rāga*), delight (*nandi*), craving (*taṇhā*), and clinging (*upādāna*) ... regarding the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, and things cognizable through eye-consciousness, I have understood that my mind is liberated. (This passage refers to all six sense bases.) (See Note 10.1)

M. III. 32.

Because *chanda* in this context is identical to *taṇhā*, it is possible to replace the term *chanda* with the term *taṇhā* in the following passages: ‘a desire for existence’,<sup>5</sup> ‘a desire for sense pleasures’,<sup>6</sup> ‘delight for the body’,<sup>7</sup> ‘love of sexual intercourse’,<sup>8</sup> ‘delight in the body and feelings, which are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and insubstantial’,<sup>9</sup> and ‘desire for sounds, smells and tastes, which are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and insubstantial’.<sup>10</sup>

Compound words are created with *chanda* in a similar way to *taṇhā*, for example: *rūpa-chanda* (‘delight in forms’), *sadda-chanda* (‘delight in sounds’), *gandha-chanda* (‘delight in smells’), *rasa-chanda* (‘delight in tastes’), *phoṭṭhabba-chanda* (‘delight in tactile objects’), and *dhamma-chanda* (‘delight in mental objects’).<sup>11</sup> *Chanda* can be used in the context of human relationships,<sup>12</sup> referring to love or affection, as is seen in the Gandhabhaga Sutta, where it refers to love for one’s wife and children.<sup>13</sup> In this same sutta it states: ‘*Chanda* is the root of suffering,’ in the same

<sup>5</sup>Thig. verse 14. *Bhava-chanda* here is equivalent to *bhava-taṇhā*; compare with the terms *kāma-chanda* and *kāma-taṇhā*.

<sup>6</sup>Thag. verse 1105.

<sup>7</sup>M. I. 500; Sn. 35.

<sup>8</sup>Sn. 164.

<sup>9</sup>S. III. 77-8.

<sup>10</sup>S. IV. 195; cf.: S. I. 186-7; Thag. 1216.

<sup>11</sup>E.g.: S. II. 144-9. Compare with the terms *rūpa-taṇhā*, *sadda-taṇhā* ... *dhamma-taṇhā*, which occur frequently in the scriptures, e.g. at: S. II. 3. Also note that the term *dhamma-chanda* here refers to desire for mental objects (thoughts) and is distinct from the *dhamma-chanda* in the third kind of desire (*kusaladhamma-chanda*) mentioned above.

<sup>12</sup>S. I. 197.

<sup>13</sup>S. IV. 327-30. In this sutta *chanda* appears with the terms *rāga* and *pema* (‘love’).

## NOTE 10.1: SYNONYMS OF DESIRE

The commentaries generally classify *chanda*, *rāga*, *nandi*, and *taṇhā* as synonyms for one another, but in some necessary cases a distinction is made according to the intensity of desire.

For example, *chanda* is described as a weak form of *taṇhā* or a weak form of *rāga*, but when it arises frequently it becomes an intense form of craving or greed.

Similarly, *chanda* is a weak form of *lobha*, but when desire intensifies and leads to infatuation, it is classified as *rāga*, and when it further intensifies it becomes acute greed (*chanda-rāga*).

See: DA. II. 499; AA. IV. 190; SA. III. 64; VinT.: *Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā*,  
Paṭhamajjhānakathā; VismT.: *Pathavīkasiṇa-niddesaṇṇanā*,  
Paṭhamajjhānakathāvaṇṇanā.

manner as the second noble truth, which states that craving is the cause for suffering. In another sutta the Buddha says that one should abandon *chanda* (for things that are impermanent, *dukkha*, and not-self),<sup>14</sup> in the same way that in the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta he says that one should abandon craving.<sup>15</sup>

**Kattukamyatā-chanda:** the desire to act. This form of desire is equivalent to the group of mental factors (*cetasika*) classified in the Abhidhamma as ‘miscellaneous’ or ‘apportioned’ (*pakiṇṇaka-cetasika*), that is, they can arise in both a wholesome mind state and in an unwholesome mind state.<sup>16</sup>

The *kattukamyatā-chanda* most familiar to students of Buddhism is the desire or enthusiasm (*chanda*) classified as the first factor in the Four Paths

<sup>14</sup>S. III. 76-8.

<sup>15</sup>Vin. I. 11; S. V. 422.

<sup>16</sup>Vism. 462-3, 466; Comp.: *Cetasikaparicchedo*, *Aññasamānacetāsikam*; CompT.: *Cetasikaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Aññasamānacetāsikavaṇṇanā*. The commentaries explain the mind states according to the quality, ‘flavour’ (*rasa*), appearance (*paccupaṭṭhāna*), and proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*) of desire, but I won’t go into length about this here. Readers who are interested can look more closely at these references.

to Success (*iddhi-pāda*),<sup>17</sup> and which is also the essential quality in the Four Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*).<sup>18</sup> The meaning of *kattukamyatā-chanda* is very similar to the meaning of *virīya* ('energy'), *vāyāma* ('effort'), and *ussāha* ('endeavour'). {980} These terms are occasionally used together to complement each other.<sup>19</sup> This form of desire is considered an essential factor in Dhamma practice.

The commentaries tend to include this form of desire in the third form, of *kusaladhamma-chanda*, as if they are one and the same. For example, the desire in the Four Paths to Success and in the Four Right Efforts is classified as both *kattukamyatā-chanda* and *kusaladhamma-chanda*.<sup>20</sup>

**Kusaladhamma-chanda:** this form of desire is mentioned in one sutta, in which it is the final factor in a list describing the six things that are difficult to encounter in the world.<sup>21</sup> It is considered an essential factor for people in order to benefit from the Buddhist teachings or to lead a virtuous life, because although one may have encountered the first five factors, if one lacks a desire for wholesome qualities one will not be able to truly benefit from these other factors:

<sup>17</sup>The Four Paths to Success are found frequently in the scriptures, e.g.: D. III. 221-2; Vbh. 216; throughout S. V. 254-93; Vbh. 216-26; and see the explanation at: PañcA. 107.

<sup>18</sup>E.g.: A. II. 15-16, 74; S. V. 244-8; Vbh. 208-215.

<sup>19</sup>For example: in the Buddha's explanation of right effort – Sn. 196; S. V. 440-41; A. I. 174-5; A. II. 93-4, 195; A. III. 306-307; DhA. III. 9.

<sup>20</sup>For an interpretation of *chanda* as *kattukamyatā-chanda* see, e.g.: MA. III. 426 (an explanation of M. II. 174); AA. III. 352 (an explanation of: A. III. 306-307; A. IV. 320); AA. III. 412 (an explanation of A. III. 431-2). For the interpretations of *chanda* that also classify *chanda* as *kusala-chanda* or *dhamma-chanda* see, e.g.: DA. III. 1006 (an explanation of D. III. 221); MA. III. 243 (an explanation of M. II. 11); AA. II. 43 (an explanation of A. I. 38-9); MA. III. 193 (an explanation of M. I. 480); AA. II. 346 (an explanation of A. I. 229); SA. III. 133 (an explanation of S. V. 30); VinT.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā; VbhA. 290 (an explanation of Vbh. 211). These commentaries offer further classifications of *chanda*, for example as *taṇhā-chanda*, *diṭṭhi-chanda*, *virīya-chanda*, and *dhamma-chanda*, but I won't expand on this subject here.

<sup>21</sup>I.e. it is difficult for a person to encounter all six of these things. For a person to encounter these things is considered to be an extremely valuable opportunity, for such a person is endowed with a complete set of factors conducive to Dhamma practice or progress in the truth of the noble ones (*ariya-dhamma*); see: A. III. 440.

Monks, the appearance of six things is rare in the world. What six?

1. The appearance of a perfectly enlightened Buddha is rare in the world;
2. the appearance of one who teaches the Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha is rare in the world;
3. to be reborn in the land of the noble ones is rare in the world;
4. the possession of unimpaired physical and mental faculties is rare in the world;
5. the absence of foolishness and dimwittedness is rare in the world; and
6. a desire for wholesome qualities is rare in the world.

The *chanda* most frequently referred to in the context of Dhamma practice is desire and enthusiasm as found in the teaching on the Four Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*; ‘complete effort’):

That person generates desire for the nonarising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, raises up the mind, and perseveres. He generates desire for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states ... for the arising of unarisen wholesome states ... for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their non-decline, increase, expansion, fulfilment, and development.

This passage is considered a definition of the Four Right Efforts. Here, wholesome desire (*chanda*) is designated as the essence or principal ingredient of effort (*virīya*), which is included in the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).

The term *chanda* in other passages related to Dhamma practice has a similar meaning, for example: the desire to fulfil all wholesome qualities,<sup>22</sup> the desire to undertake training,<sup>23</sup> the desire to develop the faculty

<sup>22</sup> A. III. 431-32.

<sup>23</sup> A. I. 229; A. IV. 15

of wisdom,<sup>24</sup> the desire to abandon all mental impurities,<sup>25</sup> and the desire for Nibbāna.<sup>26</sup> {981}

*Chanda* in these cases should be interpreted as both *kattukamyatā-chanda* and *kusaladhamma-chanda*: as both the desire to act and the desire for virtuous qualities, or in brief: the desire to do good.<sup>27</sup>

The Vibhaṅga of the Abhidhamma defines *chanda* in the Four Right Efforts and in the Four Paths to Success as *kattukamyatā-kusaladhamma-chanda*:<sup>28</sup>

- The Four Right Efforts: In the phrase ‘generate *chanda*’, how is *chanda* interpreted? Whichever delight, aspiration, desire to act, or wholesome love of truth there is is called *chanda*.

*Chandaṃ janetīti tatha katamo chando? Yo chando chandikatā  
kattukamyatā kusalo dhammachando ayaṃ vuccati chando.*

- The Four Paths to Success: In the Four Paths to Success what is the path to success of aspiration (*chanda-iddhipāda*)? At whichever time a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline cultivates the transcendent *jhānas* (*lokuttara-jhāna*) ... the delight, aspiration, desire to act, or wholesome love of truth at that time is called *chanda*.

*Tattha katamo chandiddhipādo? idha bhikkhu yasmiṃ samaye  
lokuttaraṃ jhānaṃ bhāveti ... yo tasmīṃ samaye chando chandikatā  
kattukamyatā kusalo dhammachando ayaṃ vuccati chandiddhipādo.*

<sup>24</sup>Ps. II. 24-5.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Dh. verse 218 (DhA. III. 289 states that this refers to *kattukamyatā-chanda*).

<sup>27</sup>See also: ‘the desire for all aspects of Dhamma’ (Thag. verse 305), ‘a fondness for Dhamma stanzas’ (S. I. 202), and ‘the desire to attain the fruit of arahantship’ (S. V. 273). Some passages in the scriptures state that *chanda* is a quality present at the moment of the four paths (*magga*) and the four fruits (*phala*), and that *chanda* is the Path, is insight (*abhisamaya*), is dispassion (*virāga*), and is liberation (*vimutti*). See: Ps. I. 74-6; Ps. II. 87, 143, 145-6, 216-17.

<sup>28</sup>*Kattukamyatā kusalo dhammacchando*: Vbh. 208, 211, 213, 216, 220, 223. Note that in the passage quoted above the spelling is: *kusala-dhammacchando*.

This definition in the Vibhaṅga is the basis for later commentarial interpretations of *chanda* as a distinctively wholesome quality and is most likely the origin of the convention of combining *kattukamyatā-chanda* with *kusaladhamma-chanda* into a single factor.

## B. CHANDA AS THE ROOT OF SUFFERING AND CHANDA AS THE SOURCE OF WHOLESOME QUALITIES

The Buddha used the single compound term *chanda-mūlaka* in different contexts, sometimes with opposite meanings: in one case it may refer to a wholesome quality and in another case to an unwholesome quality. It is useful here to examine this discrepancy.

The term *chanda-mūlaka* means having desire as the root, source, or point of origin. In one context the Buddha states that all forms of suffering have desire as the root, whereas in another context he states that all things have desire as the root. {982}

### A. Desire as the root of suffering and of the five aggregates of clinging:

Headman, this matter can be understood in this way: ‘Whatever suffering arises, all that arises rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for desire (*chanda*) is the root of suffering.’

S. IV. 329-30.

That bhikkhu delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s statement. Then he asked the Blessed One a further question: ‘But, venerable sir, in what are these five aggregates subject to clinging rooted?’ ‘These five aggregates subject to clinging, bhikkhu, are rooted in desire (*chanda*).’

M. III. 16; S. III. 100-101.

These two passages correspond with one another, as confirmed by the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, in which the Buddha states:

‘In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.’

S. V. 421.



All of the commentarial and sub-commentarial explanations of the second passage (on the five aggregates of clinging) are consistent, stating that ‘rooted in desire’ means ‘rooted in craving (*taṇhā*)’ or ‘rooted in covetous desire (*taṇhā-chanda*)’.<sup>29</sup> These texts occasionally confirm that these explanations are consistent with craving (*taṇhā*) being denoted as the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*).

### B. Desire as the root of all things:

The Buddha uttered these words: *Chandamūlakā ... sabbe dhammā*, which may be rendered as ‘all things are rooted in desire’, ‘all things are based on desire’, or ‘all things have desire as their source’.

This key phrase by the Buddha is contained in a longer passage, which can be considered a compilation of ten major Buddhist principles. It contains important principles of Dhamma practice and culminates in the highest goal of Buddhism:

Monks, if wanderers of other sects should ask you: ‘What, friends, are all things rooted in? ... What is their culmination?’ you should answer them as follows:

1. All things are rooted in desire  
(*chandamūlakā ... sabbe dhammā*).
2. All things have attention as their source  
(*manasikāra-sambhavā sabbe dhammā*).
3. All things originate from contact  
(*phassa-samudayā sabbe dhammā*).
4. All things converge upon feeling  
(*vedanā-samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā*). {983}
5. All things are headed by concentration  
(*samādhīpamukhā sabbe dhammā*).

<sup>29</sup>E.g.: MA. IV. 77; SA. II. 307; Majjhima Nikāya Uparipaṇṇāsaka Īṭkā: Mahāpuṇṇamasuttavaṇṇanā; Saṃyutta Nikāya Īṭkā: Khandhavaggaṭṭikā, Khajjanīyavaggo, Puṇṇamasuttavaṇṇanā.

6. All things have mindfulness as their sovereign  
(*satādhīpateyyā sabbe dhammā*).
7. All things have wisdom as their pinnacle  
(*paññuttarā sabbe dhammā*).
8. All things have liberation as their essence  
(*vimutti-sārā sabbe dhammā*).
9. All things merge into the deathless  
(*amatogadhā sabbe dhammā*).
10. All things culminate in Nibbāna  
(*nibbāna-pariyosānā sabbe dhammā*).<sup>30</sup>

A. V. 106-107.

If you are asked thus, monks, it is in such a way that you should answer those wanderers of other sects.

It is clear that all of these factors are vital in Buddhist practice. Together, they constitute the cultivation of wholesomeness up to the final goal of Buddhism, and these factors are thus all wholesome in themselves. At the very least, they are neutral factors, which may be incorporated in this wholesome framework. For this reason, the term ‘desire’ (*chanda*) here definitely does not refer to an unwholesome quality.

The commentaries explain that ‘all things’ (*sabbe dhammā*) here refers to the five aggregates, i.e. to all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata-dhammā*). (Nibbāna is excluded here as it is the cessation of all conditioned phenomena.)

Note that in the previous section (above) the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-khandha*) are said to be rooted in desire, and that this desire is equated with craving (*taṇhā*). Here, however, the five aggregates (i.e. not as a basis for clinging) are mentioned.

How do the five aggregates and the five aggregates of clinging differ from one another? The Buddha said that in the case that the five aggregates are a supportive condition for the mental taints (*sāsava*) and for clinging (*upādāniya*), they constitute the five aggregates of clinging. If

<sup>30</sup>At A. IV. 338-9 only the first eight factors are listed.

they are free from the taints and from clinging they are the five aggregates in a sheer or absolute sense.<sup>31</sup>

Many sub-commentarial passages explaining these ten factors explicitly state that wholesome qualities are rooted in desire (*chandamūlakā kusalā dhammā*): wholesome desire (*chanda*) is the source of wholesome things. One of these passages defines this desire specifically as the ‘desire to act’ (*kattukamyatā-chanda*), which incorporates the desire for virtuous qualities (*kusaladhamma-chanda*; this includes the love of goodness – *kusala-chanda* – and the love of truth – *dhamma-chanda*).<sup>32</sup>

### C. DEFINITIVE DEFINITION FOR CHANDA

When we have considered the various definitions of the term *chanda* and thoroughly examined the divergent passages in which it is used, we are prepared to establish a definitive definition for this term. By relying on a mutual understanding of this term we can establish a standard definition for it in the context of Dhamma study.

In brief, the term *chanda* encompasses all forms of human desire. {984}

Unwholesome, negative *chanda* is equivalent to the term *taṇhā*. Because the term *taṇhā* is familiar to most students of Buddhism, negative desire may be replaced by this term.

Virtuous, wholesome *chanda* is called *kusaladhamma-chanda*; it is sometimes abbreviated to *kusala-chanda* or *dhamma-chanda*. As negative desire may be referred to as *taṇhā*, it is simple and convenient to refer to wholesome desire by the single term *chanda*.

<sup>31</sup>The Buddha’s words on the five aggregates and the five aggregates of clinging, see: S. III. 47; see further explanations at: DA. III. 1006; SA. II. 243; VismṬ.: Khandhanidesavaṇṇanā, Kamādivinicchayaṭṭhāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>32</sup>For the passage defining ‘all things’ as the five aggregates, see: AA. IV. 158. For sub-commentarial texts, see: VismṬ.: Brahmavihāranidesavaṇṇanā, Pakiṇṇakakathāvaṇṇanā; Dīgha Nikāya Ṭikā: Silakkhandhavaggaṭṭikā, Nidānakathāvaṇṇanā, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā; Majjhima Nikāya, Mūlapaṇṇāsaṭṭikā, Mūlapariyāyavaggo, Tathāgatavārasattamanayavaṇṇanā; Aṅguttara Nikāya Ṭikā: Ekaṇipāṭaṭṭikā, Ekaṇipuggalavaggaṇṇanā.

*Kattukamyatā-chanda* ('the desire to act') is a neutral form of desire. In most cases this term is used in a positive sense, referring to the desire for virtuous qualities (*kusaladhamma-chanda*). Therefore, it too may be incorporated into the single term *chanda*.

Here we can determine to simplify matters by using just these two terms to refer to human desire and motivation:

1. *Taṇhā*: unwholesome desire (the desire to consume, to acquire, and to obtain).
2. *Chanda*: wholesome desire (the desire to act; the desire to bring about integrity and fulfilment).

We can feel at ease by making this simple distinction, because it accords with an identical distinction made in the commentaries and later texts.

In many of the texts, when there is a passage relevant to the subject of unwholesome and wholesome desire, an analysis of these qualities is provided. Although this analysis is not always comprehensive, it is clear that the authors of these texts wished to point out the difference between these two kinds of desire. (Note that there is no single passage in which the three aforementioned kinds of desire are clearly listed together.)<sup>33</sup> Occasionally, a pair of clearly defined terms is used; the most common distinction is as follows:

1. *Taṇhā-chanda*: desire as craving.
2. *Kattukamyatā-chanda*: the desire to act.

<sup>33</sup>There is only the following passage in which these three kinds of desire are implied: 'Sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), namely, desire as sense desire, not as the desire to act (*kattukamyatā-chanda*) or as the desire for truth (*dhmma-chanda*).'  
E.g.: NdA. 17; DhsA. 370; VismṬ.: Silaniddesavaṇṇanā,  
Pātimokkhasaṃvarasīlavaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā,  
Taṇhāpaccayā-upādānapadavithārakathāvaṇṇanā; VinṬ.:  
Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā, Paṭhamajjhānakathā; Aṅguttara Nikāya Ṭikā: [1/91].

## NOTE 10.2: DESIRE AS CRAVING OR ACTION

These commentaries refer to examples from the Pali Canon. In the Buddha's teaching: *For him who still desires, there is obsessive desiring and agitation about those things on which he fixes his attention* (Sn. 176), the desire referred to is craving (*taṇhā*).

In the teaching: *I have cut off, destroyed, and cleared the stream of Māra the wicked one; you should greatly rejoice and desire true safety* (M. I. 227), the desire referred to is *chanda*, which is a wholesome quality of desiring to act.

The commentaries also refer to this passage: *A bhikkhu who is in higher training (sekha), who has not yet reached the fruit of arahantship, and who is still desiring the supreme security from bondage* (M. I. 4). Here too, 'desire' refers to *chanda* as a wholesome quality.

There are two commentarial texts which present a clear account of these principles dealing with desire. In the *Papañcasūdanī* and the *Paramatthadīpanī*, 'desire' (here, the Pali term *patthanā* is used) may be classified into two kinds:<sup>34</sup> (See Note 10.2)

1. Covetous desire; desire with craving (*taṇhā-patthanā*).
2. Wholesome desire (*chanda-patthanā*).

These commentarial explanations support the classification of desire into two distinct kinds. {985}

<sup>34</sup>MA. I. 41; ItA. I. 61.

## 10.5 CRAVING AND WHOLESOME DESIRE

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As mentioned just above, there are two main motivating forces prompting human beings to act:

1. *Taṇhā*: pleasure, delight, desire, lust, and longing that is unwholesome, unhealthy, and unsupportive.
2. *Chanda*: pleasure, delight, desire, love, and aspiration that is wholesome, healthy, and supportive.

### A. MOTIVATION OF CRAVING

*Taṇhā* may be translated as ‘thirst’, ‘craving’, ‘yearning’, ‘infatuation’, ‘fervour’, ‘lust’, ‘agitation’, ‘anxiety’, or ‘insatiability’.<sup>35</sup>

According to the teaching of Dependent Origination, *taṇhā* is conditioned by feeling (*vedanā*) and rooted in ignorance (*avijjā*). When one receives a pleasurable or displeasurable sense impression – one sees a delightful or loathsome visual form, for example, or hears a melodious or grating sound – and feels either pleasure, pain, or a neutral feeling, craving arises in one form or another. If one experiences pleasure, then one is glad, delighted, satisfied, fascinated, enthralled, and covetous. If one feels pain, then one is displeased, dissatisfied, and averse, and one wishes to escape or wishes for the feeling to disappear. If one feels a neutral feeling then one remains indifferent and complacent.

These reactions occur automatically; they require no thinking or understanding. (On the contrary, if a person reflects on or understands the process, for example if one knows that the loathsome visual object is beneficial or the melodious sound is in fact an alarm signalling danger, or one is aware that the object is unsuitable on the grounds of ethical or cultural considerations, then craving can be severed and the habitual process can be replaced by a new form of behaviour.) Craving is dependent

<sup>35</sup>See: UdA. 42; ItA. I. 58; ItA. II. 19; SnA. I. 17; PsA. I. 79.

## NOTE 10.3: CRAVING ARISING AND CEASING

To say that craving arises from the six sense objects or from the five cords of sensual pleasure is a concise explanation. A detailed explanation by the Buddha is that craving arises from things that are pleasurable (*piya-rūpa*) and agreeable (*sāta-rūpa*), of which there are ten groups of six items: the six internal sense organs, the six external sense objects, the six forms of consciousness, the six kinds of contact, the six kinds of feeling, the six kinds of perception, the six kinds of volition, the six kinds of craving, the six kinds of applied thought (*vitakka*), and the six kinds of sustained thought (*vicāra*). Craving is both established at these pleasurable and agreeable things and abandoned and ceases at these things.

*D. II. 308-311; S. II. 108-109; Ps. I. 39-40; Vbh. 101-103.*

on feeling and is reinforced by ignorance: it ‘rests upon’ feeling and is grounded in ignorance.

Because craving is directly tied up with feeling, a person with craving searches for things that will provide pleasing, delightful feelings. There are six distinct things that can provide feeling: visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and mental objects.

The first five – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects – are connected to the material world and are particularly pronounced. They are referred to as the five objects of sensual enjoyment (*kāma-guṇa*).<sup>36</sup> The six sense objects, and especially the five objects of sensual enjoyment, are both the aim and the source of craving. Craving is thus a thirst for things that provide sensation and a thirst for pleasing sense objects – a desire for pleasing sense objects in order to experience delightful feelings. (See Note 10.3) In brief, craving is the desire to acquire. {986}

Craving has further repercussions: the experience of contacting sense objects and experiencing feelings gives rise to a mistaken belief that there is a stable, lasting self that experiences these feelings.

Accompanying this belief in a stable, lasting self is a craving for this self to endure. But this biased belief is merely an idea (that is, it is not

<sup>36</sup>Trans.: also known as the five ‘cords’ or ‘strands’ of sensual pleasure.

based in reality), and it tends to generate an opposing belief that inclines in the opposite direction, that the self exists only temporarily, that it is impermanent and will eventually disappear.

These beliefs are connected to the feelings resulting from contact with sense objects: the existence of a self is defined and determined by the experience of pleasant feelings. When a person is gratified by sense contact, the craving for the stability of the self is intensified. But when the person is not gratified by sense contact then the stability of the self loses significance. If the dissatisfaction with sense contact is strong then there arises an aversion for the stability of the ‘self’: a person wishes for the self to be separated from the present state of existence or craves for the destruction of the self. This alternative form of craving – for annihilation of the self – goes hand in hand with the belief that the self exists temporarily and will eventually disappear.

These two forms of craving – for stability of the self and for self-annihilation – exist as a pair and lie in juxtaposition to one another.

The first kind of craving – a desire for pleasant sense objects – is also a desire for sense objects to satisfy the ‘self’ or a desire for the self to experience pleasant feeling from sense objects.

All forms of craving merge at or serve a sense of self.

People allow these different forms of craving to direct the course of life, by pandering to them, nourishing them, and faithfully obeying them. They are the source of all problems, both personal and social, and they generate expectation, fear, doubt, anger, hostility, carelessness, obsession, and conflict. There are three distinct kinds of craving:

1. *Kāma-taṇhā*: craving for pleasant sense objects to satisfy a sense of self; craving for sensuality.
2. *Bhava-taṇhā*: craving for the importance, stability, and immortality of the self; craving for existence.
3. *Vibhava-taṇhā*: craving for the destruction, escape, or annihilation of the self; craving for non-existence. {987}



## NOTE 10.4: CRAVING AND SEEKING

*Taṇhaṃ paṭicca pariyesanā*: ‘with craving as condition, there is seeking’;  
*pariyesanaṃ paṭicca lābho*: ‘with seeking as condition, there is acquisition.’

(D. II. 58-9; A. IV. 400-401; Vbh. 390-1; cf.: S. II. 143 where craving is expressed as the term *chanda*).

*Pariyesanā* can also be translated as ‘endeavouring to obtain’ or ‘acknowledging’.

At DA. II. 499, AA. IV. 188 and VinT.: Parivāraṭṭikā, Ekuttarikanayo, Navakavāraṇṇanā *taṇhā* is classified as two kinds:

- *esanā-taṇhā* (craving in the search for desired objects) and
- *esita-taṇhā* (craving for things sought after and acquired).

Nd. I. 262 and DA. III. 720 mention five kinds of *chanda*:

1. desire in searching (*pariyesana-chanda*),
2. desire in acquisition (*paṭilābha-chanda*),
3. desire in consuming or using (*paribhoga-chanda*),
4. desire in accumulation (*sannidhi-chanda*), and
5. desire in distributing (*visajjana-chanda*: to hand out money or feed people to increase one’s following);

These two passages explain that these five kinds of *chanda* are all expressions of *taṇhā*.

In brief, these three kinds of craving may be referred to as craving for sense pleasure, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence.<sup>37</sup>

According to the Buddhist teaching on the mode of conditionality (*paccayākāra*), craving leads to ‘seeking’ (*pariyesanā* or *esanā*, see Note 10.4): the search to obtain desired objects, which results in acquisition. The acquisition of a desired object marks the end of one stage in the conditional process.

Before examining this process more closely, take note that seeking is not the same as doing, and seeking may not involve any form of physical action, as will be discussed below.

<sup>37</sup>For more on the three kinds of craving see Appendix 1.

## B. MOTIVATION OF WHOLESOME DESIRE

At this point let us return to the term *chanda*, which we have defined as desire for wholesome qualities (*kusaladhamma-chanda*), love of virtue (*kusala-chanda*), or love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*).

*Kusaladhamma-chanda* is translated as desire for wholesome qualities: an enthusiasm for and delight in virtue.<sup>38</sup> *Kusala-chanda* is translated as love of virtue; although the term *dhamma* is removed, *kusala-chanda* has an identical meaning to *kusaladhamma-chanda*.

*Kusala* may be translated as ‘wholesome’, ‘skilful’, ‘favourable’, ‘proficient’, ‘healthy’, or ‘salubrious’: it refers to things that are beneficial to a person’s life, things that promote wellness and prosperity for an individual and for society. (See Note 10.5) {988}

*Dhamma-chanda* is translated as love of truth or a desire for truth. The term *dhamma* often has a general meaning, referring to ‘thing’ or ‘teaching’, but in this context its meaning is more far-reaching.

Here, *dhamma* has two principal meanings: first, the ‘truth’ (or teachings that reveal the truth), and second, ‘virtue’ (‘goodness’, ‘virtuous quality’, and to some extent ‘ethics’). *Dhamma-chanda* can thus be rendered as ‘love of truth’, ‘love of virtue’, ‘desire for truth’, or ‘desire for virtue’.

The desire for truth points also towards knowledge: a person wants to know the truth, to realize the truth, to realize the true meaning, true essence, and true value of things.

And the desire for virtue is linked to action: a person wishes to generate goodness.

*Dhamma-chanda* can therefore be translated as ‘intent on truth’, ‘love of truth’, ‘intent on goodness’, or ‘love of goodness’. It includes an aspiration for knowledge, a desire to act, an eagerness to act. A simple definition for

<sup>38</sup> Compare this term with *kusaladhamma-asantutṭhī* (*asantutṭhitā kusalesu dhammesu*): ‘discontentment in regard to wholesome qualities’, which is an essential factor supporting the Buddha’s enlightenment and a factor that all Dhamma practitioners should possess in tandem with perseverance (D. III. 213–14; A. I. 50, 95; A. III. 432; Dhs. 7–8, 234).

## NOTE 10.5: DEFINITIONS OF KUSALA

There are three principal definitions for *kusala*:

1. *ārogya* (an absence of illness; healthy);
2. *anavajja* (faultless); and
3. *kosalla-sambhūta* (arising from skilfulness; arising from wisdom).

Alternative definitions include:

- ‘resulting in happiness’ (*sukha-vipāka*) and
- ‘peaceful’ (*khema*).

*See, e.g.: PsA. I. 129, 206; DhsA. 38, 62; DA. II. 645; VismṬ.:  
Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Viññāṇakkhandhakathāvaṇṇanā.*

*dhamma-chanda* is ‘intent on truth’, with the understanding that all the aforementioned explanations are included in this definition. In a similar fashion, the term *chanda* on its own can also be translated as ‘intent on truth’.

*Chanda* desires truth and virtue; it desires a knowledge of truth; it desires to act in order to give rise to goodness and to produce truly beneficial results. *Chanda* is thus related to action, specifically action performed in order to know the truth and to create goodness.

Why is it that when wholesome desire (*kusaladhamma-chanda*) is mentioned in the texts, it is usually linked to the desire to act (*kattukamyatā*)? The desire for knowledge and goodness solicits action. In order to arrive at knowledge, truth, and fulfilment, one must act. To use a play on words, to access the real one must have zeal.<sup>39</sup>

For this reason, the desire to act is an attribute of wholesome desire or the love of truth. One can even say that the term *chanda* is a synonym for *kattukamyatā*: the desire to act is wholesome desire. Sooner or later, when the texts mention wholesome desire (*kusala-chanda*) or the love of

<sup>39</sup>Trans: the Thai play on words used by the author here is somewhat more effective:   
อยากธรรม ก็อยากทำ: *yahk tam gaw yahk tam*: ‘if one desires the truth, one desires to act.’

truth (*dhmma-chanda*), they normally conclude by stating that *chanda* is equivalent to the desire to act (*kattukamyatā-chanda*).

In reference to the mode of conditionality (*paccayākāra*), the Buddha said that *chanda* leads to perseverance (*ussāha*),<sup>40</sup> or he mentioned *chanda* as preceding effort (*vāyāma*) or energy (*virīya*).<sup>41</sup> Put simply, *chanda* generates action (just as *taṇhā* generates seeking).

Related to this subject, the commentaries say that the cause of wholesome desire (*chanda*) is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).<sup>42</sup>

This passage indicates that wholesome desire is part of a conditional process involving wisdom. Wholesome desire commences when a person begins to apply wisdom (just as the arising of craving depends on ignorance). {989}

### C. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

To sum up:

- Craving (*taṇhā*) is focused on feeling (*vedanā*) and desires objects in order to experience feeling, or desires objects for personal gratification. Craving is generated and sustained by ignorance; it is linked to personal issues – it centres around a sense of ‘self’. It leads to seeking.
- Wholesome desire (*chanda*) is focused on wellbeing, on what is truly beneficial and on the quality of life; it desires truth, goodness, and virtue; it desires fulfilment and wholeness. *Chanda* is generated from wise reflection; it is objective – it is not bound up with a sense of ‘self’; and it leads to energy, effort, and action.

<sup>40</sup>M. I. 480; M. II. 174.

<sup>41</sup>For references, see the section on *kattukamyatā-chanda* above.

<sup>42</sup>VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārakkhandhakathāvaṇṇanā. *Yoniso-manasikāra*: wise reflection; skilful reflection; proper reflection; rational thinking. ‘Cause’ = ‘origin’: *samuṭṭhāna*.

There are two points here requiring special emphasis:

1. When analyzing whether a person's actions (including thoughts and speech) are dictated by craving or not, one can use the following criteria: desires or actions that are tied up with a search for gratifying sensations, that protect or promote the stability of a fixed sense of 'self' (including on a deeper level the undermining of the 'self'), are matters that fall under the category of craving.
2. The passages 'craving leads to seeking' and '*chanda* leads to action' are very helpful in distinguishing between these two qualities. This distinction has a crucial bearing on ethics and on Dhamma practice, which will be discussed below.

Craving desires things in order to experience feeling, and the gratification of craving is achieved through the acquisition of these things. Any method used by craving to acquire gratifying objects is referred to by the term 'seeking' (*pariyesanā*). The methods for acquiring these things vary: some methods require action while other methods (for example someone else provides the object) do not require action. In the case that action is required, however, the object desired by craving does not have a direct causal relationship to the action. For example:

'Mr. Gully is a janitor and gets a monthly salary of \$300.'

'If you finish reading this book Daddy will take you out to the movies.'

Many people will think that janitorial work is the cause for receiving the salary: cleaning is the cause and the salary is the result. Such a conclusion, however, is false; it stems from an habitual and self-deceptive way of reasoning.

For the statement to be accurate one must insert missing clauses: the action of cleaning results in a clean building; a clean building is the true result of cleaning. Receiving a salary for cleaning is merely the result of an agreement made by certain individuals. There is no certain causal relationship between these two events: some people who clean buildings receive no money and most people receive a salary without having to clean buildings.

The second example is similar: many people will think that reading the book is the cause and going to the movies is the result, but in fact the true result of reading a book is the gaining of knowledge. To finish reading the book is merely a condition for going to the movies. {990}

In the first example, if Mr. Gully's behaviour is compelled by craving, then he cleans only because cleaning is a requirement for getting money. He does not desire a clean building and he does not want to sweep and clean.

In the second example, the child wishes to go to the movies and she reads the book only because it is a condition for getting the object desired by craving: to see a movie. She does not desire the knowledge contained in that book and she has no wish to read the book.

Strictly speaking, craving does not lead to action nor does it generate a desire to act. In these cases, action is merely one possible method (following a pre-arranged agreement) used for attaining sought-after objects according to the needs of craving.

These two examples also clarify the quality of *chanda*, which desires virtue, truth, and knowledge of the truth.

With *chanda*, Mr. Gully would desire a clean building and the child would desire the knowledge from the book; both individuals desire the direct results of these actions. The results 'appeal to' the causes: the results help determine the course of action. Action is equivalent to generating desired results; cause and effect are intimately linked. When Mr. Gully sweeps, cleanness arises, and it arises every time he sweeps. When the child reads, knowledge arises, and it continues to arise the more she reads.

*Chanda* desires the virtue resulting from action, and thus also desires the action itself, which is the cause for that virtue.

In this sense, *chanda* leads to action and leads to a desire to act. This helps to explain why the second kind of *chanda* (*kattukamyatā-chanda* – the

desire to act) is equated to *kusala-chanda* or *dhamma-chanda* (the desire for virtue or truth).<sup>43</sup>

If behaviour is guided by *chanda*, Mr. Gully will have an enthusiasm for sweeping the building that is distinct from receiving a salary, and the child will read the book without her father's enticement to see a movie. There are many other ethical implications to these two forms of desire, but at this point simply remember the distinction that craving is the desire to consume or experience, while *chanda* is the desire for truth and action.

#### D. PROBLEMS ARISING FROM A SET OF PRECONDITIONS

The ethical or practical consequences of using either craving or *chanda* as a motivation for action vary greatly.

When a person uses craving as the motivation, action is merely a prerequisite for obtaining desirable objects in order to satisfy the sense of 'self'. The person does not directly desire the action or the results of the action; his or her direct aim is to obtain the desired objects.

In many instances the required action is merely one method of obtaining the desired objects.

Therefore, if one is able to find a method of obtaining these things without having to act, one will use this method and avoid doing anything, because obtaining the desired objects without having to work is most compatible with craving.

And if it is impossible to avoid action then one will act reluctantly, unwillingly, and without real enthusiasm. {991}

<sup>43</sup> A corroborative passage is: *Kattukamyatā-lakkhaṇo kusala-chando*, which translates as: 'The enthusiasm for virtue has the characteristic of desiring action', or: 'the mark of desiring virtue is the desire to act' (VinT.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā).

The consequences of craving are as follows:

- When one tries to avoid having to perform the prearranged action, one may seek a shortcut or an easy alternative to acquire the desired object without having to work. This avoidance may even lead people to behave immorally. For example, if Mr. Gully wants money, has no enthusiasm for or dedication to his work, and feels he cannot wait, he may seek money by stealing. If the girl cannot put up with reading the book, she may steal money from her mother and go to see the movie alone rather than wait for her father to take her.
- When one craves to acquire and has no desire to act, one will perform required actions simply to get them over with, act in a hasty fashion, or act to convince others that one has accomplished the deed. The result is a lack of precision and excellence in one's work. And one will develop bad habits like disinterest in achievement, negligence, and half-heartedness. For example, Mr. Gully may joylessly sweep day in and day out, waiting for his salary. The girl may read the book in a distracted way without gaining any knowledge or deceive her father by reading only the first, middle, and final page and claim she has finished it.
- When the original agreements have been breached, there arises underachievement, carelessness, avoidance, and deception. As a consequence, strict secondary preconditions need to be established for support and protection. But this is only attending to symptoms, making the entire system more complicated and confusing. For example, it may be necessary to find a supervisor and inspector for Mr. Gully's work and verify the hours he has spent working. It may be necessary to have an elder sibling check on the girl or else the father may need to cross-examine her on the book's content.

When craving dictates behaviour in response to these secondary terms and conditions, new layers of faulty and immoral conduct arise until the entire system becomes disrupted or useless.

- When the desired object differs from the direct result of an action, then the value of the action cannot be measured by its result



because the action is being performed to serve some other goal. In such a case, there is an imbalance between the action and desired results. The behaviour of people who aim for desired objects expected under the terms of an agreement is likely to be either excessive or deficient, and is likely to be inadequate for realizing the beneficial, virtuous results stemming directly from that action. People then determine the value of the action by the acquisition of desirable objects.

The basic rule for action performed as a prerequisite for acquiring desired sense objects, or the distinctive rule of craving, is: 'The more I obtain desirable things, the more I act', or: 'The more I experience delightful feelings, the more I act.' Action based on this premise is never-ending and possesses a flip side of: 'If I don't acquire desirable objects, I won't act', or: 'If I don't experience delightful feelings, I'll remain idle.'

Apart from being defective and a missed opportunity, action that is performed for results differing from its direct, beneficial results also creates negative effects. A simple example is that of eating: when a person eats purely with craving, then if the food is delicious he will eat till he is bloated; if the food does not appeal to his desires then he will eat too little, leading to discomfort and sickness. (The action is eating, which results in adequate nourishment for the body and is a prerequisite for experiencing delicious tastes.) {992}

The negative effects of craving are widespread as will be discussed in further examples below.

- In the case that action and the things desired by craving are not directly aligned by cause and effect, craving is averse to action and resists work. Craving attempts to avoid work by trying to obtain things through no effort at all, and when it is essential to act, then people act begrudgingly. People acting with craving (following prescribed terms and conditions) tend to find no joy or satisfaction, either in the action itself or in the fruits of their labour.

The things desired by craving abide virtually in isolation, disconnected from the deed. As long as one does not acquire the desired objects, the craving for these things remains. And acting to fulfil

certain preconditions may further incite craving, leading to disturbance and anxiety.

The state of mind of someone who acts with craving is restless, confused, stressful, and nervous, and is often accompanied by other unwholesome qualities like fear, distrust, and envy.

A lack of fulfilment and dissatisfaction can lead to severe personal problems, like stress and mental illness. When these problems extend outwards, they create difficulty for one's life in general and cause affliction for others.

### **E. BENEFITS OF WHOLESOME DESIRE**

People who apply wholesome desire (*chanda*) as the motivation for action, on the other hand, wish for the direct results of actions, and therefore they also want to act. The consequences of wholesome desire are opposite to the consequences of craving:

- Wholesome desire leads to upright behaviour, diligence, and honesty, to sincerity in relation to one's work, and to a steadfast allegiance to the natural law of causality.
- Wholesome desire creates an enthusiasm for work; it leads to precision and excellence in relation to one's work, to a wish for success, to earnest endeavour, and to being undaunted by work.
- Instead of a complicated system of control and mutual fault-finding, there is cooperation and a coordinated effort between people, because each individual wishes for the success of the work rather than yearning for personally gratifying objects which are scarce and must be competed for.
- Because the action is performed for its own direct results, the value of the action can be measured by its results. There is a balance between the action and desired results: a person acts in order to give rise to beneficial results. For example, one eats the proper amount to meet the needs of the body and to promote health, without being enslaved by delicious flavours. {993}

- When one desires the direct results of an action and wants to generate these results, one also realizes the intermediate benefits that arise during the course of action. The wish to act and the reaping of benefits from action leads to satisfaction, contentment, happiness, and a deep sense of peace.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of Dhamma practice, *chanda* is classified as one of the ‘paths to power’ (*iddhi-pāda*), which is a vital principle for the development of concentration (*samādhi*). Wholesome desire brings about concentration, which the Buddha called ‘concentration as a result of desire’ (*chanda-samādhi*).<sup>45</sup> Wholesome desire promotes mental health, as opposed to craving, which creates mental illness.

Even in the case when a person is unable to fully accomplish the results of an action, wholesome desire does not create suffering or mental problems. Whether the action bears fruit or not, it proceeds according to cause and effect: the effects are consistent with the causes; the causes along with any obstructing conditions naturally give rise to specific results. Wholesome desire does not create suffering because those people who act with such desire have an understanding of causality and recognize the direct results of their actions.

Suffering only arises when craving is given the opportunity to interfere, for example when one worries that people will be critical for not succeeding or one compares one’s accomplishments with the success of others. (See Note 10.6)

<sup>44</sup>In relation to this subject, it is possible here to add an explanation on the development of mindfulness of breathing (Ps. I. 178). In this passage it is described how when a person develops mindfulness of breathing and focuses on the in- and out-breath, *chanda* arises. When *chanda* arises, the breathing becomes more refined. By continuing one’s focus on breathing, delight arises, etc. (cf.: Vinṭ.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā).

<sup>45</sup>‘If a bhikkhu gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based upon desire, this is called concentration due to desire’ (S. V. 268).

## NOTE 10.6: THINKING AS CONCEIT

This form of thinking falls under the category of ‘conceit’ (*māna*), but craving here must also be firmly established: there must be a desire for the stability of the ‘self’, which is connected to the conceit and wish to be recognized as a ‘success’.

See the passage at Paṭ. 205, which states that the fetter of conceit (*māna-saṃyojana*) is dependent on the fetter of greed for existence (*bhavarāga-saṃyojana*); it arises due to causes and conditions. (It is most likely that important parts of this passage have been lost, as confirmed by the complete passage referred to at VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārakkhandhakathāvaṇṇanā.)

The Abhidhamma states that the proximate cause (*padatṭhāna*) of *māna* is greed (*lobha*), and that *māna* only arises in a mind that is rooted in greed (*lobha-mūla*) or accompanied by greed (*lobha-sahagata*).

Put simply, conceit is a consequence of craving.

See: Dhs. 247; Comp.: Cetasikaparicchedo, Akusalacetasikasampayoganayo;  
CompṬ.: Cittaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Akusalacetasikasampayoganayavaṇṇanā;  
Vism. 469.

## F. THE ACT OF EATING SUBJECT TO PRECONDITIONS

Following are some everyday examples of these principles:

When the body is underfed then it requires food for nourishment and for sustaining life. The need for food manifests as hunger, which we can distinguish as the first stage in the act of eating. Hunger is a function of the physical body and is classified as a result (*vipāka*). From the perspective of ethics, it is neutral: neither good nor bad, neither wholesome nor unwholesome. Even arahants experience hunger.

Hunger is a stimulus. It prompts the act of eating, and it conditions the behaviour of eating: if one is very hungry one eats a lot; if not very hungry, one eats less. {994}

Hunger, however, is not the sole conditioning factor for eating; there are other reasons why people eat.

At the second stage of eating, for ordinary, unawakened beings, another incentive or motivation comes into play and determines behaviour along with hunger: the force of craving.

There are two kinds of craving that manifest at this stage: first, is the struggle to protect the security of the ‘self’ (the craving for existence – *bhava-taṇhā*), which is obvious in times of great hunger or starvation. Craving generates anxiety, agitation, and a fear of death, accompanying the normal discomforts of going without food. The stress and fear will be commensurate to the degree of craving. At this point the person seeks food. When craving directs behaviour, the search for food tends to be desperate and disregards ethical considerations. (See Note 10.7)

The second kind of craving is the craving for sense pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*): the hunger for delightful sensations. The craving for sense pleasures combines with physical hunger to condition behaviour, either as a support or as an obstruction. This is similar to two people who are in competition for material gains; if both gain, they help each other; if only one party gains, they are in conflict.

If hunger is the sole factor, then the degree of hunger determines the amount of food a person eats; if craving is the sole factor, then the degree of delicious flavours determines the amount of food consumed.

This, however, is only a hypothetical argument: usually, craving never allows hunger to be the sole determining factor. Craving almost always intervenes, and when hunger and craving exist as co-determinants, hunger obliges craving, by helping to enhance the experience of delicious flavours. But hunger can only help to a limited extent; it cannot always accommodate the desires of craving. {995} As a consequence, a person may be very hungry but the food is not tasty and he eats too little, or he is not hungry but the food is delicious and he overeats; or he is only a little bit hungry and the food is not tasty, so he refuses to eat anything.

Hunger is a warning, announcing the body’s requirements. When a person eats to satisfy hunger then the body receives adequate nourishment; the direct result of eating is nourishing the body. But when a person eats with craving – eats to experience delicious flavours – then he sometimes eats too little and other times too much, which can harm the body.

## NOTE 10.7: SEEKING AND CRAVING

People may raise the question that if the act of seeking stems from craving, then does this mean that someone without craving needs not seek food?

The Pali word *pariyesanā* ('seeking') is used to define all methods applied for acquiring desired objects. It has a broad meaning, including methods that require action and methods that do not require action. 'Seeking' here is distinguished from pure action. Whenever seeking is directly linked to its results then it is merely an action in the ordinary sense.

For instance, in the above example, the body requires food for sustenance and good health. Seeking is an immediate cause for obtaining required nourishment, and is thus an action performed for its own direct results.

The distinguishing factor is the reason for eating. If a person eats in order to experience delicious flavours, then the process of cause and effect becomes imbalanced. But if a person eats to meet the body's requirements, the causal process is unified. A person without craving applies reasoned judgement and understanding, reflecting on the need for food to sustain life and to perform good deeds.

In Dhamma practice, if one's conduct is based on this kind of reasoned reflection, then one considers the search for food through righteous means to be a responsibility and puts forth effort. Even bhikkhus, who should sustain life with only the minimum requirement of food, endeavour to find food following their own custom and tradition.

See: Vin. I. 57-8, 96: these passages reveal another perspective on the distinction between seeking that is a responsibility and pure action, and seeking that is simply a search for sensual experience without needing to act.

In the case of craving, tasting delicious flavours is dependent on the act of eating, but it is not a direct result. Eating is the direct cause for nourishing the body but it is a prerequisite for the gratification of craving.

Craving does not necessarily want to eat nor is it particularly interested in the needs of the body. Craving only wants delicious flavours; eating is merely a requirement to obtain these flavours and there is no other option but to eat.

The tastier the food, the more one eats; one does not consider the body's needs and limitations. Similarly, if the food does not taste good,

one refuses to eat. Moreover, one may feel that the entire process of chewing and swallowing is troublesome, disagreeable, and exhausting. In this case the body is a recipient of the act of eating, but without the person necessarily intending to nourish the body.

Figuratively speaking, the living body is one party in a discussion, while the person eating with craving is another party. When the body is undernourished, it requires food, but it cannot eat on its own; it relies on the person to provide it with food. When people are inattentive to the body's needs or only grudgingly take an interest in a proper diet, the body suffers. Occasionally, when the body is famished, it must complain and grumble in order to get people's attention. When the body sends the slightest sign of distress, people hasten to eat.

The body looks for ways to entice people to eat, by offering the reward of experiencing delicious tastes. Sometimes the body is not hungry and does not send any signal of discomfort, but people come across delicious food and eat more than the body requires.

Eating has implications for both parties: for the body, eating results in rejuvenation, while for the person, eating results in obtaining delicious flavours.

(In fact, most people do not want to eat; they only want to experience delicious tastes. If someone were required to eat two plates of insipid food, he would have to force himself to do so, but if the food were delicious then he may not be able to wait for the third plate to arrive.)

When the body offers an incentive for people to eat, it simply waits; people will eat delicious foods from their own initiative and the body obtains required nourishment accordingly. {996}

This method of enticement by the body, however, can be harmful and backfire. If one lacks the ability to consider and reflect, one may be utterly deceived by the body and only search for desirable flavours; as a consequence the body suffers. Sometimes one does not eat enough because the food is not delicious; sometimes the food is tasty and one not only eats more than is necessary, but overeats to the extent of causing illness.

The act of eating then does not provide the suitable result of attending to the body's needs. Moreover, those people who are enticed by delicious flavours often create trouble and distress for other people.

### **G. PROCREATION AND SENSUAL PLEASURE**

A similar subject is procreation. To use a metaphor, the life force which desires to procreate (or the biological need to reproduce) is one party in a debate, while the person who experiences sensations is another party. The living organism desires to maintain the continuation of its genes, but it is unable to achieve this goal on its own; it requires assistance from people themselves.

To effectuate this goal, the life force seduces people with the reward of pleasant sensations, especially through the physical contact in the act of reproduction. Sexual intercourse has implications for both parties: for the life force it means a continuation of the species; for people it means obtaining pleasurable feelings.

At this stage, the life force is untroubled; it simply waits passively. When people act according to their desires, the life force receives its desired effects accordingly.

But when someone acts not out of a wish to propagate the species, which is the direct result of the action, but rather because it is a prerequisite for obtaining pleasant sensations, the action is imbalanced. The craving to experience pleasure through sexual intercourse may lead to many forms of harmful and extreme behaviour, spreading sexually transmitted diseases and generating crime, affecting both the individual and society at large.

The matter of reproduction is more complex than the act of eating; the imbalance here extends further than the relationship between the action and desired results. People seduced into acting often end up betraying the life force, which is a partner in this intentional act: the individual people only want to experience pleasure and have no wish to provide the life force with its desired goal of reproduction. They act unilaterally, in order to experience pleasure and to gratify desire, at the same time obstructing life and preventing it from obtaining any results of this action.



This alone is acceptable, but when craving increases, people behave offensively and take advantage of or ‘defraud’ the life force. Their sole interest is in pleasure and they think up ways to intensify this pleasure. They devise methods to stimulate and spread the fires of craving, to increase the passion in experiencing sense contact. And they create the instruments to experience the most extravagant and heightened sense pleasures possible, as can be seen today by the proliferation of entertainment centres and various places of licentiousness. {997}

In this activity of reproduction people pay no attention and offer no opportunity to the biological needs. And they apply a similar attitude of neglect to other activities like eating, giving rise to various widespread addictions.<sup>46</sup>

People should deal with this matter of reproduction in ways that are beneficial to themselves and their communities, by fostering sincerity and goodwill. They should develop wisdom, which recognizes the true objective of desire within the order of nature, so that they practise moderation and avoid indulgence. In this way, people’s actions will satisfy both the genuine needs of nature and the personal needs of individuals in a balanced way. Otherwise, the so-called civilization will end in ruin and devour itself, bereft of peace and happiness.

#### H. EATING IN MODERATION

Let us return to the subject of eating. As mentioned earlier, there are two factors conditioning a person’s behaviour in relation to eating: hunger and craving. Indeed, there is another conditioning factor that may play a participatory role in the act of eating: *chanda* – a desire for truth or a love of goodness.

<sup>46</sup>The comparison of reproduction to eating concludes with the discussion of craving. There are no similar comparisons in reference to *chanda*, because *chanda* is not required for the act of reproduction, and reproduction is not connected to the realization of a wholesome life. Reproduction is influenced by the power of craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), in order to maintain the stability of the ‘self’. Dhamma practice depends on eating, but it does not depend on reproduction; eating is required to practise the Dhamma, but reproduction is not; the life that presently exists is sustained by eating, not by procreating.

In the case of hunger, wholesome desire (*chanda*) wishes for a truly beneficial state of being; it desires a healthy or optimal existence. It desires favourable conditions for life: health, ease, an absence of illness, a freedom from difficulties and from burdens (more than occur naturally), and a convenience for performing one's responsibilities, especially in regard to spiritual development.

The process in which wholesome desire arises is different from the process giving rise to craving. Craving arises wrapped up in ignorance. When encountering an agreeable object, one is pleased; when encountering a disagreeable object, one is displeased. Craving follows automatically from feeling, without a person needing to think or to have any understanding of the process.<sup>47</sup>

The process involving wholesome desire is one of ending ignorance; it is a process of wisdom: of applying thought, understanding, and awareness. When one eats, reflection and awareness are involved; one does not allow the indiscriminate reaction of craving to arise along with associated sensations (*vedanā*). The process of ignorance and craving ends or abates and is replaced by a process of cessation. {998}

The first factor to eliminate ignorance and cut off craving is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which can also be translated as skilful consideration, correct thinking, or analytical reasoning. (See Note 10.8)

Wise reflection here investigates in this way: 'What is the result of eating?' 'What is the purpose of eating?' It is aware that the reason for eating is to nourish the body, to promote health and ease, and that a natural, healthy state of existence is conducive to performing one's duties. One does not eat primarily for delicious flavours, amusement, or beautification, which would be detrimental to one's health, lead to the exploitation of others, increase defilements, and be unfavourable to the truly desirable results of eating.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup>The thinking or understanding referred to here is of the kind that intervenes and cuts off craving. It should not be confused with thinking that arises to serve craving, by seeking ways of satisfying craving.

<sup>48</sup>See the Buddha's frequently mentioned teaching on the proper reflection while using the four requisites, in which he uses the term *yoniso-paṭisaṅkhā* (a synonym

## NOTE 10.8: REFLECTION NOURISHES MINDFULNESS

Compare with this teaching:

Wise reflection nourishes mindfulness and clear comprehension;  
mindfulness and clear comprehension nourishes restraint of the  
senses....

The perfection of wise reflection perfects mindfulness and clear  
comprehension; the perfection of mindfulness and clear  
comprehension perfects restraint of the senses.

A. V. 118-19.

Wise reflection is not in itself a motivating force, but it conditions the wholesome motivation of *chanda*, which in this case leads to enthusiasm and desire for the health and ease of the body, for a good and suitable state of existence.

*Chanda* becomes a third motivating force in the act of eating; it aligns with hunger and both alternates with and blocks craving. If strong enough, it even cuts off any opportunity for craving to arise. In the context of eating, *chanda* generates moderation – to eat just enough (*bhojane-mattaññutā*).

In the act of eating, there are thus three conditioning factors or motivations: hunger, which is specific to this activity and is inherently neutral from a moral perspective, and craving and *chanda*, which are wide-ranging motivations and oppose one another. Craving is unwholesome and harmful; *chanda* is wholesome and beneficial. {999}

for *yoniso-manasikāra*). (This reflection in later times has been referred to as *tañkhaṇika-paccavekkhaṇa* or colloquially as '*paṭisañkhāyo*'.) In relation to eating, this reflection is described as 'moderation in eating' (*bhojane-mattaññutā*), e.g.: M. I. 355; M. III. 2; S. IV. 176-7; A. I. 113-14; A. II. 39-40; A. IV. 167-8.

## 10.6 COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRAVING AND CHANDA

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### A. INTERPLAY BETWEEN WHOLESOME AND UNWHOLESOME DESIRES

Some people may counter here that the desire for good health is most likely a form of craving, because people want to be healthy and strong in order to experience pleasure to the utmost. This argument stems from an inaccurate interpretation; it does not accord with the Buddhist doctrine of analysis (*vibhajja-vāda*), which encourages a clear and concise discrimination of causes, factors, stages, and conditions, rather than mixing up these factors, etc. and then analyzing them in a jumbled way.

A state of good health, absence of illness, and ease is inherently favourable and positive. What one then decides to do with this good health is another stage in the process.<sup>49</sup> One may not be desiring pleasant sensations, but rather wish to rely on good health in order to perform kind deeds or to practise for the elimination of mental impurity.

In general, people's thinking tends to be comprised of a mixture of factors and it is important that one is able to distinguish them. At times this mixture of factors is very complicated.

A person, for example, may think in this way: 'I will eat only enough and will thus become a strong, attractive, and healthy person.' This way of thinking can be divided into three separate parts: a) the person recognizes that the truly desirable result of eating is a healthy and strong body; b) the person's desire and contentment with this supportive state of good health is pure and unadulterated; and c) there is a desire to possess this strength and good health, for it to 'belong to me', to be recognized by others as a healthy person, or to identify with the good health and generate such thoughts as, 'May I become a beautiful person,' 'I will be stronger than he,' or 'I will be prettier than she.'

In this case, wholesome desire (*chanda*) and craving (*taṇhā*) overlap or accompany one another: wholesome desire arises and is then followed by

<sup>49</sup> Compare this with mindfulness, which is a wholesome and supportive factor, but which may be applied either in a correct fashion, as 'right mindfulness' (*sammā-sati*), or incorrectly, as 'wrong-mindfulness' (*micchā-sati*).

craving. This accords with the principle that goodness can be a condition for the bad. When the process of thinking arrives at this stage of craving and self-identification, it begins to breed suffering and diverse problems.

For unawakened persons, this complexity is normal and their acts of goodness can thus still create or increase suffering. The solution is to apply wise reflection and to establish mindfulness, clear comprehension, and wholesome desire, in order to bar or cut off ignorance and craving, and to prevent craving from taking advantage of wholesome desire. In the circumstance that craving has already arisen, one can try to reverse the process so that craving conditions wholesome desire, in accord with the principle that the unwholesome can be a condition for the good. For an ordinary person to apply these means of correction is already to reach an excellent level of spiritual development. {1000}

## B. RELYING ON WHOLESOME DESIRE

An attribute of craving that ought to be stressed one more time is that craving acts as a motivation or determining force whenever an action is a prerequisite for experiencing pleasure. And this attribute reveals the flip side of this process: when craving is unable to experience pleasure, it is unwilling to induce people to act. Indeed, it sometimes urges people in the opposite direction, by inducing them to refrain from acting, even though the action would lead to a beneficial result.

For example, when a person is ill, the body requires medicine in order to combat infection, remove toxins, or repair damaged organs. Since the medicine does not provide pleasurable sensations, craving urges the person to not take it. In this case, the person relies on wholesome desire (*chanda*) for persuasion in taking the medicine.

Occasionally, in times of acute sickness, one develops a lack of hunger and a lack of appetite for foods that craving normally finds delicious; here, one does not eat even though that food would be beneficial. At such times, the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) may be of no help; occasionally the craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*) is dominant, giving rise to utter despair and such thoughts as: 'Without pleasure, life is meaningless;

why should I go on living?’ This craving drives a person in an opposite direction, leading to a refusal to eat.

In such circumstances a person must wisely reflect on the objectives and benefits of food, in order to establish wholesome desire and find the motivation to eat. The stronger the desire, the stronger is the mind; the person thus resists craving and eats with enthusiasm. (Here, one sees how wholesome desire supports effort and gives rise to concentration.)

Some sick people may not be able to generate wholesome desire themselves. Before they are willing to eat, they may require a friend to instil a fear of death and a wish for self-preservation. They may then take the medicine out of panic. When craving for existence is the motivating force, however, the mind is beclouded and agitated, unlike with wholesome desire (*chanda*), in which case the mind is peaceful. This is because craving is tied up with ignorance, while wholesome desire springs from wisdom.

### **C. SEEKING GRATIFICATION, ESCAPING THE UNPLEASANT, AND PROTECTING THE SENSE OF SELF**

When people are angry and hostile, to the point of killing one another, the true reason for killing is not a wish for the other person’s death. The death of an enemy is the same as the death of any other person, in so far as it offers no benefits to the perpetrator. The real reason for people to kill an enemy is that this is the best precondition for acquiring what they desire: to maintain self-security and self-importance, to escape from that which threatens the stability of the self, to separate themselves from what is unacceptable, or to cause the greatest imaginable harm or destruction to a disagreeable person.

If they know that their enemy’s continuation of life will not impact the stability of their self-identity, and they find another way other than killing to increase their self-importance, or they find a way to create more suffering for their enemy than by killing them, then they will refrain from killing and apply this other, more effective precondition for achieving their aims.

If people are unable to kill or harm their enemy, unable to eliminate undesirable people or things, then it happens frequently that they think of killing themselves or want to die. {1001}

In truth they do not want to die; the real reason for thinking in this way is that when they are unable to find another means to escape from undesirable people or things, killing themselves becomes the only avenue for escape. Take for example someone who wants to kill himself because he is lovesick – his loved one is marrying someone else – or because he has some horrible, untreatable disease. Both of these are undesirable conditions which he is unable to rectify or eliminate, and thus the only remaining way to escape is by suicide.

If, however, someone else tells him that his beloved has not yet married and surely still loves him, or that there is a doctor who can most likely treat the illness, then he will renounce the wish to die immediately, because there is a more satisfactory provision to escape from this undesirable situation.

A similar example is the savage practice in interracial or intertribal warfare, in which the victors slay all surviving males of the vanquished side, including children and the elderly, but do not kill the young women, at least not immediately, but hold them captive to satisfy their pleasure.

The victors do not gain any individual advantage by the genocide of their male enemies, but kill them out of a fear stemming from a wish to protect the stability of their collective identity. Killing is deemed the best method to maintain this stability.

Abstaining from killing the young women does not result from any wish to preserve their lives. What they desire is pleasure, which is obtained from these women, and the preservation of the women's lives is merely a precondition to indulge in this pleasure.

#### D. WHOLESOME DESIRE AND LOVINGKINDNESS

This subject of desire is linked to the vital quality of lovingkindness (*mettā*), as well as to the other three ‘divine abidings’.<sup>50</sup> An examination of lovingkindness helps to clarify the meanings of *taṇhā* and *chanda*.

The quality of *mettā* is familiar to most Buddhists, but it does give rise to misunderstandings. Some common translations for *mettā* are ‘love’, ‘friendliness’, ‘well-wishing’, and the ‘desire for others to be happy and fortunate’.

These definitions seem straightforward, but confusion arises for some people in regard to the distinction between love that is *mettā* and love that is unwholesome.

Unwholesome love is usually referred to in Pali as *sineha*, which means love for a specific individual, or selfish love. It leads to narrow-mindedness, attachment, excitement, and passion. {1002}

This is the opposite to *mettā* – pure love – which a person feels towards other human beings and all creatures, as friends on this earth, companions in suffering, and companions in life and death. It is an all-inclusive and altruistic form of love, which broadens, eases, and brightens the heart.

The commentators were aware of this confusion and thus emphasized certain points in order to prevent misunderstanding. They explain that the advantage of *mettā* is a reduction of ill-will, while its disadvantage is that it can cause selfish love. They describe how the distant enemy of lovingkindness is ill-will, while the close enemy is lust (*rāga*). People must be extremely cautious of lust; one moment of carelessness and it suddenly flares up.<sup>51</sup>

*Sineha* is a synonym for *taṇhā*. Unwholesome love, which is the opposite of *mettā*, is therefore love springing from or adulterated by craving. As

<sup>50</sup>The four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*): lovingkindness, compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

<sup>51</sup>See: DhsA. 192; Vism. 317-18.



stated earlier, the main characteristics of craving are a desire for pleasure and a desire for self-protection.

The criterion, therefore, to decide whether love stems from craving or not is to see whether the love is a sincere wish for other's wellbeing or whether it is a wish for other's wellbeing merely as a prerequisite to experience pleasure or to reinforce the stability of the self.

People may allege to love another person, for instance their wife, husband, or friend, and claim that their love is so great and true that the other person's life is of equal value to their own. Later, however, following the course of time things may change: the spouse's body, for example, may change and no longer be agreeable to the other partner's desires, or the spouse or friend may no longer support or provide a sense of security to the sense of self. The former love then fades or disappears. In this case the person no longer recognizes the value of the other, no longer recognizes cherished and valued traits in the other person. This kind of love is not *mettā*; it is merely love tainted by craving, or it is craving itself, which seizes the opportunity to take advantage of someone's else's positive attributes to pander to its own desires or to reinforce a self-identity.

While travelling in the countryside and seeing an enormous tree with overarching branches and lush green leaves, someone whose mind is expansive and appreciates the beauty of nature will delight in the splendour and magnificence of that tree and wish for it to prosper and be free from danger.

In that moment the mind is devoted and directed to the tree's wellbeing. One's thoughts are benevolent; they are not selfish, acquisitive, or covetous. The mind delights in the healthy, natural state of the tree. This state of mind is wholesome, virtuous, and peaceful; it is beneficial to that person and to others. The pleasure in witnessing the fulfilment of this tree or the wish for it to exist in a state of completeness is wholesome desire (*chanda*). One can say that one feels goodwill towards the tree. {1003}

In the same manner, we may see other people in good health, strong and at ease, and we delight in their wellbeing, wishing for them to be

happy, healthy, and free from illness. This state of mind radiates outwards and does not revolve around selfish concerns. This wish for other beings to exist in a state of happiness and fulfilment is wholesome desire as it is expressed towards living creatures, and it is given the special designation as lovingkindness (*mettā*).

#### E. CONTINUED HARASSMENT BY CRAVING

For many people, however, the mind does not function in this way. In the case of a tree or something else in nature, the mind may be easily receptive to kindness, but in relation to other people this tends to be more difficult. Craving in one form or another frequently interferes with or overwhelms the wholesome state of mind. For example, when one sees a healthy and vigorous person with a graceful body, if the person is of the opposite sex, instead of rejoicing in the person's wellbeing, craving incites one to see the person as a source of personal pleasure. And if the person is of the same sex, one tends to feel that he or she is an impediment or threat to the sense of self, causing one to feel inferior and reducing one's self-importance.

Instead of having an open, generous and cheerful mind endowed with lovingkindness, one's sense of self feels impacted and the mind is confined, stressed, and tainted by craving. One harbours infatuation, lust, envy, jealousy, or malice, all of which are unwholesome, turbid, and uncomfortable states of mind, forms of mental illness, and obstructive to oneself and others.<sup>52</sup>

A guideline to verify whether one's love for another person is true *mettā*, or is *mettā* mixed with craving or simply a symptom of craving, is to ask oneself these questions: If I am unable to derive pleasure from this person or if his or her existence no longer bolsters a sense of self-security

<sup>52</sup>The Sakkapañña Sutta (D. II. 277) presents the following process: *chanda* (here meaning *taṇhā-chanda*, i.e. *taṇhā*) → *piya-apiya* (separation into the loved and the despised) → *issā-macchariya* (envy and jealousy). The discussion here is limited to encounters with pleasant objects, which relate to *chanda*, *taṇhā*, and *mettā*. In contrast, when one encounters unpleasant, infirm, painful, or troubling objects, if one's mind is wholesome, one will experience compassion; if one's mind is unwholesome, one will experience contempt or hatred.

will I still love this person? Will I still value and cherish him or her? Will I still delight in his or her wellbeing?

The love of parents for their children is a good benchmark for *mettā*. Parents generally love their children, delight in their wellbeing, want them to be prosperous, happy, and free from danger. The parents experience this love without viewing their children as a source of pleasure and regardless of whether their children's lives reinforce a sense of self-security.

However, when the parents are still unenlightened, craving tends to infiltrate and taint the parents' love to some extent; their love is not completely pure, as is evident in the common attachment of 'these are my children; they belong to me'. Most parents still hope that their children will help to increase self-security or self-importance, for example they want their children to have a high social standing so that they can be proud and share in the prestige, or they fear that their children will lose social standing and thus they themselves will be shamed. {1004}

(A slight attachment is normal for unawakened people, but if it expands and controls the entire behaviour of a person then it can cause considerable damage. From the perspective of *mettā*, the important point is that the love is unconditional: the parents love the child regardless of whether he or she boosts their sense of self-importance. When the child is abandoned by everyone else, the parents continue to provide love and support.)<sup>53</sup>

When conflict arises between their children and someone else, parents tend to feel indignant towards the opposing party and are biased towards their children. They are unable to consider the issue in a truly objective way, because their love is still mixed up with craving. The love still gives rise to a division between the 'loved' and the 'not-loved', and thus still causes problems and causes suffering.

<sup>53</sup>Trans.: the author quotes a Thai saying: 'Parents can never completely disinherit their children.'

An understanding of *mettā* helps to increase an understanding of *chanda*, because both of these qualities concern the subject of love and desire, and they are both wholesome, pure, and supportive to the mind.<sup>54</sup>

There is a distinction, however, between these two qualities: the term *chanda* has a broad definition and can be applied universally, whereas the term *mettā* technically has a more narrow definition, and pertains specifically to a person's relationship to living creatures, to animals and other people. Living creatures are the objects (*ārammaṇa*) of lovingkindness.<sup>55</sup> In addition, *mettā* (along with the other three divine abidings – *brahmavihāra*) relies on *chanda* (specifically, *kattukamyatā-chanda*) as a foundation or as a primary agent.<sup>56</sup>

## F. REVIEW OF WHOLESOME DESIRE

The former example of a person delighting in the healthy state of a tree, without the interference from selfish desires, was a way to introduce the subject of lovingkindness (*mettā*), but in fact it accurately describes the quality of wholesome desire (*chanda*) itself. Lovingkindness begins from wholesome desire, but technically it is confined to a person's relationship to other people and animals. *Chanda*, on the other hand, can be applied to everything, and thus a discussion of *chanda* is more wide-reaching.

*Chanda* is a satisfaction in and wish for things to exist in an optimum or ideal way. It is a delight in the integrity of things, the wish for all things to exist in a wholesome, correct, prosperous, and complete state. {1005}

<sup>54</sup> Compare these teachings: *mettā* = *hitasukhūpanayana-kāmatā* (the desire to bring benefit and happiness to others), SnA. I. 128; and *chanda* = *kattukamyatā* (the desire to act), e.g.: Vbh. 208; Vism. 466.

<sup>55</sup> See DhsA. 195; Vism. 318.

<sup>56</sup> *Kattukamyatā-chanda* is the starting point (*ādi*) for all four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*): DhsA. 195; Vism. 318; VismṬ.: *Brahmavihāraniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Pakiṇṇakakathāvaṇṇanā*; cf.: A. IV. 338-9; A. V. 107. At VismṬ.: *Brahmavihāraniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Pakiṇṇakakathāvaṇṇanā*, it states that even equanimity (*upekkhā*) is not devoid of a wish for others' welfare (*hita-chanda*); in this case, the lack of exertion is the appropriate course of action, like in the case of a mother who steps back and watches her child act in a proper way.

*Chanda* includes a desire to act in order to bring about this state of wholesomeness and integrity. One wishes for those benefits that arise directly from specific actions, in line with causes and effects, rather than wishing for those advantages that feed selfish gratification.

We can ask how those people endowed with this virtuous state of mind would respond if they were to encounter the following situations: a filthy floor in a house, a public place littered with rubbish, school desks in a cluttered mess, withering trees, a potholed road, a destitute child in tattered clothes, an ill person with no nursing care, areas with widespread theft and persecution, drug addiction, rampant gambling, a lack of attention to education, rudeness and insensitivity, lack of harmony, or unrighteous behaviour. Similarly, how would they respond to encountering these conditions: a clean, well-ordered place, a shady, refreshing grove of trees, a harmonious community, or a peaceful, contented person.

*Chanda* is a love of virtue, wholesome conditions, and a good quality of life, for example: cleanliness, orderliness, tranquillity, a natural countryside, and a healthy, refreshing environment.<sup>57</sup>

This state of mind is pure: it does not require a desire for sense pleasure, or an involvement by selfish thoughts and preoccupations.<sup>58</sup>

Such a state of mind does not arise independently or randomly, but requires reason and understanding. This is opposed to the perpetual stream of ignorance and craving, which requires no reflection. The love of goodness, or the ability to determine what is good, relies on an understanding of the value or truth of things, unlike in the stream of ignorance and craving, where a person encounters pleasure and pain, and then suddenly and impulsively experiences like or dislike. To give rise to *chanda* a person must apply wise reflection to sever the stream of

<sup>57</sup> People with an abundance of *chanda* strive for quality of life and seek what is truly valuable for their lives. In the Pali Canon, a person who strives for goodness is called a *kusalānu-esī*, meaning someone who seeks the noble path (*ariya-magga*) or seeks Nibbāna (Sn. 187; Nd. I. 486). The Bodhisatta (the Buddha), when he went in search of the Truth, is referred to as 'one who seeks that which is wholesome' (*kiṅkusalānu-esī* – D. II. 151-2, or *kiṅkusala-gavesī* – M. I. 163-4).

<sup>58</sup> Of course, if one allows craving to interfere, then sense desire and selfish intentions can manifest.

ignorance and craving, and replace it with a cessation cycle: the end of ignorance and craving.

Wise and skilful reflection may be needed merely to steer a person's thinking in a proper direction towards a course of wholesome desire, or it may involve a great amount of consideration, analysis, inquiry, and reasoning. {1006}

When wise reflection arises, the stream of ignorance ends. When the mind sees the value of something, it naturally inclines towards and engages with it, without the need for force or enticement.<sup>59</sup> At this stage perseverance arises, an effort to produce, establish, and fulfil that wholesome thing or wholesome state.

In some situations the Buddha revealed intermediate, subsidiary factors in this process. For example, in the Kīṭāgiri Sutta and the Caṅkī Sutta he presented the sequence of stages in Dhamma practice, beginning with faith and ending with the realization of the highest truth.

The stages that are relevant to this discussion are that when a person has listened to a Dhamma teaching and memorized it, he examines its meaning. When he examines its meaning, he gains an understanding that accords with the subject of contemplation. With such an understanding *chanda* arises. And with *chanda*, perseverance, etc. (See Note 10.9)

The stage of examining the meaning of the teachings is precisely the stage of wise reflection. The understanding according with the subject of contemplation is the result of this examination, and these two stages comprise the application of wisdom.<sup>60</sup> When a person discerns and understands the goodness and value of something, *chanda* arises: the

<sup>59</sup>Beware of confusion between *chanda* and *taṇhā*. When one enters an area that is clean and refreshing, for example, craving too can lead to feelings of delight and satisfaction. The difference is that craving delights in the pleasant sensations stemming from seeing, hearing, touching, etc. various sense objects located in that place; it does not delight in goodness directly. The action resulting from craving is to linger in that place to experience sense pleasure, and may lead to laziness.

<sup>60</sup>'Examining the meaning of the teachings' = *atthupaparikkhā*; 'understanding according with the subject of contemplation' = *dhamma-nijjhānakkhanti*.

## NOTE 10.9: STAGES OF LEARNING

The entire sequence is as follows:

faith (*saddhā*) →  
 a person approaches (the teacher) – *upasaṅkamana* →  
 he pays respect (to the teacher) – *payirupāsana* →  
 he gives ear (*sotāvadhāna*) →  
 he listens to the Dhamma (*dharmassavana*) →  
 he memorizes the Dhamma (*dharmma-dhāraṇā*) →  
 he examines the meaning of the teachings (*atthupaparikkhā*) →  
 he gains an understanding that accords with the subject of  
 contemplation (*dharmma-nijjhānakkhanti*) →  
 enthusiasm (*chanda*) →  
 perseverance (*ussāha*) →  
 scrutiny (*tulanā*) →  
 resolute effort (*padhāna*) →  
 a person achieves perfect understanding (*aññārādhana* or  
*saccānupatti*).

M. I. 480; M. II. 173-4.

mind inclines towards, delights in, and desires this thing. In sum, wise reflection leads to wholesome desire, which then leads to perseverance.

### G. CAN CHANDA WISH FOR UNWHOLESOME THINGS?

Some people may pose the question whether *chanda*, besides desiring goodness, can also desire unwholesome things. People perform bad deeds because they yearn for pleasurable sense experiences, they wish to reinforce a sense of self-importance, they wish to escape from an undesirable object or state, or their general way of conducting their lives is dominated by impulsive sensory responses: when they experience a pleasant sense impression they are pleased and covetous; when they experience an unpleasant sense impression they are frustrated, angry and hostile. The causes for unwholesome or evil actions are ignorance and craving (including grasping – *upādāna*); the desire to perform bad actions thus always stems from ignorance and craving (following the principle of contingency or preconditions mentioned earlier).

*Chanda* on the other hand results from understanding, from a delight in the integrity of things, or from an awareness of cause and effect. When one has contemplated things independent of agreeable and disagreeable sensations (*vedanā*), and independent of likes and dislikes, one sees which things are truly beneficial and then inclines the mind towards them. {1007}

This inclination of the mind towards wholesome things is automatically a freedom from bad deeds, which result from preferences and aversions stemming from craving. For this reason, *chanda* cannot be a desire for negative states or for performing unwholesome actions.

Granted, actions prompted by *chanda* may be inappropriate or wrong due to insufficient consideration or inadequate understanding. The desired, beneficial results may not arise from these actions, or adverse effects may arise instead. The true agents behind bad actions, however, are ignorance and craving; when these factors have been severed, the discussion of inappropriate behaviour and ways of rectifying this behaviour is another subject, which will be discussed below.

Conversely, people may ask whether craving (*taṇhā*) can desire wholesome things or desire to do good. The answer is unequivocally ‘yes’ and this is frequently the case. But the desire by craving for wholesome things is connected to and contingent on increasing pleasurable sense experiences or on reinforcing self-importance.

Normally, this desire for goodness is the function of craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*),<sup>61</sup> for example: the desire to be born as a god (to have splendour, long-life, heavenly pleasures, or an entourage of celestial nymphs), the desire to be a hero (to receive praise and adoration, which will enhance one’s self-image), the desire to become a stream-enterer (to become great and surpass ordinary people), or the desire to be a good person (to receive honour and praise, which will reinforce the sense of self).

<sup>61</sup>See: Vism. 525.



Craving is not interested in whether the action is good or bad; it only requires that the action is a precondition for pleasure or self-aggrandizement.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, because craving often desires wholesome things, people get confused and have trouble distinguishing between *taṇhā* and *chanda*.

#### H. INTERFERENCE AND INTRUSION BY CRAVING

The confusion between craving and *chanda* exists because these two qualities are often intertwined, interchangeable, and interdependent.

For unawakened persons, craving is an ingrained characteristic and constantly waits for an opportunity, regardless of whether wholesome desire arises or not. If wholesome desire is absent, craving operates without interruption; if wholesome desire arises, craving surreptitiously seeks an opportunity to interfere and take over.

Human beings are able to develop exceptional wisdom and virtue, and when people develop in wisdom and other spiritual qualities, craving likewise becomes more subtle and manifests in more refined ways. Therefore, when wholesome desire (*chanda*) arises, craving may interfere immediately, by taking control, forming personal attachments, identifying with an object, or creating the division of ‘mine’ and ‘yours’. {1008}

The arising of craving then sows the seeds for suffering and various problems. For example, when one is able to sustain wholesome desire throughout an activity, one will be gladdened and fulfilled by the goodness and merits of this activity.<sup>63</sup> One’s mind will be absorbed in and devoted to the activity and to the excellence it brings, and one will

<sup>62</sup>The desire to destroy the self or the desire for extinction, which are forms of *vibhava-taṇhā*, resemble the desire for goodness. For example, a person holding an annihilationist view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) may yearn to become an arahant in order to cease existing and cease being born. (The desire to become an arahant in order to become a supreme Buddhist, however, is an example of *bhava-taṇhā*).

<sup>63</sup>Such good actions lead to a faultless or impeccable state (*anavajja-bhāva*), in which a person does not experience any harmful consequences of his actions, either to himself or to others. The commentaries include this teaching: *Faith that possesses great devotion to an object is both an attribute of and a special condition for chanda, which has the nature of desiring to act*; Nettipakaraṇa [Burmese edition, p. 70].

work with joy and concentration. But whenever craving interrupts and displaces wholesome desire, such assertions creep in like ‘my work’, ‘my results’, or ‘my future gain’. Craving may increase excitement or passion for work, but it is often followed by anxiety, with such thoughts as: ‘What do they think of me?’ ‘What do they think of my work?’ and ‘How does my work compare to that of others?’ This then results in competitiveness, covetousness, envy, and stress.

In such circumstances, people will not experience joy in their work, although they may feel pride (the ‘conceit of craving’ – *taṇhā-māna*), which comes from having a rival: they may hope that once they have finished their work they will receive praise and admiration from others.

But if they finish their work and people do not bestow the desired amount of praise, they suffer. And even if they do receive the desired praise, later on when this event is just a memory, if they are not fully aware, they may be nostalgic and miss the good old times of being flattered, leading to further sadness and depression.

Moreover, some people receive praise after accomplishing a deed and then forget themselves; they do not purify the mind with insight. Their ego becomes inflated and they attach to this praise, giving rise to heightened conceit. They want more and more flattery and acknowledgement of their own greatness from other people, leading to aberrant, improper behaviour and harm to themselves and others.

Craving can interfere at any stage of the process: for example, one may complete one’s work with wholesome enthusiasm at which point craving maintains: ‘This is my work’, or else the motivation for the action may vacillate between craving and wholesome desire throughout the process.

The important thing to remember is that craving creates problems at whichever stage it appears. If these problems are not so severe as to endanger others or to cause social turmoil, at the very least they create suffering for the person and become lodged as innate personality traits.

{1009}

## I. DESIRE FOR NIBBĀNA

When one can distinguish between craving and *chanda* in everyday events or activities, then one will also be able to know which of these factors constitutes one's desire and aspiration for Nibbāna.

When one listens to the Dhamma and understands the harm of mental defilements – that greed, hatred and delusion stain the mind, lead to unwholesome actions, and create all sorts of problems – and one understands that by eliminating the defilements one's mind will be peaceful, happy, and without anxiety, one will recognize the value of such freedom from defilement. Wholesome desire (*chanda*) here is the delight in and inclination towards this state of freedom.

In the Pali texts several expressions are used for this state of mind endowed with wholesome desire, including: 'delighting in (*abhirama* or *abhirata*) Nibbāna', the 'desire (*abhipatthanā*) for the Nibbāna element' (*nibbāna-pada*), and the desire for 'security from bondage' (*yogakkhema*). (See Note 10.10) This enthusiasm is a wholesome quality and an attribute of one who practises the Dhamma in order to attain Nibbāna.

However, if one's yearning for Nibbāna is mixed up with the idea that Nibbāna is a desirable state or place in which one can reside, then this way of thinking contains a hidden belief that Nibbāna will provide pleasure or eternal life, or will finally lead to a destruction and end to the self. In this case, the delight in and desire for Nibbāna is a form of craving, which impedes the realization of Nibbāna.

The same principle holds true for the desire to become an arahant.

Here we can see the difference between *chanda* and craving: *chanda* is directly linked to action; it is a readiness and enthusiasm to act and to seek out an object that is recognized as beneficial and desirable.

*Chanda* is one part or one stage of action: it is the starting point of action, the beginning of all wholesome engagement. Craving is a desire for something that is separate and alien to oneself. Craving only has an

## NOTE 10.10: ONE WHO DELIGHTS IN NIBBĀNA

Note the following passages:

- The Buddha is referred to as ‘one who delights in Nibbāna’ (*nibbānābhirato*), Sn. 17;
- a person who delights in Nibbāna is released from all suffering (S. I. 38);
- a monk who is not caught up in work, does not indulge in sleeping, chatting, fraternizing, or mental proliferation, is one who delights in Nibbāna, and abandons identification with the body in order to bring an end to suffering (A. III. 293-5);
- a monk who knows how to restrain the mind when it should be restrained, who knows how to guard the mind, who is able to gladden the mind, and who maintains equanimity when this is appropriate, is called one who delights in Nibbāna, and is able to realize Nibbāna (A. III. 435-6);
- a therī states that she delights in Nibbāna (Thig. verses 46 and 450);
- one who desires Nibbāna conducts his life well in the world (‘fares well’; Sn. 64);
- the Buddha teaches monks who aspire to security from bondage (M. I. 4);
- the Buddha teaches monks to be full of joy and to desire security from bondage: to desire Nibbāna (M. I. 227).

obscure understanding of things; it simply hopes to profit from an object and seeks ways to obtain or consume it.<sup>64</sup> {1010}

<sup>64</sup> On some occasions, the commentaries and sub-commentaries claim that craving (*taṇhā*) is a desire for an object that one has not yet reached, similar to a thief who stretches out his hand in the dark (Vism. 569; CompT.: Paccayaparicchedavaṇṇanā, Paṭiccasamuppādanayavaṇṇanā).

## J. ABANDONMENT OF DESIRE

In reference to Dhamma practice, we can conclude the following:

- It is the normal state of affairs that unawakened beings are governed by craving, and this craving will arise whenever a person carelessly allows it an opportunity.
- Whenever craving arises, it leads to problems or to suffering, and therefore it should be eliminated or abandoned.
- Because craving is always prepared to manifest and to cause havoc, it is impossible for unawakened people to completely avoid it.

There are two ways to deal with this situation: the first is, when necessary, to take advantage of craving or to use craving constructively. The second way stems from the understanding that wholesome desire (*chanda*) supports the realization and acquisition of things that are truly beneficial, and thus one should establish and apply it as much as possible. Moreover, wholesome desire prevents and eliminates craving.

The Buddha stated that craving should be eliminated;<sup>65</sup> on the other hand wholesome desire should be performed or accomplished (*karaṇīya*).<sup>66</sup>

It is equally accurate to say that both craving and *chanda* should be abandoned. However, the abandonment of these two factors differs: the Buddha explained that craving should be abandoned or eliminated right at the point where it arises.<sup>67</sup> *Chanda* on the other hand should be abandoned by completing the action that is motivated by wholesome desire.

<sup>65</sup> A quality to be eliminated: *pahātabba* or *pahātabba-dhamma*. Craving as the origin of suffering in the Four Noble Truths, see: V. I. 11; S. V. 422. The six 'divisions' of craving: D. III. 280; Ps. I. 26. The craving for existence: A. II. 247. Other references to craving: M. II. 256; S. IV. 83-4; A. II. 249; Nd. I. 432. Craving referred to as *chanda*: S. III. 177-9.

<sup>66</sup> S. II. 131-2. See also: S. V. 440; A. II. 93; A. III. 306-307; A. IV. 320; A. V. 95-6. To bring about *chanda* (i.e. one should bring about *chanda*), e.g.: S. V. 244 (*chanda* should be generated in relation to all four forms of 'right endeavour' – *sammappadhāna*).

<sup>67</sup> E.g.: D. II. 308-311; S. II. 108-109.

When this is accomplished the person will no longer require *chanda* and it will end automatically.

Craving is a desire that one should eradicate or abandon immediately and without exception; it should not be sustained or preserved. *Chanda* is a desire that one should sustain and bring to fulfilment, at which point it will end on its own. Craving ends by abandonment; *chanda* ends by accomplishment.

The abandonment of *chanda* by accomplishment is referred to as ‘abandoning *chanda* by *chanda*’: to apply wholesome desire in order to bring about its own end. This process is described in the following passage from the Pali Canon, which is a discussion between a brahmin and Ven. Ānanda:

*Brahmin:* For what purpose, Master Ānanda, is the holy life lived under the ascetic Gotama?

*Ānanda:* For the sake of abandoning desire (*chanda*). (See Note 10.11)  
{1011}

*Brahmin:* Is there a path, is there a way of practice for abandoning this desire?

*Ānanda:* There is a path, brahmin.

*Brahmin:* What is the path, what is the way for abandoning this desire?

*Ānanda:* A bhikkhu develops the basis for spiritual power consisting of the concentration of desire and the mental formation of striving. He develops the basis for spiritual power consisting of the concentration of effort ... the concentration of mind ... the concentration of investigation and the mental formation of striving. This is the path, this is the way for the abandoning of this desire.

*Brahmin:* Such being the case, the [pre-]existing desire still exists; it has not ceased to exist. It is impossible that one can abandon desire by means of desire itself.

*Ānanda:* Well then, brahmin, I will question you about this matter in return. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, brahmin, did you earlier have the desire, ‘I will go to the monastery’, and after you came to the monastery, did the corresponding desire subside?

*Brahmin:* Yes, sir.

*Ānanda:* Did you earlier arouse energy (viriya) ... apply focused reflection (citta) ... use wisdom to investigate (vīmaṃsā) in relation to the question, ‘Shall I go to the monastery?’ And after you went to the monastery did the corresponding energy ... focused reflection ... investigation subside?

*Brahmin:* Yes, sir.

*Ānanda:* It is exactly the same with a bhikkhu who is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed.... He earlier had the desire for the attainment of arahantship, and when he attained arahantship, the corresponding desire subsided. He earlier had aroused energy ... applied focused reflection ... used wisdom to investigate, and when he attained arahantship, the corresponding energy ... reflection ... investigation subsided.<sup>68</sup>

S. V. 272-3.

## K. ABANDONING CRAVING BY WAY OF CRAVING

In relation to craving, although the Buddha’s primary teaching is to abandon craving at the moment it arises, he acknowledged the frailties, habitual tendencies, and lack of preparedness of unawakened persons. He therefore established ways of practice in which a person may take advantage of craving in order to generate positive results.

As documented in the Pali Canon, the Buddha claimed that it is possible to use craving in this way even for the greatest benefit: to realize Nibbāna. This secondary principle, of relying on craving in order to eradicate

<sup>68</sup>The Pali word *ārāma*, translated here as ‘monastery’ can also be translated as ‘park’.

## NOTE 10.11: ABANDONING DESIRE

The commentators at SA. III. 258 claim that the *chanda* referred to in this phrase is *taṇhā-chanda*, i.e. craving. By following this interpretation Ven. Ānanda's reply means that a person lives the holy life in order to abandon craving, and his subsequent explanation that a person abandons *chanda* by applying *chanda* must mean that a person applies *kusala-chanda* (of the four Paths to Success) in order to abandon *taṇhā-chanda*.

Ānanda's answer, however, clearly states that both the *chanda* to be performed and the *chanda* to be eliminated are the identical *chanda* contained in the Paths to Success, which is universally recognized as *kattukamyatākusala-chanda*.

Ānanda thus states that a person abandons *kusala-chanda* by accomplishing that very *kusala-chanda*. If one insists that the *chanda* in this first phrase refers to craving as claimed by the aforementioned commentary, then the debate can be concluded by saying that this is a play on words: Ānanda's reply begins with *chanda* that is craving but he follows up the explanation by referring to wholesome *kattukamyatā-chanda*.

In any case, however one interprets the meaning of *chanda* in the first phrase, this phrase can be passed over because the content of the subsequent passage offers adequate confirmation for the kind of *chanda* to be abandoned. If one objects to the term 'abandonment', one can say that *chanda* should be 'stilled' by accomplishment.

craving, is evident in the following teaching which Ven. Ānanda gave to a bhikkhuni who had fallen in love with him: {1012}

Sister, when I said: 'This body has come into being through craving; one should rely on craving in order to abandon craving', with reference to what was this said? In this case, a monk hears it said: 'They say that a monk of such and such a name, by the destruction of the taints, in this very life enters and dwells in the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself by direct knowledge.' Then he thinks, 'Oh, when shall I too realize the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom?' Then some time later, based on that craving, he abandons craving.<sup>69</sup>



The desire of the monk in this story, who has heard of another monk's realization of arahantship and wants to become an arahant himself, is clearly a form of craving: he sees the state of arahantship as something external to himself and he desires (with a sense of self-view) to possess or dwell in this state.

The use of craving here is a skilful means: a method to reach one's goal and an enticement to perform actions that are required to reach this goal. People who apply this form of enticement should develop an understanding of the process so that they will gradually be inspired by and feel a zeal for the goodness that is the direct result of their actions. In this way they will generate *chanda* and switch to this motivation of wholesome desire by their own accord. To accomplish this switch is a form of spiritual training. However, if the transition from craving to wholesome desire is unsuccessful, the exercise is considered a failure.

The enticement is often not the direct result of the action. For example, after the Buddha's half-brother Nanda was ordained as a monk, he began to think about his former sweetheart and lost his inspiration for the holy life. The Buddha knew what he was thinking and led him to one of the heaven realms to admire the celestial nymphs. As a consequence, Ven. Nanda forgot about his former sweetheart and began to desire the nymphs instead. The Buddha guaranteed Nanda that if he continued to put forth effort in the holy life, he could expect to enjoy the company of celestial nymphs. When Nanda began to apply himself once again to the holy life, he recognized its true purpose and progressed on the spiritual path until he eventually attained arahantship.<sup>70</sup>

The Buddha seldom used this method of promising a reward; he used it carefully, only when he determined that it was most suitable for the circumstances.

<sup>69</sup>The nun in this story was smitten by Ven. Ānanda and pretended to be sick so that he would come and offer teachings. Oddly, the commentaries at AA. III. 136 claim that the craving (*taṇhā*) of the monk in this story is wholesome craving (*kusala-taṇhā*).

<sup>70</sup>See: Ud. 21-22; Thag. verse 158. This story is often quoted in the commentaries; see: DhA. I. 118; UdA. 170; SnA. I. 274; [JA. 2/121-4].

Everyday examples of this method include the promise of a reward if a child cleans the house or a promise of a gift if a child finishes reading a book.

This method is a useful tool in education. The person who employs this method must do so responsibly, by carefully considering how to lead the child to the stage of wholesome enthusiasm. The person should at least hope that by enticing the child to clean or to read, he or she will gradually see the beneficial results of these actions and develop a love of cleanliness or a love of knowledge. {1013}

Even better, one should encourage children to apply wise reflection, to understand the value of cleanliness or of knowledge, so that they develop a love for and delight in these qualities. Wholesome desire will then arise naturally for them, and cleaning or reading will no longer be a precondition for obtaining a separate reward.

This method of using craving as a motivation or as a condition for *chanda* is acceptable if it truly leads to wholesome desire, but if it does not it can increase harmful effects, since it is a way of fuelling craving. It can create bad habits and instil the seeds of suffering into children's lives, and it has repercussions in the wider society. It produces a generation of people who expect rewards and who will not perform good actions without some enticement.

Those who use this method should make careful and thorough preparations and be confident of success; they should help throughout the entire process, until wholesome enthusiasm is generated.

The relationship between craving and *chanda* is complex. Take for example a student who chooses to study medicine because he believes that being a doctor is a lucrative profession and he will become rich quickly. If he is driven merely by the craving for material comforts (*kāma-taṇhā*), he may only study to meet the required terms for obtaining a medical certificate, or, because he is not truly interested in medicine, he may not be able to endure the hardship of studying and drop out part way.

If he wants to be a respected and successful doctor, however, he will consider that a doctor should have ample knowledge and expertise. This

craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) conditions him to study in a determined fashion. The qualities of being a good doctor determined by the craving for becoming (i.e. of being famous and respected) are related to the ideal state of being a good doctor, a state in which *chanda* delights. *Chanda* may arise later, helping him to study earnestly and to seek expertise in the field of medicine; alternatively, during the time that he tries to fulfil the terms set by craving, he may be deeply inspired by the medical profession.

In the end he may develop a true love for the study of medicine, receive a medical degree, and gain expertise, yet still seek out a position that affords the highest income and the greatest prominence.

Another student may witness many fellow human beings who suffer from various illnesses and see how their way of life or physical surroundings are detrimental to good health. She desires a knowledge for solving these problems and for helping these people. She desires all people to be healthy, strong, and happy, and she wants her society to be peaceful and secure. She chooses to study medicine with this thought in mind, and she is enthusiastic and determined to obtain knowledge to help according to her intentions. Here, wholesome desire (*chanda*) is expressed through compassion (*karuṇā*).

If she sustains this wholesome enthusiasm throughout, after her studies she will choose a position that offers the best opportunity to improve people's health and to free them from illness, without giving much thought to fame or money. {1014}

## 10.7 CONCLUSION

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### A. INCREASING ONE'S INNER RADIANCE BY GENERATING WHOLESOME DESIRE

It is normal for unawakened persons to crave, and therefore it is unrealistic to expect them to act without being entangled or influenced by craving to some degree.

The important consideration here is that craving is destructive and is the source of all suffering, both for individuals and for society, and therefore one should seek a solution to prevent the harm from craving. The primary solution is to utterly abandon craving and to prevent it from arising through the cessation of ignorance, which is achieved through wisdom.

But for unawakened persons who live amidst various temptations and disturbances, and whose ignorance, craving, and grasping is constantly waiting to respond to these enticements, no matter how careful they are and how much they intend to apply wisdom, they are unable to prevent craving from playing a role at one stage or another, either on a small scale or with force, either covertly or blatantly.

The most practical solution to this problem is to establish wholesome desire so that it can direct one's actions to the greatest possible extent.

Human beings have well-developed brains; they are not bound as other animals are by the blind, instinctual process of ignorance and craving. Human beings have the opportunity to counteract or restrain ignorance and craving through the desire for and love of goodness. If they do not practise this restraint, humans are able to perform the most horrific atrocities simply in order to experience sense pleasures, escape from disagreeable things, or protect and reinforce their sense of self.

Even when people appreciate the value of wholesome desire, if craving is too strong, many of them are unable to continually act in a positive way as governed by their own sense of goodness or by the moral codes of society; instead, they seek an easy way out in order to gratify the desires of craving.

Unawakened persons are generally faced with the choice between a life governed by craving – allowing craving to be the dominant force dictating behaviour – and a life in which wholesome desire is elevated to prominence, in which the person gradually escapes from the power of ignorance, craving, and clinging.

If possible, one should sustain pure, unadulterated wholesome desire, but if this is not possible, one should enlist the help of craving but in a way that supports wholesome desire and is a condition for wholesome desire.

When a person is able to establish wholesome desire as the motivation and governing force for behaviour, craving will automatically be restrained and subdued.

This is precisely the method advocated by Buddha-Dhamma to control and abandon craving. The teachings do not advocate trying to deal with craving in a clueless and witless way, without understanding the factors involved, which only increases ignorance and leads to more harm than good. {1015}

## **B. WHOLESOME DESIRE MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY WISDOM**

Concerning this subject of motivation there are three important points for review. Take the following example:

**A.** Two boys named Craving and Chanda have the opportunity to listen to a radio, a device they have never encountered before. Craving is delighted by these lovely and strange sounds. He believes that it must surely be great fun to own a radio and he knows that owning a radio is cool. If he can get one he will be extremely popular with his friends. He will be so proud of himself and show off to others. When he arrives back home he pesters his parents to buy him a radio. He even thinks that if his parents refuse to buy him a radio he will sneak around the shop and find a chance to steal one.

As for Chanda, he is amazed when he hears the sounds coming from the radio. He asks himself: ‘How does this machine make these sounds?’ ‘How do people create such a machine?’ ‘For what can a radio be used?’ He desires answers to these questions and thus pays close attention and

makes inquiries. He seeks out a technician to gain more knowledge. He is so deeply impressed by the benefits of a radio that he may even want to build one from scratch.

Consider how the different ways of thinking of these two boys will affect their behaviour and how their conduct will influence their friends, family and society.

The initial responses and mental processes of these two boys are similar: the sense base (the ear) + the sense impression (a sound) → hearing (ear-consciousness – *sota-viññāṇa*) = the cognition of sound (contact – *phassa*) → sensation (*vedanā*; the feeling of pleasure), but following on from feeling, the mental processes differ distinctly for these two individuals.

When Craving experiences the pleasurable sensation from hearing the radio, he forms an infatuation and he desires more of this pleasure. Based on this desire, his thoughts are incoherent; he does not apply wise reflection by considering the truth and analyzing the facts about the radio. His thoughts of sense pleasure and self-aggrandizement are determined by craving. These thoughts feed ignorance and intensify craving. His entire behaviour is governed by craving.

Chanda on the other hand does not allow the process to spill over from feeling into craving. Instead, he applies wise reflection in order to block off and end craving. Wise, rational reflection thoroughly examines the objects encountered and asks such questions as: ‘What is this?’ ‘How did this come to be?’ ‘What does this depend on?’ and ‘What are its advantages and disadvantages?’ This way of thinking leads to an understanding of an object’s true value, to wholesome enthusiasm, to active engagement with the object, and to deeper learning.<sup>71</sup> {1016}

**B.** Although *chanda* is a wholesome, pure quality and is beneficial to a person’s life, its benefits depend on the degree of understanding concerning the truth and value of the things a person interacts with. This

<sup>71</sup>This first point emphasizes present-moment benefits (*ditṭha-dhammikattha*) or everyday ethics.

is because *chanda* relies on reasoned analysis (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is the beginning stage of wisdom.

If a person's understanding is inadequately deep or clear, *chanda* may lead to errors in judgement. Therefore, in order for *chanda* to be a truly reliable instrument for leading a person to the highest goal, the development of wisdom or an education aimed to cultivate wisdom is a vital principle in Buddhism.

A person should begin by developing reasoned analysis – to be skilled in reflecting on the truth and investigating causality, and to ask such questions as: ‘What is the truth?’ ‘What is truly beneficial to my life?’ and ‘What is worthy as a goal in life?’ One should then develop virtues by generating a desire for and love of truth, a love of goodness, and a desire for an enhanced quality of life. By increasing these virtues one reaches the highest stage of wisdom, which brings about utter deliverance and freedom of the mind.<sup>72</sup>

C. When *chanda* conditions craving, the result is most often harmful even for a well-intentioned person. Even though good people may not become arrogant or overbearing by attaching to or identifying with the goodness they have created by wholesome desire, subtle attachments can still cause a considerable amount of anguish. For example, a person may have the following thoughts: ‘Why is my house, my monastery, my school not as clean and well-organized as theirs?’ ‘I have tried my utmost to train this pupil and sought every possible way to provide help and advice; why does he not improve?’ ‘I have done everything to help these people become more self-reliant; why do they not make an effort and progress as quickly as I desire?’ And when the causes and conditions lie beyond the power of good people to rectify, this can increase their suffering and sense of affliction.

This form of suffering is particular to virtuous people; a base, immoral person is not troubled by such circumstances. It is fair to say that virtuous

<sup>72</sup>This second point concerns the three levels of benefits: present benefits (*ditṭha-dhammattha*), future benefits (*samparāyikattha*), and ultimate benefit (*paramattha*).

people experience a unique form of suffering.<sup>73</sup> Suffering then offers an opportunity for the wheel of mental defilement to spin once more, generating such mind states as confusion, depression, self-pity, indignation, restlessness, and hot-headedness. {1017}

Therefore, being a good person is not enough; a good person requires help in order to be free from suffering, to have no hidden vices, and to not convert back to acting immorally. The factor that provides this freedom and prevents craving from returning is wisdom, which leads to the supreme liberation of the mind. A person who desires this state of liberation should apply wholesome desire to lead the way.<sup>74</sup>

### C. CONSUMMATE WHOLESOME DESIRE

The preceding material should help to dispel some common doubts, including: Do arahants, who have completely done away with craving and thus cannot call upon it as a source of motivation, consequently become indifferent, lethargic, and spiritless? Are arahants, despite their wisdom, able to act without the desire of craving?

As mentioned earlier, craving is not the sole motivating factor behind people's behaviour. Moreover, craving is not only a motivation for action; it is also a motivation for non-action and for laziness. Regardless of whether craving induces action or non-action, it is accompanied by agitation and is unreliable. For this reason, people should cultivate a truly wholesome and secure form of desire.

When people engage in such cultivation, the role of craving is lessened and ignorance and delusion decreases. Wisdom paves the way for a prudent application of wholesome desire, leading to blessings for one's own life and for everyone with whom one comes into contact.

Eventually, when this cultivation is complete and delusion is fully dispelled with the realization of arahantship, one need not rely on craving

<sup>73</sup>On the harmful consequences of having craving replace *chanda* see Appendix 2.

<sup>74</sup>This third point moves beyond future, spiritual benefits (*samparāyikattha*) and emphasizes the supreme benefit (*paramattha*), which is the highest goal in Buddhism.



as a motivation. Wisdom assists wholesome desire (*chanda*) to guide all of one's activities, with the clear understanding that one's actions are truly beneficial.

At this stage, wholesome desire directs one's activities according to the supervision by wisdom. There remains no unfinished personal business for arahants to do, because they are fully satisfied and complete. Their thoughts focus entirely on how to increase the happiness of others, which conforms to the maxim of the arahants: *bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya*: to act for the happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world.

In this regard, the Buddha was chief. Besides acting as a guide for those people still engaged in spiritual development, he also guided awakened beings in performing good deeds for the manyfolk. In this respect, the Buddha was indefatigable, because he was a true 'master' (*issara-jana*), a true 'liberated one' (*serī-jana*). Unhindered by any internal craving, he was replete with wholesome desire and could act to the utmost of his ability.

This consummate wholesome desire is one of the Buddha's attributes. It is one of the eighteen qualities of the Buddha (*buddha-dhamma*), referred to in the phrase: '(The Buddha) is endowed with unremitting wholesome desire.'<sup>75</sup>

Motivated by this unremitting wholesome desire, the Buddha acted to liberate beings from mental impurity, suffering, and distress, and to lead them to peace, by way of his great kindness and compassion. {1018}

<sup>75</sup>*Natthi chandassa hāni*. This is the tenth of the eighteen qualities; see, e.g.: DA. III. 994; MilnA. [369]; Dīgha Nikāya Pāṭikavagga Ṭīkā: Sampasādanīyasuttavaṇṇanā, Sāriputtasīhanādavaṇṇanā.

#### D. GREAT BEINGS ARE GUIDED BY WISDOM AND COMPASSION

Wisdom does not arise in isolation; rather, it helps to generate other virtues as well.

When people fall under the sway of ignorance and indulge in sensations rather than rely on understanding, they permit craving to dictate their actions. But when wisdom is cultivated, wholesome desire (*chanda*) grows in strength and has the opportunity to direct people's affairs, without being overwhelmed by craving and delusion. Supported by wisdom, wholesome desire carries out a person's work. Furthermore, wholesome desire mobilizes other spiritual qualities to help generate fulfilment and integrity. In particular, it mobilizes compassion, which plays a pivotal role in one's interaction with others.

When one gains a deeper understanding of the truth and of the true value of things, if one does not permit craving to interfere and take over, wholesome enthusiasm will invariably arise. One will be inspired by and develop an aspiration for goodness. One will desire that things be sustained in a state of prosperity and excellence. If one encounters a lack of such prosperity and excellence, wholesome desire will act to bring this to fulfilment.

This is the case in general. If one is relating to other sentient beings, however, wholesome desire (*chanda*) manifests as the state of mind referred to as lovingkindness (*mettā*): the desire for other beings' happiness and wellbeing; a wish for them to achieve prosperity, to be safe and be free from all forms of oppression.

The wholesome desire (*chanda*) for other beings to abide in a state of wellbeing and integrity is not expressed solely by way of lovingkindness. Rather, its expression is determined by the specific circumstances that others find themselves.

Lovingkindness and friendliness manifest in ordinary circumstances. If these circumstances vary, however, wholesome desire is expressed differently and is designated accordingly.

If the ordinary state of affairs accompanied by lovingkindness is labeled the first factor, then the second set of circumstances pertains to

when living beings fall on hard times and are distressed, say in times of illness or destitution. In these circumstances wholesome desire is expressed by way of compassion (*karuṇā*): to feel empathy and to wish to help release others from suffering.

The third factor pertains to times when others rise above ordinary circumstances, for example: they finish their studies; they find employment; they are cured from illness; they give up drinking alcohol; or they turn over a new leaf and practise virtue. Here, wholesome desire is content and satisfied. One experiences appreciative joy (*muditā*): one shares and rejoices in the delight of others; one wishes to support them so that they continue to prosper and progress.

The fourth factor is special. When others develop a sense of self-responsibility, or it is suitable that they have such responsibility, then we should not interfere. This factor applies, for example, in the administration of justice and in education. Take the case of parents, who wish for their toddler to succeed at walking. They should look on closely in a detached manner, allowing the child to practise on her own. They are ready to assist if the child trips, but they do not carry her around all the time out of fear that she may fall. This refraining from interference is referred to as 'equanimity' (*upekkhā*).<sup>76</sup> {1019}

One may wonder how equanimity is connected to wholesome desire and well-wishing. In fact, this is the ultimate form of well-wishing, based on true wisdom. One wishes for others to be successful and upright. One wishes for them to abide in correctness and safety. One wishes for them to be grounded in righteousness.

These are the key spiritual qualities that follow in the wake of wholesome desire (*chanda*). Everyone can develop these qualities, but they are exceptional within the minds of arahants, who are completely liberated from suffering. When they witness how unawakened beings are tormented by suffering, their foremost response is compassion (*karuṇā*).

<sup>76</sup>As a group, these four factors – *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* – are usually referred to as the 'excellent abidings' (*brahmavihāra*; 'divine abidings'). The commentators state that these four factors have wholesome desire as their starting point (*sabbesaṃpi ca etesaṃ kattukamyatā-chando ādi*); see, e.g.: DhsA. 194. See footnote 64.

The problem for unawakened persons is that in these aforementioned situations they tend to be governed by ignorance and craving: they will either be searching for some form of pleasure or they will be fretting over a cherished sense of self – a ‘self’ that needs protection and pampering – and therefore a pure, spacious wisdom accompanied by compassion cannot arise.

There are times, however, when the mind of unawakened people is clear and spacious and they apply wise reflection: they reflect in harmony with causality and with the truth, and thus cut off any opportunity for ignorance and craving to interfere. Wisdom here sets the stage for compassion.

An arahant has made an end to ignorance and craving, and neither anxiously searches for pleasure nor worries about self-stability or self-importance. Pure wisdom is constantly prepared for wholesome desire to express compassion whenever an arahant encounters a fellow being in suffering.

The end of ignorance, craving, and grasping enables an arahant to act with purity: to act blamelessly and without such inhibiting defilements as fear and laziness. The motivating force behind an arahant’s actions is comprised of two factors: wisdom and compassion.<sup>77</sup>

With wisdom lighting up the way and compassion acting as a force propelling them onwards,<sup>78</sup> the Purified Ones – the Buddha and the arahants – act steadfastly and earnestly for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk. Their great works (the Buddha’s deeds – *buddha-kicca*, and the teaching activities – *sāsaṇa-kicca*) have resulted in the Buddha-Dhamma and the Buddhist religion, which remain to this day. {1020}

<sup>77</sup> On the Buddha’s chief attributes see Appendix 3.

<sup>78</sup> Note the corresponding expression in the commentaries: *karuṇāvegasaṃussāhita-mānasa*, which translates as: ‘[the Buddha] has a mind empowered by the strength of compassion [and therefore he teaches the Dhamma]’ (DhA. I. 1; cf.: ItA. II. 142, which contains the term *karuṇā-saṃussāhita*). Note also the expression in the Pali Canon describing the moment when the Buddha began to proclaim the Dhamma: *sattesu ca kārūṇīyatam paṭicca*, which translates as: ‘[The Blessed One] relies on the quality of compassion (and thus shows consideration to the human race)’; see: Vin. I. 6-7 = M. I. 169 = S. I. 138; D. II. 37-8.

## E. SUMMARY OF CRAVING AND WHOLESOME DESIRE

Some important distinctions between craving (*taṇhā*) and wholesome desire (*chanda*) are shown on Table 10.1.

Taṇhā	Chanda
Basic Definition	
Desire; craving; thirst: the desire to obtain; the desire to acquire; the desire to exist or to not exist; the desire to consume.	Delight; satisfaction; enthusiasm; love; desire: a love of truth; a love of goodness; a desire for knowledge; a desire to act.
Doctrinal Definition	
The desire for pleasurable sense objects; the desire for self-stability; the desire for the 'self' to escape from or pass away from undesirable states of existence.	A delight in the goodness of things; the desire for things to be sustained in a wholesome and prosperous way; the wish to act in order for the value and virtue of things to achieve their optimal state.
(Simple definition: selfish desire; the desire for self-gratification; the desire for the 'self' to exist or cease to exist in a particular way.)	(Simple definition: the desire for goodness and integrity; the wish to bring about such goodness and integrity.)
Process	
(Ignorance +) feeling ( <i>vedanā</i> ) → craving ( <i>taṇhā</i> ) → seeking ( <i>pariyesanā</i> )	Wise reflection ( <i>yoniso-manasikāra</i> ) → <i>chanda</i> → perseverance ( <i>ussāha</i> )
Objective / Aim	
The six sense objects ( <i>ārammaṇa</i> ) – things to provide pleasure or to indulge the 'self'; objects of enjoyment ( <i>āmisa</i> ).	The Truth (Dhamma); wholesomeness; virtue; quality of life.
Attributes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a self-centred activity; it is acquisitive.</li> <li>• It seeks pleasure or things to indulge the 'self'.</li> <li>• It is a 'blind' activity; there is no consideration, say, of an object's advantages or disadvantages.</li> <li>• Related actions are merely conditional; there is no desire to act.</li> <li>• Personal advantage and gain determines the action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not caught up with a sense of 'self'; it involves dedicated service.</li> <li>• It focuses on that which is truly valuable and beneficial to one's life and to all things.</li> <li>• It is a consequence of understanding; it is linked to wisdom.</li> <li>• It is a source of action; it is the start of action.</li> <li>• The direct result of a deed determines the action.</li> </ul>

Table 10.1: Craving and Wholesome Desire

**Mental Consequences**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety, agitation, lack of concentration. For instance: one may like something and want to acquire it, and as a result one is restless and agitated.</li> <li>• Stress, suffering, mental illness.</li> <li>• Sensual pleasure (<i>kāma-sukha</i>), material happiness (<i>sāmisa-sukha</i>), dependent happiness.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease, peace, composure; <i>chanda</i> is conducive to concentration. For example: one may rejoice in someone else's virtue, in a teaching, or in the beauty of nature, and one's mind will be absorbed, tranquil, and firmly established.</li> <li>• Conducive to mental health.</li> <li>• Refined happiness, non-material happiness (<i>nirāmisa-sukha</i>), independent happiness.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**Application / Way of Practice**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct way: craving should be uprooted and eliminated; bring it to cessation wherever it arises; curb it by increasing wisdom and <i>chanda</i>.</li> <li>2. Strategic way: rely on craving to abandon craving; use craving to be a condition for <i>chanda</i> (to support wholesome desire).</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise <i>chanda</i> by generating it and following it accordingly.</li> <li>• Bring it to cessation by accomplishing the task initiated by <i>chanda</i>.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**F. CULTIVATING DESIRE**

Some people like an ordered environment for show, while others like it for its own sake. The former inclination stems from craving: immaculate surroundings are merely a precondition for sustaining a sense of beauty; one's actions may thus become overly cosmetic or excessive, leading to all sorts of problems. The latter inclination, however, springs from wholesome desire.

People who act with craving are interested in defeating other people, while people who act with wholesome desire wish to triumph over their work. Those with craving make grand, attention-seeking efforts at the beginning, but when the excitement fades they become dispirited and demoralized. Those with *chanda* act earnestly and in a sustained way until the work is accomplished. A person with much craving will only want to have fun. (In such circumstances there may be complicated factors involved; one may, for example, act under the pretext of developing insight.) A person with much wholesome enthusiasm is able to think

ahead and act for longterm benefits. (Here too there may be complicated co-factors; if craving begins to influence the process, one may start making great plans for the future.) Craving is tied up with indolence; *chanda* fears no difficulties.

People who love the truth want to know their own faults and shortcomings; they are pleased to acknowledge these faults as it gives them an opportunity to improve themselves. At the very least, such reflection gives them the chance to assess their own virtues. People with a lot of craving are obsessed with their own self-image, and thus are continually in conflict with things and are preoccupied with protecting their self-image. They derive no benefit from constructive criticism.

Craving makes one careless in regard to methods of conduct; one tries to accomplish one's aims by using any means, including unrighteous means. A person who loves the truth, however, possesses both an intelligence in regard to methods of conduct as well as a conscience: the methods must accord with Dhamma. A love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*) thus requires an exceptional degree of mindfulness and wisdom.

Some children try to repair their toys or electrical appliances even though they have enough money to buy new ones. The reason for this action may not exclusively be to save money; it may indeed reveal the child's wholesome enthusiasm. The child desires for things to exist in a good, complete state. At the very least the child desires the truth, and adults should encourage this behaviour.

Those people who possess an aspiration for truth (*dhamma-chanda*) should beware of two incorrect or erroneous ways of conduct:

- One allows craving to interfere: one allows craving to replace wholesome desire or to seize control, for example one fails to solve a problem and then becomes self-deprecating (this behaviour is relatively harmless).
- One has inadequate knowledge or one does not seek wisdom: one who loves the truth must be able to clearly distinguish the truth or else one may make mistakes. A love of truth and a knowledge of truth must thus be paired in order to accomplish one's desired

goals. This second factor emphasizes the key Buddhist principle of wisdom, which is central to the path of spiritual development.

According to the Buddhist teachings, human beings possess positive and negative desires, both of which are prepared to act as a motivation for action.

All virtuous deeds and all actions performed to solve human problems, including the act of realizing the supreme goal of Buddhism, depend on the wholesome desire known as *chanda*. In the same manner, all bad deeds and all actions that create suffering are instigated by craving, which is rooted in ignorance.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of all educational and training systems – all forms of Dhamma practice – to promote *chanda* as an impetus for wholesome action. Such wholesome action leads to a virtuous goal, which in turn provides true benefit and happiness both for an individual and for society.

People's minds are prone to follow the currents of craving. If people are unable to cultivate *chanda* – the love of truth and the love of goodness – as a rival to craving, then hopefully they can at least eliminate some of the evils found in today's society and develop in other wholesome ways. The use of negative incentives as a means of restraint, say by ordering people to refrain from immoral behaviour or forbidding them from transgressing certain rules, is inadequate, because to uphold moral principles without wholesome enthusiasm is almost impossible.

*Chanda* is a positive motivation and an effective agent for restraining and subduing craving. It is the key to solving all problems and all evils, and it promotes the development of all virtuous qualities.

If a child loves cleanliness and order, for example, it will be extremely difficult for her to follow craving and carelessly throw rubbish on the ground. If she makes a room untidy it is very unlikely that she will leave it in a mess, and if someone else makes it dirty she won't wait for the promise of a reward before she begins to clean it herself.



Wholesome desire (*chanda*) can potentially cause suffering for virtuous, unawakened people and may even lead them to violence if they are under the sway of mental attachment and they have insufficient mindfulness and wisdom. But wholesome desire is a vital motivation for action and it promotes the development of all virtuous qualities, and therefore should be promoted with insight and understanding. As for the dangers posed to unawakened persons, there are ways to avoid and to deal with them, which will be explained in later chapters.

If a love of truth (*dhamma-chanda*) or a love of goodness (*kusala-chanda*) is strong, it can check the force of craving.

When subject to craving, one feels jealous when one sees others get something one wants and one cannot refrain from trying to impede them or from causing harm. In a similar way, when one possesses a love of goodness, one cannot stand around idly and refrain from doing good deeds if one has not yet realized the supreme good.

When *chanda* is stronger than craving, a student will study with all her energy and endeavour to reach the truth of the subject at hand, even though a moderate amount of study would produce good grades.

A merchant will try and manufacture products with real quality, even though he can profit from inferior products and trick the customers who cannot recognize the difference.

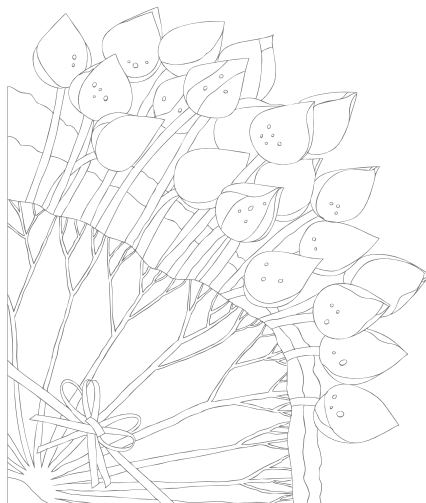
Civil servants and other workers will aim to accomplish the best work possible in their own area of responsibility, even though they can make a decent salary without putting forth much effort. {1022}

When an employee or co-worker achieves success, a manager or colleague will support this success and share the benefits for the common good, even though he may experience envy, which is a natural response for an unawakened person.

A ruler or government official will look to the prosperity and highest good of the people and strive to provide them with knowledge and opportunities, even though he knows that by withholding this knowledge or these opportunities he will gain personally and live a life of material comfort.

People who can take advantage of others refrain from doing so, because they fear a loss of Dhamma more than they fear a loss of personal gain. This is opposite to craving, which prefers to forfeit the truth rather than forfeit personal gain.

Indeed, it is due to this love of truth that the Bodhisatta devoted himself for many lifetimes to perform meritorious acts for the wellbeing and happiness of all beings. Because he loved the knowledge of awakening (*bodhiñāṇa*), he aspired resolutely towards the truth (*sacca-dhamma*). As Prince Siddhattha, he relinquished his royal comforts and possessions, and braved a life of difficulty, cultivating the path of awakening until he was enlightened as the Buddha.



Lotus Buds in Lotus Leaves

## 10.8 APPENDIX 1: THREE KINDS OF CRAVING

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In some aspects the three kinds of craving can be equated with Freud's concepts of libido, life-instinct, and death-instinct, although they are not exactly the same.

*Kāma-taṇhā* can be defined as a craving for the five cords of sensuality – as a delight in sensuality,<sup>79</sup> or as a craving for the six sense objects.<sup>80</sup>

*Bhava-taṇhā* is accompanied by a 'view of existence' (*bhava-diṭṭhi*: i.e. an eternalist view – *sassata-diṭṭhi*), *vibhava-taṇhā* is accompanied by an annihilationist view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*); *kāma-taṇhā* comprises all remaining forms of craving.<sup>81</sup>

According to the Buddhist teachings, the attachment to sensuality is more deep-seated and fundamental than an attachment to self or the view of existing as a distinct self: for example, in terms of the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*), self-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is abandoned by stream-enterers, whereas sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*) is abandoned by non-returners. In reference to the four kinds of grasping, the attachment to the idea of self (*attavādupādāna* = *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is abandoned at the stage of stream-entry, whereas grasping onto sensuality (*kāmupādāna*) is abandoned at the realization of arahantship (*kāmupādāna* includes attachment to fine-material form – *rūpa-rāga* – and attachment to immateriality – *arūpa-rāga*).<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup>DhsA. 366.

<sup>80</sup>PañcA. 312.

<sup>81</sup>See: Vbh. 365-6; ItA. II. 19 – explaining It. 50.

<sup>82</sup>Dhs. 212-13; Vism. 570.

## 10.9 APPENDIX 2: HARM OF CRAVING

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If craving (along with conceit – *māna* and fixed views – *diṭṭhi*) replaces *chanda* and overwhelms the mind, it can cause severe suffering and harm for a virtuous person. For example:

- As a consequence of a person's love of goodness and purity, craving may establish an attachment to personal virtue until the person feels anxious about protecting his virtue, fears a stain on his character, and fears other people's misunderstandings. His suffering over these matters is greater than what most people feel. This anxiety is related to what Western psychologists describe as a 'guilt feeling'.
- Some people have an intense desire to build a virtuous society. If they are unable to fulfil their ambitions or they meet obstacles, they feel angry and cling to their personal opinions more tightly, becoming more headstrong and wilful. Alternatively, they have a one-pointed mission to revolutionize and improve society, but turn to violent means in order to eliminate and purge those people whom they view as uncooperative, acting out of anger and without any concern for these other people's wellbeing. *Chanda* that is dominated by *taṇhā*, *māna*, and *diṭṭhi* can thus lead to violence.
- Highly competitive social systems, work systems, and lifestyles promote selfishness and lead people to act in a way that corresponds to a craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). When such systems are implemented in a society in which there is a high degree of zeal and a will to act (*chanda*), many aspects of the society will progress rapidly. The downside, however, is that these competitive systems will lead to problems like stress, anxiety, and mental illness. When such systems are implemented in a society lacking wholesome desire, they tend to generate immoral behaviour, confusion, and corruption (I use the term 'tend to' here because one must consider other causes and conditions for behaviour).

### 10.10 APPENDIX 3: THE BUDDHA'S MAIN ATTRIBUTES

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The Buddha's main attributes are considered to be twofold:

1. wisdom (*paññā*), leading to the state of being a Buddha (*buddha-bhāva*), to being a 'refuge onto oneself' (*atta-nātha*), and to the completion of personal wellbeing (*attahita-sampatti*); and
2. compassion (*karuṇā*), leading to the accomplishment of the Buddha's deeds (*buddha-kicca*), to being the 'saviour of the world' (*loka-nātha*), and to living a life of benefiting others (*parahita-paṭipatti*).<sup>83</sup>

In some of the commentaries, purity (*visuddhi*) is distinguished as a separate attribute, but generally purity is considered to be a part of wisdom because it is an automatic result of enlightenment and therefore this quality is usually not designated as a separate attribute. In the *Vajirabuddhiṭikā*, the Buddha's deeds (*buddha-kicca*) are stated as twofold: work that is done with knowledge (*ñāṇa-kicca*) and work that is done with compassion (*karuṇā-kicca*).<sup>84</sup> The Buddha's and the arahants' wisdom is free from conceit and selfishness, and their compassion is free from attachment and grief. The compassion of unawakened persons is still a pseudo-compassion, because their minds are not completely clear and bright: when they feel compassion there are still personal attachments and affections, along with a sense of sadness and grief.

With the division of Buddhism into two main schools, the Theravāda tradition is considered to emphasize wisdom, while the Mahāyāna tradition emphasizes compassion.

<sup>83</sup> See: VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā; VismT.: Cha-anussatiniddesaṇṇanā.

<sup>84</sup> [Burmese edition, p. 34].

Phra Sri Sakyamuni  
(Bronze Buddha Image, Sukhothai Period)  
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# CHAPTER 11

## HAPPINESS

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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#### A. BUDDHISM IS A PATH OF DEVELOPING HAPPINESS

Happiness plays a vital role in Buddhist spiritual practice. It is fair to say that Buddhist practice is inseparable from happiness. The Buddhist teachings describe many names for happiness and classify it into various categories and stages, culminating in supreme happiness. Here are some examples of happiness found in the scriptures:

- Happiness of consumption (*paribhoga-sukha*; *upabhoga-sukha*).
- Happiness of material wealth (*bhoga-sukha*).
- Physical pleasure (*kāya-sukha*; *kāyika-sukha*).
- Mental happiness (*citta-sukha*; *cetasika-sukha*).
- Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*).
- Material happiness (*sāmisa-sukha*; *āmisa-sukha*).
- Immaterial happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*).
- Seasonal happiness (*utu-sukha*).
- Happiness resulting from fame (*kitti-sukha*).
- Happiness of ordinary people (*puthujjana-sukha*).
- Human happiness (*manussa-sukha*).
- Celestial happiness (*dibba-sukha*).
- Happiness of the multitudes (*mahājana-sukha*).

- Happiness of the entire world (*sabbaloka-sukha*).
- ‘Sweet’ or ‘intoxicating’ happiness (*madhura-sukha*).
- Wholesome happiness (*kusala-sukha*).
- Righteous happiness (*dhammika-sukha*).
- Happiness of spiritual development (*bhāvanā-sukha*).
- Frequent or constant happiness (*nicca-sukha*).
- Happiness of the realm of rebirth (*saṃsāra-sukha*).
- Happiness of endeavour (*yoga-sukha*).
- Mundane happiness (*lokiya-sukha*).
- Transcendent happiness (*lokuttara-sukha*).
- Happiness of the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa-sukha*).
- Happiness of the freedom from rebirth (*vivaṭṭa-sukha*).
- Coarse pleasure (*oḷārika-sukha*).
- Refined happiness (*sukhuma-sukha*).
- Happiness of concentration (*samādhi-sukha*).
- Happiness of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*).
- Happiness of insight (*vipassanā-sukha*).
- Happiness of awakened beings (*ariya-sukha*).
- Happiness of unawakened beings (*anariya-sukha*).
- Happiness of solitude (*viveka-sukha*).
- Happiness of peace (*santi-sukha*).
- Happiness of mental liberation (*vimokkha-sukha*).
- Happiness of deliverance (*vimutti-sukha*).
- Happiness of awakening (*sambodhi-sukha*).
- Supreme happiness (*parama-sukha*).

In terms of beginning stages of practice, the Buddha stated that ‘merit is a name for happiness’ (merit = *puñña*; ‘goodness’, ‘performing wholesome deeds’).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It. 15; A. IV. 89.



## NOTE 11.1: AUTHOR'S NOTE

Chapter 23 is new to the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*. Happiness is a subject that is of universal interest, and I have wished for a long time to supplement the original chapter in *Buddhadhamma* on happiness which is rather complex and full of technical references. On February 24, 2010, I was invited to speak on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Hon. Professor Dr. Sakorn Dhanamitta (advisor to the Educational Project for Developing Health). The content of this talk was published in December of that year, under the title of 'All Aspects of Happiness', and this chapter is a précis of that book. Note that many of the topics in this chapter have been touched upon in some respects in the original chapter on happiness and in the chapter on desire and motivation (see chapter 10).

[Trans.: this chapter on happiness in the English edition of *Buddhadhamma* combines the two chapters on happiness from the Thai edition. Although this has been a challenge (chap. 22 is presented in a formal written style, whereas chap. 23 is a transcript from a talk) I have attempted to knit these two chapters together into an integrated whole.]

In terms of meditation, happiness is an important factor giving rise to concentration (*samādhi*), as confirmed by the Buddha: *A happy mind becomes well-established [in concentration]*.<sup>2</sup> In the scriptures, happiness is described as the 'proximate cause' (*padaṭṭhāna*) for concentration. When the mind is highly concentrated and one reaches the state of *jhāna*, happiness (*sukha*) is one of the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*), present up to the third *jhāna*.<sup>3</sup> Although happiness is technically not a factor of the concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*) higher than the third *jhāna*, these states are nonetheless considered to be a more refined form of happiness.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the highest goal of Buddhism – Nibbāna – is described as a form of happiness, the supreme form of happiness (*parama-sukha*).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>E.g.: D. III. 288; S. V. 69, 332; Ps. I. 86.

<sup>3</sup>E.g.: D. III. 222; M. 40-41.

<sup>4</sup>This subject will be discussed at more length below.

<sup>5</sup>M. I. 508-509; Dh. verse 204. This subject was discussed in the section on the state of mind of those who have realized Nibbāna; see chapter 7.

An important synonym for Nibbāna is *nirodha* ('cessation'), which is endowed with three key attributes:

1. The cessation of ignorance (*avijjā*): this is equivalent to the arising of supreme knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*), to a realization of the truth.
2. The cessation of mental defilement (*kilesa*): the elimination of mental impurities; the end of any root factors in the mind causing distress for oneself or others.
3. The cessation of suffering (*dukkha*): the end of suffering; the attainment of supreme happiness.

Although this third attribute – the end of suffering – was described to some extent in the chapter on an arahants's mental self-mastery (*bhāvitacitta*), there are several more aspects to this attribute that need to be considered.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, this highest goal of Buddhism, of awakening (*bodhi*) or supreme happiness, is to be reached by way of happiness or through a practice comprised of happiness. It is not to be reached by way of suffering or through affliction and torment.<sup>7</sup> {1024}

In relation to Dhamma practice, the scriptures describe various kinds of happiness, and at the same time they describe both the advantages and the faults of each kind. They also compare each kind of happiness with other kinds, to point out how one is superior to another. This description of the various kinds of happiness and their comparison to each other is a way of urging people to progress in spiritual practice and to develop superior kinds of happiness. Every person has the potential to progress

<sup>6</sup>Trans.: see Chapter 7.

<sup>7</sup>See: M. I. 246-7; M. II. 93. These are references by the Buddha pertaining to his own practice. The word *dukkha* in this context refers to suffering as a result of self-mortification (*dukkara-kiriya*). This should not be confused with the terms *dukkha-paṭipadā* and *sukha-paṭipadā*, of which the former simply refers to difficult, arduous practice (A. II. 149-52). The Nigaṇṭhā (Jains) had the belief that: 'Happiness cannot be reached by happiness; it can only be reached by pain.' For this reason they practised severe austerities and self-mortification (*atta-kilamathānuyoga*) – M. I. 93-4. Before the Buddha's awakening he had the same understanding and thus practised extreme austerities in vain for a long time (M. II. 93).

in these various stages of happiness until he or she reaches supreme happiness.

This comparison of various kinds of happiness indicates that although lower levels of happiness may have favourable aspects, they are still imperfect. They still have both advantages (*assāda*) and disadvantages (*ādinava*). In order to gain a clear understanding and to progress in Dhamma practice, it is essential to recognize these advantages and disadvantages. {1070}

In this context, there is a third factor: one must also have a way out (*nissaraṇa*), an escape, where one is freed from both the advantages and disadvantages. In short, one reaches a superior or more complete state of happiness.

One should apply these three principles while focusing on a specific level of happiness, by examining it and determining its pros and cons. If the happiness is still endowed with disadvantages, one then asks whether there is a way out, a way to pass beyond this state of incompleteness, a way to reach freedom and security. When one encounters such a way out (*nissaraṇa*), spiritual practice can progress.

In sum, Buddhism acknowledges many different levels of happiness and teaches that happiness needs to be cultivated. One can define the entirety of Buddhist practice as this cultivation of happiness. Buddhism is a system of developing happiness, and the development of happiness is given great emphasis in Buddhism.

## **B. HAPPINESS IS REACHED BY HAPPINESS**

It is often overlooked that Buddhism is a religion of happiness. If one encounters such statements as ‘life is suffering’ or ‘all is suffering’, one may think that Buddhism is permeated by suffering. When people see that the Four Noble Truths begin with *dukkha* (‘suffering’), or they encounter the Buddha’s words in relation to the Four Noble Truths, ‘Both in the past and in the present, I teach only suffering and the end of suffering,’ some people may be convinced that Buddhism is a religion pervaded by suffering.

People need to be constantly reminded that the Buddha accompanied the teaching of the Four Noble Truths with the four ‘duties’ (*kicca*). If one performs these duties incorrectly, then one trips up from the very start; one will not be able to reach the heart of Buddhism. Especially in regard to the first noble truth, one needs to be as accurate as possible. If it helps, one can memorize the Pali phrase: *Dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ pariññeyyaṃ* (‘the noble truth of suffering should be thoroughly understood’).

Our responsibility in the face of suffering is comprehensive understanding; suffering is to be thoroughly understood. Suffering is a matter to be taken up and addressed by wisdom; it is not something to be accumulated in order to torment the heart. If one experiences suffering, use wisdom to deal with it and bring it to an end. This is the beginning of the correct path of practice.

One can look at the life of the Buddha. Before he was awakened, he practised severe austerities and extreme asceticism, which was the custom of renunciants at that time. When he realized that this is a wrong form of practice, he abandoned these austerities and turned to the ‘middle way of practice’ (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), until he reached awakening. This is a brief summary of events. A close examination of this account from the Tipiṭaka provides a clearer understanding of Buddhism on the whole.

In the Bodhirājakumāra Sutta, the Buddha recounts how before his enlightenment he had this thought: ‘Happiness cannot be reached by way of happiness; it can only be reached by way of pain.’ It was for this reason that he went forth into the renunciant way of life.

He then went to live with two meditation masters at their hermitages. Afterwards he undertook extreme ascetic practices with intensity and ardour, experiencing extreme physical pain, but all in vain. He realized that it is not possible to reach the supreme good by way of self-mortification. Note here his words: ‘The way to awakening must be otherwise.’ {1071} He remembered an event from his childhood, when he was sitting quietly alone in the shade of a jambolan tree and had attained the first *jhāna*, distinguished by bliss and joy. He had the insight that this

is the path, as confirmed by the words he spoke to himself: 'Here, indeed, is the path to awakening.'<sup>8</sup>

When he was clear in his mind about this issue he asked himself whether he is afraid of this happiness free from sensual pleasure and free from unwholesome states. This was a way of verifying whether this happiness contains any danger. He answered with confidence that he was without fear. He consequently abandoned the extreme ascetic practices, followed the path of happiness, which is represented by the term 'middle way' (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), and finally reached awakening.

An important distinction is that many of the religious traditions in India at that time claimed that 'happiness cannot be reached by way of happiness; it can only be reached by way of pain.' Adherents of these traditions thus undertook extreme ascetic practices (*tapā*). Buddhism, however, teaches that 'happiness can be reached by way of happiness', and thus encourages practitioners to abandon extreme ascetic practices, which are classified as 'self-mortification' (*atta-kilamathānuyoga*) and considered a waste of time.

The most basic form of happiness is derived by coming into contact with external objects, and is dependent on material things, and is thus referred to as 'sense pleasure' (*kāma-sukha*). When one has developed and accessed a higher form of happiness, this superior happiness exists in tandem with sense pleasure. Alternatively, one may choose to abandon sense pleasure altogether and only abide in a more refined kind of happiness.

These superior forms of happiness prevent the dangers of a dependence on material things; indeed, they provide a greater degree of independence. One is able to experience happiness without needing to consume things. Note the phrase by the Buddha above: 'Happiness free from sensual pleasure and free from unwholesome states.' One progresses in unison with wholesome desire (*chanda*).

A vital factor in this correct practice for promoting independence is wisdom. With wisdom, even if the refined forms of happiness are sustained over a long period of time, they do not overwhelm the mind;

<sup>8</sup>*Eseva maggo bodhiyā*. E.g.: M. II. 93.

one is not intoxicated; one does not forget oneself. True happiness goes hand in hand with freedom, and conversely true freedom is endowed with happiness.

One reason why the birth of Buddhism was so revolutionary, allegedly causing an earthquake and excitement all the way up to the highest Brahma realms, is because it introduced this new perspective and way of life, that happiness can be reached by happiness.

The goal of Buddhism – supreme happiness (*parama-sukha*) – is accompanied by wisdom, which frees the mind through understanding. This is genuine, independent, and secure happiness; it need not be searched for and it is free from a reliance on external things; it remains constant; wherever one is, one is bright, joyous, and happy. All of us who are aware of this principle of supreme happiness have the opportunity to develop ourselves in order to realize it. {1072}

## 11.2 FORMAL TEACHINGS ON HAPPINESS

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### A. WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

In order to develop happiness it is important to know the meaning and significance of happiness. In brief, happiness is the fulfilment of one's desires and needs, or simply a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. Note that this definition is not all-encompassing, but it covers a broad and basic range of meaning. It is a crucial definition because it comprises the happiness that most people are confined to; most people are not aware of a happiness greater than this.

Wishing to take a shower and having taken a shower, one is happy. Wishing to eat and having eaten, one is happy. A child who wants to play and has finished playing is happy. This is a fulfilment of one's desire, a meeting of one's needs.

As a matter of linguistics, it is important here to recognize that some branches of modern academic study make a distinction between 'desire' and 'needs', and give these terms different definitions. In this context I

am using these two terms interchangeably, with identical meanings. Here the focus is more on ‘desire’ than on ‘need’ (i.e. a requirement).

By defining happiness as the fulfilment of desires, it is also important to understand the nature of desire. The subject of desire is vast. Note here the Buddha’s principal tenet: ‘All things are rooted in desire’ (*chanda-mūlakā sabbe dhammā*). This means that all things human beings are engaged with are based on desire, have their origin in desire.

Therefore:

- We must clearly understand the nature of desire.
- Given that happiness is the fulfilment of desire, it stands to reason that the development of happiness requires a development of desire. Otherwise, the development of happiness is unsuccessful.

In sum, desire must be cultivated. {1073}

Ambiguity and confusion about the nature of desire prevents people from seeing things clearly, from making headway, and from solving problems. This is true for all human activities, including formal study, moral conduct, and spiritual practice. If one fails to understand desire, one will not reach the essence of the matter at hand.

## B. THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF DESIRE

The technical terms for desire are rather complex. The relevant term in the above quote by the Buddha is *chanda*, which can be translated here as ‘desire’, ‘wanting’, or ‘wish’.

The term *chanda* is essentially neutral: it can be used in a positive or negative sense; it can be wholesome or unwholesome. For example, there are terms such as ‘sense desire’ (*kāma-chanda*), ‘desire for renunciation’ (*nekkhamma-chanda*), ‘desire to consume’ (*paribhoga-chanda*), ‘desire for the Dhamma’ (*dhamma-chanda*), etc.

In the scriptures the term *chanda* is then divided into two kinds:

1. Desire as craving (*taṇhā-chanda*): the desire to obtain, to seize, to become, to possess, or to destroy.
2. Desire as the wish to act (*kattukamyatā-chanda*): the desire to act, the wish to engage, the wish to create, the desire to improve, the desire to train, the desire to study, the desire to practise.

The former is negative and unwholesome (*akusala-chanda*); the latter is positive and wholesome (*kusala-chanda*). This is easy to understand, although these terms are rather long and unwieldy.

Here is where things get complex. When teaching the Dhamma or when communicating in everyday circumstances, it was convenient to use short, concise terms. The result is:

- When referring to negative, unwholesome desire the single term *taṇhā* is used (it is not necessary to say *taṇhā-chanda*).
- When referring to positive, wholesome desire the single term *chanda* is used (it is not necessary to say *kattukamyatā-chanda*, *kusala-chanda* – ‘wholesome desire’, *dhamma-chanda*, *sabhāva-chanda* – ‘desire for truth’, etc.).

This is a simple, easy-to-understand distinction. The word *taṇhā* implies a negative form of desire; the word *chanda* implies a positive form of desire. If this distinction is not clearly understood, things get very confusing. For example one may wonder, by assuming that *chanda* is a positive term, why *kāma-chanda* (‘sense desire’) is described as negative.

The commentators selected the neutral word *patthanā* (‘wish’, ‘desire’) to combine with the two terms mentioned above, thus creating a similar distinction:

1. Desire as craving (*taṇhā-patthanā*): the wish to obtain; the wish to consume.
2. Desire as wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda-patthanā*): wholesome desire; the wish to do good.



Many people, especially Buddhists, encounter the word ‘desire’ and immediately label it as bad or incorrect. They then go on to encourage others to not have desires, which they see as dangerous and potentially destructive, both for an individual’s spiritual development and for society.

Others go to an opposite extreme and promote desire, encouraging people to acquire things and to increase wealth. Some even advocate greed, urging people to be rich, famous, and influential. They claim this hunger for things is required for society to develop. This is not true development, however; rather it leads eventually to conflict and destruction. The best people can achieve by such efforts is to reach an unstable form of development, both politically and economically.

These people represent two extremes, but they share the common factor of a lack of understanding. They do not understand the nature of desire and do not deal with it correctly. Therefore, it is essential to understand and distinguish between different kinds of desire. This will lead to greater clarity.

Having provided a rough outline of the distinction between the two kinds of desire, let us now focus on some of their essential characteristics:

1. Craving (*taṇhā*): desire catering to selfish needs, e.g.: a wish to acquire something for oneself; the search for self-gratification; the wish to personally consume, obtain, become, or avoid something.
2. Wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*): desire focusing on the inherent nature of the object involved; a search for the wellness, virtue, and completeness of an object.

Take, for instance, the natural surroundings of a monastery. People enter the forested area of a monastery and see squirrels bounding in the trees. Some people will rejoice in the charm and nimbleness of the squirrels. They may think: ‘What a delightful sight. May these squirrels be healthy and strong. May this beautiful and refreshing place prosper.’ In this way they desire for the completeness of the thing in question. They possess a wholesome desire.

Other people will see the same squirrels and think: ‘These squirrels are plump and meaty. If only I could catch one and cook it for my evening soup.’ Here, the desire is for self-gratification; it is an unwholesome form of desire, based on craving.

Another example is the consideration by certain students who have finished their secondary education to go on and study medicine. Some students want to be doctors in order to get rich and to gain honour and prestige. This is a selfish, unwholesome form of desire. {1075} Other students wish to study medicine because they want others to be free from illness, to be healthy, to be free from affliction, to live safely and at ease. This desire aims for the completeness of the conditions at hand – in this case the health of the nation’s people – which is the express purpose of the medical profession. This is a wholesome desire.

When people’s needs and desires are fulfilled they experience happiness. For this reason, happiness among people varies according to their desires. When those who wish for the squirrels to be well and healthy see them bounding through the trees, their desire is fulfilled and they will immediately experience happiness. Those who wish to eat the squirrels for the sake of their palates must hunt the squirrels, kill them, and cook them in order to prepare them as a meal; only then will their desire be satisfied and will they experience happiness.

From a wider perspective, those people with wholesome desire (*chanda*) like to create the causes for prosperity, while those full of craving simply wait to enjoy the fruits of prosperity. Those with wholesome desire are creators; those with craving are consumers. The former experience happiness in creating; the latter experience happiness in consuming.

In a society with people of such different inclinations, it is too much to expect that the current of craving will dry up on its own or that the way of wholesome desire will prevail. The best one can do is to balance these two forces, to prevent the floods of craving from washing people into the abyss, and to support the fulfilment of wholesome desire. As long as there are people dedicated to fulfilling wholesome desire, human society can progress. Moreover, supporting the spiritual development of people simultaneously increases the happiness for all.

### C. DELIGHT AND HAPPINESS

It was mentioned above that happiness is the fulfilment of needs, the satisfaction of desires. Another way of describing this fulfilment and satisfaction is to say that desires have been stilled, similar to slaking thirst or alleviating hunger. When thirst or hunger is allayed, one experiences happiness. According to this definition, happiness is the abating of desire; happiness is peace.

In this process, before the mind reaches that peace constituting happiness, one may experience various forms of delight and pleasure. In particular, one may experience *pīti* ('delight', 'rapture', 'bliss'), which in Pali is often paired with happiness as *pīti-sukha*. Discerning these various stages of delight and fulfilment provides a clearer understanding of how happiness is equal to peace. Moreover, one realizes the nature and value of such peace. {1076}

In regard to these two aforementioned terms, the pleasure derived from obtaining a desired object is considered to be *pīti*, while the actual enjoyment of experiencing that object is *sukha*. For example, a person who is travelling through a desert, who is parched and exhausted, will experience rapture when he sees water or hears from another that water is nearby. When he reaches the shade of the oasis, and drinks from and bathes in the pool, he experiences happiness.

The commentaries provide an example for clarification.<sup>9</sup> A man has travelled a long distance through a barren wilderness. He is soaked in sweat, famished and thirsty. At one point he meets someone travelling the other way and asks whether there is any drinking water ahead. He is told that not far ahead is a large pond with a wooded grove. When he hears this news he is exceedingly glad and elated.

When he walks further and sees the lotus petals, leaves, and stalks scattered on the path he is even more delighted. He walks on and sees people with wet clothes and wet hair, and hears the cry of forest chickens and peacocks. And as he approaches the pond and sees the lush woodland

<sup>9</sup>DhsA. [166].

grove and the lotuses growing in the clear, clean water he grows increasingly exultant.

Finally he steps into the water, providing a great sense of refreshment. The exhilaration he felt earlier is replaced by calm. He bathes and drinks to his heart's content, dispelling all anxiety, and he eats the roots and young leaves of the lotuses until he is full. He then climbs onto the bank and lies down in the cool shade of the trees, caressed by a gentle breeze, and says to himself: 'Ah, such happiness.'

According to this example one can see that:

- The delight and elation the man experiences from the moment he hears about the pond and wooded grove until he sees it with his own eyes constitutes *pīti*, which is a preliminary joy and pleasure in the object about to be experienced.
- His bathing in the water, slaking his thirst, satisfying his hunger, and resting in the shade of the trees constitute *sukha*: actually experiencing the desired object.

*Pīti* has the characteristics of elation, euphoria, exuberance, exultation, radiance, and suffusion, which are all extremely positive qualities. Yet however positive this delight and rapture may be, it is not yet complete; it has not yet reached its goal. In the end it must conclude and culminate in happiness, which is precisely inner peace. If this delight is not yet peaceful it is not yet complete; it reaches completion and perfection at peace, which is referred to as 'happiness' (*sukha*).

In fact, a detailed and thorough analysis reveals that there is another important state of mind existing between *pīti* and *sukha*. Above, we looked only at the gratification of desire, which is an aspect of acquisition. But a closer analysis also requires a look at the actual nature of desire.

Desire possesses the attributes of compulsion and disturbance. If it becomes intense it manifests as anxiety, stress, restlessness, and even turmoil. Despite the heightening of delight (*pīti*), as one reaches the stage of fulfilment of desire, the anxiety, stress, and restlessness, which are attributes of desire and have an impact on the body and mind, ease and

subside. Agitation is reduced; one becomes even and calm. This state is referred to as ‘tranquillity’ (*passaddhi*). {1077}

Tranquillity (*passaddhi*) is the direct antecedent to happiness (*sukha*). Therefore, when making a more detailed distinction, the scriptures describe the ordered progression as: *pīti* → *passaddhi* → *sukha*.

Desire based on craving is full of agitation, anxiety, and stress, because it rests on a foundation of delusion and is fed by the attachment to a sense of self. Desire based on wholesome enthusiasm, however, is naturally accompanied by wisdom, which prevents or corrects these mental afflictions.

Note that besides a stilling of desire by way of gratification, there is also a stilling of desire by way of non-gratification, which is an opposite form of intentional action.

One must be careful though. If one tries to still desire by obstructing, resisting, suppressing, or controlling it, the repercussions are even more serious than when seeking gratification. The agitation and turmoil increases and one may vent one’s frustration or explode, causing extra suffering to oneself and endangering others. This then leads to retaliation and reprisals. This inner suppression is merely a form of coercion; it is not true peace.

At the beginning of spiritual practice, the very awareness of training helps in part to deal with desire. Although, to some degree, one may be acting against one’s will and choosing a path of non-gratification, the benefits of training include a feeling of self-development and a joy in having tested one’s strength and resolve.

There are additional tools for working with desire:

First, to empower wholesome mental qualities. One ensures that wholesome desire (*chanda*), which longs for knowledge, is stronger than craving (*taṇhā*), which longs for indulgence. Such wholesome desire, for instance, prevents one from skipping work in order to go off drinking with one’s friends.

Second, negative qualities are replaced by positive qualities. For example, Paul covets John's money and wants to steal it, but he considers how difficult it was for John to acquire this money. John has enough problems; why create more for him? This thought gives rise to compassion, and the craving dries up and is stilled.

In respect to wisdom, take for example a person who sees gold for sale at an extremely cheap price. His eyes widen and he desires this gold, but once he discovers that the gold is fake his desire vanishes instantly. This recognition, however, is only a basic or counterfeit form of wisdom; it deals only with immediate problems.

Disciples endowed with genuine wisdom discern that gold, silver, jewels, indeed all material wealth, does not make up the true purpose of life. Material wealth does not truly belong to anyone; it is unable to provide true happiness or distinction to one's life; both the wealth itself and all living beings are subject to the laws of nature: of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself. To benefit from material things one must gain insight into their true nature, so that they do not create harm. When one has opened oneself up to true freedom and happiness, these things can be renounced without hesitation. Such wisdom prevents craving from gaining any footing and leads to true peace.

Regardless of whether one stills desire by way of gratification or one abstains from gratifying unhealthy desires by empowering wholesome qualities and applying wisdom, the resulting stillness and peace (*santi*) itself constitutes happiness. Happiness is peace.<sup>10</sup> {1078}

#### D. DUAL PATHWAYS TO HAPPINESS

Most people are endowed with a 'starting capital' of both craving and wholesome enthusiasm. Those leaders in society or those who act as mentors (*kalyāṇamitta*; 'virtuous friends') should understand this fact and help others to both promote wholesome desire and to regulate or subdue craving. At the very least, people should prevent the undercurrent of craving from becoming an overwhelming force.

<sup>10</sup>In Pali this happiness is represented by the term *santi-sukha* ('the happiness of peace').

In regard to basic wholesome desire (*chanda*), most people wish for their environment to be well-ordered, tidy and clean. When they encounter a beautiful natural setting they rejoice. They want their surroundings to be in a state of completeness; they want people, animals, trees, and plants to be healthy and vibrant. In the same vein, people want their own bodies to be healthy, strong, and clean, and to exist in a state of completeness. (These are useful examples for distinguishing between *chanda* and *taṇhā*).

At the same time most people wish to gratify their desires by way of contact with appealing and agreeable visual forms, fragrances, sounds, tastes, and tactile objects. These are collectively referred to as ‘material objects’ (*āmisā*) or ‘sense objects’ (*kāma*). Because these sense objects rely on a coarse form of contact and often involve strong stimulation, they can be very seductive. Developing a thorough understanding so as not to be led astray by these enticements requires repeated emphasis.

Let us compare these two kinds of desire in more depth:

As mentioned above, wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*) begins with a pleasure and contentment in seeing things exist in a state of wellbeing and completeness. If the object or person in question is not yet in a state of completeness, or is in a state of only partial completeness, one wishes to act in order to fulfil this completeness. It is at this stage of wanting to act that one reaches the true essence of *chanda*, which is referred to as ‘desire as the wish to act’ (*kattukamyatā-chanda*).

The unwholesome form of desire – craving, on the other hand, manifests as a lust for the five sense objects in order to achieve gratification by way of consuming things. Craving is the desire for consumption. This is a desire to obtain and to acquire solely for one’s own benefit. Here is where a crucial distinction between these two kinds of desire is evident.

When craving arises, it is by definition accompanied by a presumed ‘owner’, ‘desirer’, ‘claimant’, or ‘consumer’, i.e. by someone who acquires, seizes, and consumes, who wants to get things for the sake of this so-called ‘owner’ or ‘consumer’. This is the birth of a sense of self. {1079}

Wholesome enthusiasm functions differently; it is accompanied by a delight and satisfaction in witnessing the goodness and completeness of an object. This delight arises without needing to do anything. If the object is not yet in a state of completeness there is a desire for it to reach this state. This desire for completeness generates another level of desire, which is the wish to act to bring about completeness.

In the case that one does not know how to bring about such completeness, the natural causal process advocates how to respond. The desire for completeness and the inquiry into how to bring this about leads to a desire for knowledge, a yearning to understand.

The above explanations indicate the breadth of meaning of the term *chanda*. First, there is a delight in the goodness, beauty, and completeness of an object or person. Second, there is a wish for this thing or person to remain healthy, complete, or happy. Third, in the case that this thing or person has not yet reached such a state of completion, there is a wish to act in order to help bring about this completion. And fourth, there is a desire to gain the necessary knowledge required to help bring about completion.

The first distinction here is that wholesome enthusiasm wishes for something to exist in a natural state of fulfilment and completion. When one encounters something or someone in this state of completion one immediately experiences happiness and satisfaction, for instance when one delights in the beauty of nature. This differs from craving, which must wait for gratification until an object can be consumed.

Another essential distinction is that throughout the process of wholesome enthusiasm there is desire without the birth of ‘one who desires’ or the birth of an agent who must act. This differs from the process of craving, which requires a sense of self: of a consumer, an owner, a controller, etc. If while engaging with something by way of wholesome enthusiasm a fixed sense of identity arises, this indicates that defilements associated with self-view have infiltrated the mind. A subtle defilement that tends to arise in this context is ‘conceit’ (*māna*; the wish for self-importance).



The essence of *chanda* is a desire to act. For this reason this term is defined as *kattukamyatā-chanda*: desire as a wish to act. A frequent definition of *chanda* is *chandoti kattukamyatā-chando*: ‘*chanda* is the aspiration expressed as a desire to act (in order for something to reach a state of virtue or completion)’. This point needs to be reiterated because it is the starting point of human spiritual development.

If we are endowed with wholesome enthusiasm, we will rejoice and feel at ease when we see that our house or monastery is clean and tidy. If it is dirty or messy, we will want to clean it. We will grab a broom and sweep the floor or the grounds. If we do not know how to sweep, we will want to learn and will study the best methods of sweeping. We will become experts at sweeping and experience joy while sweeping. This is an example of spiritual training and of how wholesome enthusiasm is the starting point of spiritual development.

With craving, however, this process of training does not begin. When craving arises, one wishes to obtain something in order to consume it. With consumption, the process ends; one has no wish to improve oneself. {1080}

## E. WHOLESOME DESIRE IN RELATION TO OTHERS

So far the discussion on desire has focused on people’s work and activities, as well as touching upon the relationship to one’s environment. For this discussion to be complete, however, one must also look at wholesome desire in relation to other human beings.

As mentioned above, wholesome desire (*chanda*) is the wish for all things to exist in a state of goodness and completion. This desire extends also to all sentient beings. This well-wishing towards all beings, beginning with one’s human companions, is the desire for others to be well, to flourish, to be healthy and strong, and to experience joy and happiness.

Interaction with other human beings is a vital part of people’s lives. Likewise, wholesome desire in relation to other humans beings, and indeed, to all beings, holds a special significance in people’s lives.

This well-wishing, or desire for goodness, in relation to other people and other living creatures, has exceptional attributes, distinct from the desire for inanimate things to reach a state of wellness and completion. For this reason, there are several terms used to represent *chanda* in this context, depending on specific circumstances. Instead of using the term *chanda* to designate wholesome desire vis-à-vis other human beings, the following four terms are used:

1. *Mettā* ('lovingkindness'): under normal circumstances, if one has wholesome desire – a sense of well-wishing – towards other people, one wants them to have a bright complexion, be physically healthy and experience happiness. This is a basic, initial form of well-wishing. It is a desire focusing on another person or living creature; it is not tied up with personal concerns. {1096}
2. *Karuṇā* ('compassion'): if one encounters another person (or living creature) who is unhealthy, debilitated, anguished, or troubled, or who has fallen on bad times, one wishes for him or her to be free from such suffering, destitution, misery, or illness.
3. *Muditā* ('appreciative joy'): if another person prospers, a child grows up to blossom and thrive, someone is healthy, physically beautiful and attractive, someone reaches some form of true success, etc., one rejoices in his or her accomplishments.
4. *Upekkhā* ('equanimity'): In some circumstances, another person is able to take self-responsibility, or else it is suitable and appropriate for him or her to take such responsibility. In such cases, one should allow him or her to remain independent, without interference. For example, two parents may be watching their toddler learn how to walk. Wishing for the child to grow and succeed, they watch from a distance without intruding. They do not get caught up with worry and constantly cradle the child. The desire here for a state of wellness is a desire for people's success, goodness, and rectitude. One wishes for them to abide in uprightness, correctness, and safety, for them to exist in truth and righteousness. To enable this, one refrains in these circumstances from interfering.

Wholesome desire (*chanda*) is the catalyst for these four mind states. In other words, wholesome desire expresses itself in four different contexts:

1. A sense of well-wishing when people abide in a normal state of happiness (= *mettā*).
2. A sense of well-wishing when people fall on hard times; a wish for them to be released from suffering and to arrive at a state of wellbeing (= *karuṇā*).
3. A sense of well-wishing when people reach success and accomplishment; a wish for them to achieve ever greater prosperity (= *muditā*).
4. A sense of well-wishing when people have the opportunity to exercise self-responsibility; a wish for them to abide in integrity, uprightness, security, and righteousness (= *upekkhā*).

Most people only consider the first three kinds of well-wishing, but this is insufficient, because these three factors are still confined to the domain of ‘feeling’. Although these feelings, sentiments, or emotions are exalted and highly cultivated, they are not yet complete. Only the fourth factor brings completion.

In brief, if people only possess wholesome sentiments, no matter how elevated or sublime these may be, this is inadequate. These sentiments fulfil personal attributes, but they are not yet linked with truth – with Dhamma. Although these people are ‘good’, they may not yet be ‘correct’. To realize the truth, to reach true correctness, to dispel suffering, and to realize perfect happiness, one must also possess knowledge.

Technically speaking, completing the cultivation of the mind (*citta*) is insufficient. Factors of the mind, or the heart, cannot by themselves bring about liberation. One must complete the cultivation of wisdom (*paññā*), which is the decisive factor for liberation and mental perfection. The first three forms of well-wishing are confined to factors of the mind. The fourth factor involves wisdom, which prompts true application of the mind and leads to liberation. {1097}

In sum, although people may possess positive emotions, they need wisdom to regulate, refine, and elevate these emotions.<sup>11</sup> The fourth factor of equanimity constitutes this link with wisdom.

If people lack wisdom, they are unable to solve life's problems. Even if they are possessed with virtues and wholesome sentiments, they may apply these incorrectly and perform unskilful actions.

Say a thief steals \$2,000. From one perspective, he has reached success; he has obtained money and experiences some happiness. How should one respond to this? In accord with the factor of appreciative joy, one rejoices in his happiness. Yet this is incorrect. Here, one runs counter to true Dhamma practice by getting stuck on the level of emotions. Although the emotions are positive, they may lead to trouble. People may then condone stealing, causing all sorts of problems for society.

Here is where wisdom brings about an integration and balance of the mind. The wish here, referred to as equanimity (*upekkhā*), is for other people to possess rectitude and correctness.

Equanimity as an expression of wholesome desire (*chanda*) is the wish for others to be well and complete. In order to reach completion, people must align themselves with Dhamma, with righteousness. One abides in a state of equanimity in order to allow correctness and righteousness to proceed according to the laws of nature.

The first three factors, of kindness, compassion, and appreciative joy, protect the individual; the fourth factor of equanimity also safeguards the truth. If someone else commits a breach of truth, then one should uphold and protect the truth, uphold justice and probity.

Fulfilment is reached with equanimity, which is an emotion connected to wisdom. Equanimity acts to balance these four 'divine abidings' (*brahmavihāra*). According to the Buddhist teachings, these four factors

<sup>11</sup>It was mentioned earlier how *chanda* can be translated as 'desire', but in relation to Dhamma it is valid to use the term 'love'. *Chanda* is love of truth, love of the good. In regard to lovingkindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), *chanda* is the love of fellow living beings. Love of Dhamma, love of truth, love of justice, and love of righteousness then invokes wisdom, and one reaches the stage of equanimity (*upekkhā*).

are indeed divine forces, that is, they represent Brahma (the highest divinity) and protect the world.

### 11.3 WISE ENJOYMENT OF SENSE PLEASURE

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#### A. DIVERSE GRADES OF HAPPINESS

The Buddha stated that he had realized a sublime happiness independent of sensuality (*kāma*), and for this reason he could assert that he would not circle back to seek out sense pleasure again. Had he not experienced this sublime happiness, he would not have been able to make such an assertion.

The Buddha then went on to say that even though a noble disciple may clearly discern with right wisdom that sense pleasure has little sweetness and much suffering – much affliction and danger – if he has not yet experienced the sublime bliss and happiness independent of sensuality, then he cannot yet say with confidence that he will not revert back in search of sense pleasure.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, he warned the monks in particular that if someone who has gone forth has not yet savoured the sublime bliss and happiness independent of sensual pleasures, it is still possible for various defilements, like covetousness, ill-will, restlessness, laziness, and boredom, to overwhelm the mind.<sup>13</sup> Such a person will not delight in the holy life or will not be able to endure living the holy life.

Apart from demonstrating the importance Buddhism gives to happiness, these references also reveal how noble disciples do not abandon sense desire because sensuality is void of pleasure or because Buddhism teaches to abstain from pleasure. Buddhism acknowledges pleasure and happiness as it truly exists; it encourages people to practise in order to

<sup>12</sup>M. I. 91–92.

<sup>13</sup>M. I. 463–4.

achieve happiness and it recognizes that sensuality comprises one form of happiness.<sup>14</sup>

Noble disciples abandon sense desire because they see that despite the inherent pleasures of sensuality it is still mixed up with a great deal of suffering. And importantly, there is a more profound form of happiness, exceeding that of sense pleasure, exceeding the pleasures derived from consuming the various delightful objects in the world. Noble disciples abandon sense desire because they have savoured this more refined form of happiness.

There are thus different levels of happiness; here we can examine how Buddhism classifies them.

The Duka Nipāta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya separates happiness into various kinds and degrees, providing a long list of pairs, including: the happiness of householders and the happiness of renunciants, the happiness of sensuality and the happiness of renunciation, mundane happiness and transcendent happiness, and the happiness of noble beings and the happiness of ordinary beings.<sup>15</sup>

A clear and detailed classification of the various levels of happiness is the teaching on the ten levels of happiness which is found in many places in the Tipiṭaka:<sup>16</sup>

1. Sense pleasure (*kāma*): joy and happiness dependent on the five cords of sensuality (*kāma-guṇa*).<sup>17</sup>
2. Happiness of the first jhāna (*paṭhamajhāna-sukha*): happiness of the first jhāna, which is removed from sensuality and unwholesome

<sup>14</sup>Trans.: note that the Pali word *sukha* can be translated as both ‘happiness’ and ‘pleasure’, according to the context.

<sup>15</sup>For more on these pairs, see Appendix 1.

<sup>16</sup>Cf.: M. I. 398; S. IV. 225.

<sup>17</sup>Note that the word *kāma* is not restricted to the narrow, commonly understood definition of sexual desire. Objects of sensuality (*kāma-guṇa*) refer to all beautiful sights, melodious sounds, fragrant odours, delicious tastes, and delightful tangible objects (e.g. a soft, silky bed), without exception. They include all things providing material pleasure (*āmisa-sukha*). Therefore, even renunciants may be caught up in enjoying objects of sensual pleasure.

states, and is comprised of initial and sustained thought (*vitakka* and *vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

3. Happiness of the second jhāna (*dutiya-jhāna-sukha*): happiness of the second jhāna, which is comprised of bliss (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). {1025}
4. Happiness of the third jhāna (*tatiya-jhāna-sukha*): happiness of the third jhāna, which is comprised of happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
5. Happiness of the fourth jhāna (*catuttha-jhāna-sukha*): happiness of the fourth jhāna, which is comprised of equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
6. Happiness of the attainment of the sphere of unbounded space (*ākāśānañcāyatanasamāpatti-sukha*); in this concentrative attainment one transcends the perception of form (*rūpa-saññā*) and the perception of repulsion (*paṭigha-saññā*), and one pays no attention to the perception of diversity (*nānatta-saññā*); one directs attention solely on the infinity of space.
7. Happiness of the attainment of the sphere of unbounded consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatanasamāpatti-sukha*); in this concentrative attainment one meditates on the infinity of consciousness as one's object of attention.
8. Happiness of the attainment of the sphere of nothingness (*ākīñcaññāyatanasamāpatti-sukha*); in this concentrative attainment one meditates on the state of nothingness as one's object of attention.
9. Happiness of the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-nonperception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasamāpatti-sukha*).
10. Happiness associated with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpatti-sukha*).

It is possible to abbreviate these ten kinds of happiness into three levels:<sup>18</sup>

1. Happiness associated with sensuality (*kāma-sukha*).
2. Happiness associated with jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*), or happiness associated with the eight concentrative attainments (*aṭṭhasamāpatti-sukha*), which can be further divided into two sub-categories:
  - A. Happiness associated with the four fine-material jhānas.
  - B. Happiness associated with the four formless jhānas.
3. Happiness associated with the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*).

All of these aforementioned kinds of happiness are acknowledged as constituting happiness, but they are seen as representing gradually more refined and superior forms of happiness. The initial kinds of happiness still contain harmful aspects and are tied up with suffering. The higher forms of happiness are more refined and pure.

The scriptures teach to recognize these kinds of happiness as they truly are, both their pleasurable aspects and those aspects tied up with suffering, both their advantages (*assāda*; positive aspect) and disadvantages (*ādinava*; negative aspect), both their merits and dangers. Moreover, they reveal the way out, the escape (*nissaraṇa*), or the freedom from all conditioned states of happiness which is independent of both the advantages and disadvantages.

When one sees the dangers of coarser forms of happiness, one becomes disenchanted by them and aspires towards more refined happiness. And when one has witnessed for oneself refined forms of happiness, one abandons the coarser forms and seeks ever more sublime happiness. At the very least one will not be overly engrossed in coarse pleasures.

Whenever people are liberated in a decisive way and the bonds of mental defilement have been utterly severed, they will never return to

<sup>18</sup>For another classification of stages of happiness, see: Appendix 2.



seek out coarser forms of happiness.<sup>19</sup> They will experience only the refined happiness corresponding to a liberated mind. Experiencing these gradually more refined forms of happiness is one attribute of making progress in Dhamma practice. {1026}

## B. SENSE PLEASURE AND SUPERIOR FORMS OF HAPPINESS

Following are some teachings that help to clarify the aforementioned subject material:

Monks, there are these five cords of sense pleasure (*kāma-guṇa*): forms cognizable by the eye ... sounds cognizable by the ear ... odours cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tangibles cognizable by the body that are desirable, alluring, likeable and agreeable, attractive and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sense pleasure. Now the happiness and joy that arises dependent on these five cords of sense pleasure is the gratification (*assāda*) in the case of sense pleasures....

M. I. 85.

The happiness and joy ... is called sensual pleasure (*kāma-sukha*).

M. II. 42-3; S. IV. 225; A. IV. 415-16; Nd. II. 66-7.

The term ‘*kāma*’ refers to two things: alluring material objects (*vatthu-kāma*; desirable objects), and desire as mental impurity (*kilesa-kāma*; mental defilement that breeds desire).

What are alluring material objects? Pleasing visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles; rugs, blankets, female and male servants, goats, sheep, chickens, pigs, elephants, cows, horses, donkeys, rice paddies, land, silver, gold, houses, villages, royal towns,

<sup>19</sup>There are many examples of people who have obtained the happiness of *jhāna* returning to seek out sensual pleasures, and likewise there are many householders who have obtained the happiness of *jhāna* and who thus enjoy both kinds of happiness. Whatever the case may be, both of these kinds of individuals are better prepared than others to relinquish sense pleasures and progress in Dhamma practice.

states, countries, armies, and royal treasuries – whatever material objects are the basis for attachment are called alluring material objects. Furthermore, all objects of desire existing in the past, present, and future; existing internally, externally, or both internally and externally; those that are base, middling, and superior; those belonging to beings in unhappy states of existence, belonging to human beings, and belonging to the celestial realms; those that are immediately at hand (*paccupaṭṭhitā*), those that are self-created (*nimmitā*), and those that are created by others (*paranimmitā*); those owned and those not owned; those coveted and those not coveted; those that belong entirely to the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara*), those that belong entirely to the fine-material sphere (*rūpāvacara*), and those that belong entirely to the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*) – which are the basis for craving, the objects of craving; they are called objects of desire on account of being a basis for desire, on account of being a basis for infatuation. All of these are called alluring material objects.

And what is desire as mental impurity? Delight is desire, lust is desire, lustful attachment is desire; purpose (*sāṅkappa*) is desire ... lustful preoccupation is desire; sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*), sensual delight (*kāma-nandi*), sensual craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), sensual attachment (*kāma-sineha*), passion for sensual pleasure, infatuation for sensual pleasure, obsession with sensual pleasure, sense desire engulfing the mind, sense desire binding the mind, grasping to sensual pleasure, the hindrance of sensual desire, sense desire in the phrase: ‘Look here, sense desire, I see your origin – you arise from intention. I will no longer be preoccupied with you; by doing this you will remain no longer’ – all these are called desire as mental impurity.

*Nd. I. 1-2, 28.*

Monks, the conception of an embryo in a womb takes place through the union of three things. When there is the union of the mother and father, and it is the mother’s season, and the being to be reborn is present, through the union of these three things the conception

of an embryo in a womb takes place. The mother then carries the embryo in her womb for nine or ten months with great risk to her life, as a heavy burden. Then, at the end of nine or ten months, the mother gives birth with great risk to her life, as a heavy burden. She then nourishes the newborn child with her own blood; for the mother's breast-milk is called 'blood' in the noble ones' tradition.<sup>20</sup>  
{1027}

M. I. 265-6.

'A young infant child, lying on his back, plays [even] with his own urine and faeces. What do you think, isn't that completely amusing for that infant child?

'Yes, venerable sir.'

'Sometime later, when that child grows up and his faculties mature, he plays the games that are typical for children – games with toy ploughs, stick games, somersaults, games with pinwheels, game with measures made of sand, games with toy chariots, games with toy bows. What do you think, isn't this amusement superior and more refined than the former kind?'

'Yes, venerable sir.'

'At a still later time, as that boy continues to grow up and his faculties mature still further, he enjoys himself furnished and endowed with the five objects of sensual pleasure: with forms ... sounds ... odours ... tastes ... tangibles that are are desirable, alluring, likeable and appealing, attractive and provocative of lust. What do you think, isn't this amusement superior and more refined than the former kind?'

'Yes, venerable sir.'<sup>21</sup>

A. V. 203.

<sup>20</sup>A being to be reborn = *gandhabba* (the commentaries give a strange explanation for this term: MA. II. 310).

<sup>21</sup>Similar in part to M. I. 266.

Among householders the most exalted person is a universal emperor (*cakkavatti*; ‘wheel-turning monarch’), who wields supreme power and is replete with material wealth. According to Buddhism such a person is also endowed with superior virtue. A universal emperor is thus considered to have the greatest amount of happiness, greater than that generally experienced by other human beings. The Buddha referred to the happiness of a universal monarch in order to describe the most complete form of (ordinary) human happiness, and to compare it with various other levels and degrees of happiness, revealing their relative subtlety and profundity.

According to the ideal depiction, a universal emperor possesses seven treasures (*ratana*) and four kinds of success (*iddhi*). The seven treasures are as follows:

1. A precious wheel, signifying righteous and legitimate sovereignty. It enables the emperor to extend his empire of peace across the entire continent, reaching the oceans in all four directions, by using righteous methods and sustained by the delight of those who accept his rule.
2. A precious elephant, which is able to transport the emperor across the entire continent quickly in order to inspect the royal domain.
3. A precious horse, which is likewise able to transport the emperor across the entire continent quickly in order to inspect the royal domain.
4. A precious and powerful gem, which radiates light across great distances, enabling the emperor to move his troops at night or to have citizens of the land work at night as if it were daytime.
5. A precious queen, who besides having a beautiful body and complexion surpassing that of all other women also possesses a marvelous touch, described as ‘gentle and soft as cotton or down’. When cold, her body warms; when hot, her body cools. Her fragrance is as sweet as sandalwood; her breath like the scent of a lotus. Moreover, she speaks pleasing words and knows how to minister to all the wishes of the emperor.

6. A precious treasurer, who possesses the divine eye; he is able to spot sources of wealth in all places and is able to find as much gold and silver as the emperor desires.
7. A precious advisor, who possesses exceptional talent at rulership. Apart from offering correct counsel on official matters, he is able to direct all sorts of work projects and issue royal decrees in place of the emperor. {1028}

The emperor's four kinds of success are as follows:

1. his outward appearance is more handsome and majestic than that of all other men;
2. his lifespan is longer than that of all other people;
3. he is healthy and strong, with few illnesses;
4. his subjects are loyal to him; they love him like children love their parents, and he loves them as a father loves his children. When he travels outside of the palace the people receive him and wish to spend as much time as possible with him; he too wishes to spend time with them.

The happiness and pleasure of such an emperor is superior to that of other people, including the young man referred to in the previous quotation. Nevertheless, the Buddha said that however great is the happiness of a universal emperor, it is paltry – even inconsequential – when compared to the happiness of the celestial realms. It is similar to comparing a small stone the size of one's palm to the towering Himalayas.<sup>22</sup>

Although divine happiness (*dibba-sukha*) is an elevated form of sensual pleasure, greatly exceeding the sense pleasure of human beings, there exists a happiness more sublime than this. Such a latter form of sublime happiness is independent of sensuality and of external objects of gratification. Those who have experienced it feel no envy or desire when they

<sup>22</sup>M. III. 172-7. For more on the glory of a universal monarch, see: Mahāśudassana Sutta, D. II. 169-99; Mandhātūrāja Jātaka, JA. [4/47].

see someone else who is enjoying abundant sense pleasure. This is similar to celestial beings, who feel no envy or delight in the inferior happiness of human beings. Moreover, these individuals have no yearning even for divine happiness, because they have experienced a superior form of happiness.

In this context, the Buddha recounted his own experiences:<sup>23</sup>

‘So too, Māgandiya, formerly when I lived the home life, I enjoyed myself, provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure: with forms ... sounds ... fragrances ... tastes ... tangibles that are are desirable, alluring, likeable and appealing, attractive and provocative of lust. I had three palaces, one for the rainy season, one for the winter, and one for the summer. I lived in the rains’ palace for the four months of the rainy season, enjoying myself with musicians who were all female, and I did not have to step out of the palace for four months.

‘On a later occasion, having understood as they actually are the origin, the transience, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of sensual pleasures, I abandoned craving for sensual pleasures, I dispelled the fever for sensual pleasures, and I abide without thirst, with a mind inwardly at peace.

‘I see other beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures being devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, burning with fever for sensual pleasures, indulging in sensual pleasures, and I do not envy them nor do I delight therein. Why is that? Because I delight in the happiness apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states. Therefore I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein. {1029}

‘Suppose, Māgandiya, a householder or a householder’s son was rich, with great wealth and property, and being provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure, he might enjoy

<sup>23</sup>Here, the terms *kāma*, *kāma-guṇa*, and *kāma-sukha* need to be understood in their broad definitions according to the Pali language.

himself.... Having conducted himself well ... he might reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world in the retinue of the gods of the Thirty-Three; and there, surrounded by a group of nymphs in the Nandana Grove, he would enjoy himself, provided and endowed with the five cords of divine sensual pleasure. Suppose he saw a householder or a householder's son enjoying himself, provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure. What do you think? Would that young god ... envy the householder or the householder's son for the five cords of sensual pleasure, delight in the five cords of human sensual pleasure, or be nostalgic for human sensual pleasures?'

'No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because heavenly sensual pleasures are more excellent and sublime than human sensual pleasures.'

'So too, Māgandiya.... I do not envy them nor do I delight therein ... because I delight in the happiness apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses divine bliss. Therefore I do not envy an inferior happiness, nor do I delight therein.'

*M. I. 505-506.*

### C. DANGERS AND DRAWBACKS OF SENSE PLEASURE

What is *kāma*? As indicated in the quotation above, the term *kāma* has two definitions. First, it can mean 'desire', 'affection', 'lust', or 'yearning'. Second, it can mean 'object of desire', 'object of affection', 'object of lust', 'object of yearning', 'object of gratification', 'something that stimulates pleasure', 'something that provides comfort'. This second definition refers to any person, living being, material wealth, personal belonging, etc., which people possess or hold on to in order to derive pleasure. In sum, these objects are classified as the five 'strands of sensuality' (*kāma-guṇa*): sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles that are desirable, that provide sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*). Sense pleasure is dependent on the five senses and dependent on material things; it can also be referred to as 'carnal pleasure' or as 'material happiness' (*sāmiṣa-sukha* or *āmiṣa-sukha*).

There are many kinds and degrees of sense pleasure, including exalted and divine kinds of pleasure, all of which are recognized as forms of happiness. Here, we shall focus on the flaws of sense pleasure and the advantages of supreme happiness. We may ask why those people who have experienced more refined happiness claim that it is superior to sense pleasure and even relinquish sense pleasure altogether.

The dangers and drawbacks of *kāma* (here, both definitions of this term are combined, i.e. desire and objects of desire) can be looked at from three angles: in relation to an individual, in relation to *kāma* itself, and in relation to the social behaviour of people indulging in sensuality.

In terms of the individual, one can witness how people, through an improper relationship to sense objects, generate suffering within themselves. By behaving incorrectly in relation to the world around them, they make things into objects of desire and cause themselves misery.

In terms of *kāma* itself, one can discern the flaws of those things sought after by people, and one can discern the flaws inherent in the enjoyment and gratification derived from these things.

In terms of people's behaviour, one can see how those people who seek out and indulge in sense pleasure act in relation to society.

Note that although these three aspects can be distinguished, they are in fact interconnected.

### **1. *The individual***

Here the focus is on the process of creating suffering in line with Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This begins with cognition of various sense objects, followed by an erroneous mental attitude towards these things. A person continually allows the stream of events to follow the path of ignorance and craving until this process becomes habitual. One can call this a habitual predilection for suffering or a propensity for causing problems. The Buddha mentioned this process in his description of human development, beginning with conception in the womb until a person grows up as an adult. A part of this development was quoted above; here, we continue this description: {1030}



When that child grows up and his faculties mature still further, he enjoys himself provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure.... On seeing a form with the eye, he lusts after it if it is pleasing; he dislikes it if it is displeasing.... On hearing a sound ... on smelling an odour ... on tasting a flavour ... on touching a tangible object ... on cognizing a mind object, he lusts after it if it is pleasing; he dislikes it if it is displeasing. He abides with mindfulness of body unestablished, with a limited mind, and he does not understand as it actually is the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom wherein those evil unwholesome states already arisen cease without remainder.

Engaged as he is in pleasure and aversion, whatever feeling he feels – whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant – he is engrossed in that feeling, devoted to it, and preoccupied by it. As he does so, delight (*nandi*; craving) arises in him. Now delight in feelings [transforms into] clinging. With this clinging as condition, there is becoming; with becoming as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging and death; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair all come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.<sup>24</sup>

M. I. 266.

## 2. *Kāma itself*

Here one focuses on the flaws of sense desire and on the objects of sense desire. The Buddha frequently used the following analogies to demonstrate how *kāma* provides relatively little satisfaction; instead it creates much affliction and danger:

<sup>24</sup>Note the Buddha's words: 'The pretty things in the world are not sense desire (*kāma*); rather, a person's lustful intent is sense desire. The pretty things in the world exist just as they are [according to their nature]; therefore the wise remove [only] the craving (*taṇhā-chanda*) for them.' (I.e. the wise do not eliminate the pretty things in the world); A. III. 411.

- Sense desire is similar to an exhausted and starving dog who is thrown a bone covered with blood. It will gnaw on the bone until it is tired and weak, without real satisfaction or fulfilment.
- Sense desire is similar to a vulture or hawk with a piece of meat in its mouth; other raptors will swoop down as a mob and snatch the meat away. People have no absolute ownership over material things; others can snatch them away. Many different people desire the same object, giving rise to rivalry, conflict, oppression, and even killing. If one does not know how to relate responsibly towards sense objects one will experience distress and torment.
- Sense desire is similar to a person holding a flaming grass torch and walking upwind. Before long he will have to throw the torch down or else his hands, arms and body will be burned, leading to severe injuries or even death.
- Sense desire is similar to a blazing pit of coals. Someone who cherishes his life knows that if he falls in he will die or be severely injured. He does not want to fall in, but a strong man grabs him by the arms and gradually drags him towards the pit.
- Sense objects are similar to a radiant and beautiful dream. Before long the images fade and disappear; upon waking one sees nothing and is left with a feeling of anguish.
- Sense objects are similar to borrowed possessions, which a person shows off in order to appear fancy and smart. Other people will admire them, but one will only be able to possess them temporarily and with a sense of doubt; one has no true ownership over them. Whenever the true owner (i.e. nature) asks for them back, one must return them; there is no compromise. All that a person is left with is his or her body-and-mind, which is constantly subject to rising and passing away. {1031}
- Sense objects are similar to a tree at the edge of the forest bearing abundant fruit; those people who pass by and desire the fruit will use whatever means at their disposal to acquire it. Those who are able will climb the tree to gather the fruit, while those who cannot

will use other means; if they are foolish or evil-minded, they will cut the entire tree down. If those people up in the tree do not get down in time, the tree will fall on them, leading to injury or even death.<sup>25</sup>

- Sense objects are similar to a chopping block. Meddling with them is tantamount to risking losing one's life by being chopped or slashed.
- Sense objects are similar to a spear or lance; they tend to stab and pierce, wounding one and causing injury.
- Sense objects are similar to the head of a snake; if one is exposed to it, one must always live in distrust; one is unable to truly feel secure or be at ease. The snake can strike at any time, placing one in a constant state of danger.<sup>26</sup>

The disadvantages or flaws of *kāma* can be summarized as follows: objects of sense pleasure are only able to provide a desirable sweetness, delectability, and enjoyment for the short duration that one is experiencing them, but these objects, when they are related to incorrectly, end up inflicting acute pain and distress for a long time. Moreover, the fading and passing away of the enjoyment may cause sadness and torment, leading to longstanding grief.

<sup>25</sup> Another way of interpreting this analogy is as follows: sense objects are like the fruit of a tree, the trunk of which is being cut by impermanence and instability. Decay and death, for instance, are constantly eating away at the trunk, wearing it away and leading to its eventual collapse. A person indulging in sense desire is constantly threatened by fear and apprehension resulting from this instability and uncertainty. The more a person is obsessed with sensuality and is unable to renounce it, the greater the risk there is of being severely injured by the falling tree.

<sup>26</sup> There is a description of the first seven of these analogies at: M. I. 364-7; other references simply give a list of the ten analogies, e.g.: Vin. II. 25-6; Vin. IV. 134; M. I. 130; A. III. 96-7. Brief explanations of these analogies are provided at: Nd. I. 6-7, 19; Nd. II. 67; VinA. IV. 869; AA. III. 269; NdA. I. 32; VinT.: Sappāṇakavaggo, Ariṭṭhasikkhāpādaṇṇanā; some aspects of these analogies are described at: S. IV. 189.

### 3. *Social behaviour*

Here, an examination of the disadvantages of sense desire begins with the suffering, hardship, and adversity inherent in earning a livelihood and seeking material objects to use and consume. Everyone must endure the hardships of climate and of physical and mental fatigue in earning a living. Some people are so impoverished that they lose their lives in the search for material things; other people make great effort in their work, struggling with obstacles and exhaustion, but are unsuccessful; they make no money or they go bankrupt, resulting in grief and anguish. Even when one obtains such things, there is suffering in trying to protect them. Some people experience such misfortunes as having their possessions stolen by thieves or incinerated by fire, causing them additional distress.

When ignorant people obtain material possessions they get enslaved by them. Proud of their possessions – which are ultimately illusory and have no inherent lasting existence – they look down on others, thus increasing the woes of society. Some people are jealous of other people's possessions, leading to disputes, competition, and various forms of oppression.

This interpersonal conflict is illustrated in this passage from the Pali Canon: 'Kings dispute with kings, nobles dispute with nobles, brahmins dispute with brahmins, merchants dispute with merchants, mothers dispute with their children, children dispute with their mothers, fathers dispute with their children, children dispute with their fathers, brothers dispute with their brothers, sisters dispute with their brothers, brothers dispute with their sisters, friends dispute with friends.' This conflict can spill out into physical fighting and even murder.

Spurred on by various personal interests and fuelled by sense desire, people take up arms and engage in war: shooting, stabbing, and bombing one another. {1032} Likewise, they engage in various forms of immoral behaviour, like theft, burglary, adultery, and rape. When they are caught they receive various kinds of punishments. And when they die they must experience further torment in planes of misery, bad destinations, lower worlds, and hell. All of these actions and results are due to sense desire.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Cf.: M. I. 85-6.

Those who discern the aforementioned disadvantages and dangers of sense desire (*kāma*), and who have experienced a superior kind of happiness, to the point of no longer hankering after objects of sensual enjoyment, also see into the true nature of sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*). The Buddha explained this matter by using another analogy, as follows:

Imagine a person with leprosy, whose body is deeply infected by the disease and covered with lesions. He uses his fingernails to scratch at the scabs and for relief he burns his flesh over a charcoal pit. At a later time a doctor cures him of this illness, enabling him to live at ease and to move about as he wishes. He sees other people suffering from leprosy who scratch their wounds, cauterize their flesh, and take medicine for their illness, but he feels no delight or gladness in respect to these people. This is similar to those who formerly indulged in objects of sense pleasure. When they later abandon craving for sense pleasure and experience an internal peace and happiness that is independent of sensuality and superior even to divine pleasures, they feel no delight or hankering when they see others indulging in sense pleasures.

If a strong person were to grab someone who has recovered from leprosy and drag him towards a fire pit, he would struggle to escape, because of the heat of the fire. The contact with the fire is now considered painful, whereas formerly, when he had leprosy, he would seek out the same hot fire voluntarily to grill his flesh, and he considered the contact pleasurable. This is because a person afflicted with leprosy has damaged faculties, leading to inverted or perverse perceptions (*saññā-viparīta*) in the face of fire, experiencing pain as pleasure. So too it is with sensuality.

In truth, all forms of sensuality entail painful contact and are marked by burning and agitation. People are ordinarily infected by craving for sensuality, however, and possess damaged and faulty faculties, giving rise to warped perceptions about sensuality, experiencing the actual pain as pleasure.<sup>28</sup>

The more a leper scratches and burns his lesions, the dirtier and more putrid they become. His happiness and delight stems from scratching

<sup>28</sup>It is worthy to consider the degree and frequency of pleasure and pain resulting from contact by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body.

his wounds, or exists at the point of the wound that is being scratched. As long as he is not cured from this itch, he will be unable to know a superior kind of happiness. He will be caught up in scratching – how can one introduce him to a happiness that does not involve scratching the itch? But when he is cured of this illness and is healthy, he will be able to know a superior form of happiness, and from then on he will not desire the pleasure derived by scratching an itch.

The same is true in respect to sense pleasure. When those people marred by craving for sensuality experience sense pleasure, their craving intensifies. Moreover, their happiness and delight is derived from and limited to the five objects of sense pleasure. If they are still not cured from the infection and inflammation of craving for sensuality, it will not be possible for them to know a superior, more refined kind of happiness. In this agitated state, how can one get them to experience an internal happiness independent of external sense objects? {1033}

But when craving for sensuality no longer gnaws away at them, and they are freed from the provocations of sense desire, they will be able to experience a sublime, internal happiness. This is referred to as a freedom from disease, an absence of mental disturbance, or perfect mental health, which is one of the definitions for Nibbāna.<sup>29</sup>

In the Sakka Sutta the Buddha converses with a group of Sakyan householders.<sup>30</sup> After being questioned, the Sakyans acknowledge that someone who makes his living righteously and abstains from anything unwholesome, and who as a result earns half a coin, a single coin, two coins – all the way up to five hundred coins – per day, is worthy to be called an enterprising person.

Yet even if such an enterprising person were to save up his earnings for one hundred years, amassing a large quantity of wealth, this wealth

<sup>29</sup>This is a summary and explanation of a section contained in the Māgandiya Sutta: M. I. 506-509. In this sutta the focus on different forms of happiness begins with sense pleasure and moves directly to the state of Nibbāna; there is no explicit mention of the happiness of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*). The state of jhāna, however, is described as Nibbāna ‘indirectly’ or ‘in some respects’ (*pariyāya*), i.e. it has some similar characteristics. For more on this subject see chapter 6 on Nibbāna.

<sup>30</sup>A. V. 83-4.

would not be able to provide him with pure, uninterrupted happiness for a single day or even a half a day. This is because objects of sense pleasure are impermanent, insubstantial, without any lasting reality, subject to disappearance and decay. This differs from those who practise according to the Buddha's teachings and who attain the fruit enabling them to abide in pure, unadulterated happiness for long periods of time.

#### **D. HAPPINESS FROM SCRATCHING AN ITCH AND HAPPINESS FROM THE ITCH BEING CURED**

To help review the Buddhist perspective on happiness, let us examine once more the passages in the *Māgaṇḍiya Sutta*. This teaching outlines the development of happiness, beginning with the pleasures experienced by infants up to the supreme happiness of *Nibbāna*. In this *sutta* the Buddha describes the pursuit and experience of various kinds of happiness in people's lives:

To begin with, a newly-born infant, lying in its cradle, may giggle and find delight by smearing its own urine and excrement.

A few years later, this child no longer finds pleasure in such activity. Rather, he or she likes to play in a sandbox or in the dirt, and enjoys playing with toys, like dolls or miniature cars, trains, or airplanes. Children find tremendous delight in toys, cherishing and clinging to them. Some children have a favourite blanket, and no matter how ragged or soiled it is, they cherish it intensely. If someone acts to take it away from them, they will scream as if their life depended on it. {1100}

Children then develop into young adults at which time these toys are no longer considered amusing; they provide them with no pleasure or satisfaction. Instead, people derive another level of pleasure from enjoyment by way of sense contact, by way of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects.

From here happiness can be developed further. Yet if people fail to develop higher forms of happiness and stop at the level of sense pleasure, before long they will experience an inevitable despair, or at the very least they will no longer be able to enjoy these pleasures, and will encounter great suffering and affliction.

Those people who develop higher forms of happiness experience a refined joy independent of pleasurable sense objects. They reach a free, unconstrained happiness and become truly liberated.

When these liberated individuals observe others who indulge in sense pleasure, they no longer consider this enjoyment of sense pleasure as a form of satisfaction. Their attitude towards sense pleasure has changed, similar to how an adult looks at children delighting in their toys. Although they understand this delight, they look upon it with humour or sympathy.

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha used the metaphor of a leper to describe this development of happiness. Lepers feel extreme itchiness due to the disease. As a result they scratch at their lesions, yet this scratching only intensifies the itch. The more they scratch the more they itch; the more they itch the more they scratch. Moreover, they derive a sense of pleasure from scratching. Because of the discomfort they also seek relief by burning their lesions by a fire. They find happiness and satisfaction by burning themselves, which ordinary people would find intolerable.

The Buddha once asked a brahmin what would happen if a leper met a doctor with an effective medicine, resulting in the cure of this illness. Would this person cured of leprosy still seek happiness from scratching or desire to burn himself with a flame? The brahmin answered that just the opposite would occur. If someone were to grab this man and pull him towards a flame, he would struggle desperately to escape. The Buddha pointed out how the development of happiness is similar. Someone who has experienced a happiness superior to sense pleasure no longer considers the enjoyment of sense objects as a source of satisfaction.

One can say that a significant percentage of human beings derive happiness from scratching an itch. Those people who have developed themselves to another level derive happiness from a freedom from itching. Consider which of these kinds of happiness is superior.

Does a healthy person free from illness consider this state of health, this state of wellbeing, to be happiness? Is not such freedom from illness, freedom from affliction, freedom from chafing, itching, and physical pain



a true state of happiness?<sup>31</sup> {1101} The state of physical health, free from weakness and irritation, in which all of one's organs function well, is an inherent state of happiness. Indeed, such health, such freedom from affliction, is a basic, primary form of happiness aspired to by all people.

No matter what sort of happiness people aim for and no matter how abundant are their material possessions, if they are deprived of physical health, their objects of sense pleasure gradually lose importance. Regardless of how bountiful are their objects of sense pleasure, if people are impaired or ravaged by physical illness, these things lose all of their value. Moreover, if their happiness was invested in these things, the illness will only intensify suffering and lead to a sickness of heart.

Let us turn our attention to the mind. A mind that is satisfied, spacious, joyous, and bright, free from vexation and disturbance, is inherently complete. Such a state of mind is in itself happiness, in the same way as physical health is a form of happiness. In fact this happiness is even greater than that of physical health, but because of the mind's refinement most people have difficulty gaining an insight into it.

Take the example of someone in rude health. If he is in great mental distress, no amount of material comforts can provide him with happiness. In contrast, people whose minds are bright, cheerful, and free are happy even when nothing is happening and when they abide in the most ordinary and routine circumstances.

#### **E. ENJOYMENT OF SENSE PLEASURES WITHOUT AFFLICTION**

Normally speaking, sense pleasure and more refined kinds of happiness are incompatible. This is because sense pleasure is tied up with arousing and stimulating sense objects, accompanied by agitation and anxiety, and dependent on external things for gratification. Refined happiness, on the other hand, begins with peace of mind. The happiness of *jhāna*, for example, arises when the mind is first secluded from sensuality and secluded from unwholesome states.

<sup>31</sup>The Pali word *roga* ('illness', 'disease') literally means to 'break', 'crush', or 'pierce'; the word *ābādha* ('affliction', 'illness', 'disease') literally means 'oppression'.

Therefore, it is difficult for ordinary people to enjoy both sense pleasures and more refined forms of happiness, especially the happiness of *jhāna*, because whatever they delight in they also tend to attach to and indulge in. When they are agitated and confused by the power of sense desire, it is difficult for them to enter into the happiness of *jhāna*. There are many stories of hermits and renunciants falling away from *jhāna* because of an infatuation for sense pleasure. Only when one is a noble being, beginning with stream-entry, can one enjoy sense pleasures safely. For this reason the Buddha repeatedly encouraged people to develop wisdom and have a proper relationship to sense pleasure; only then can one escape from its power and influence.

In the *Pāsarāsi Sutta* the Buddha compares the five objects of sense pleasure to a hunter's snare. This teaching pertains to three groups of ascetics and brahmins:<sup>32</sup>

1. *First Group*: those ascetics and brahmins who enjoy the five cords of sensuality (*kāma-guṇa*) with attachment, infatuation, and indulgence, without a discernment of their dangers and without liberating wisdom. They are similar to a deer captured in a snare; they will meet with downfall and destruction, slaughtered by the hunter – evil-minded *Māra*. {1036}
2. *Second Group*: those ascetics and brahmins who enjoy the five cords of sensuality without attachment, infatuation, and indulgence, with a discernment of their dangers and with liberating wisdom. They are similar to a deer lying on top of the snare but not caught in it. They do not meet with downfall and destruction, and are not subject to being carried off by the hunter.
3. *Third Group*: those bhikkhus who are secluded from sensuality, secluded from unwholesome states, who have attained a level of fine-material and immaterial *jhāna*, along with the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*), and who have brought the mental taints to an end (i.e. who have experienced supreme happiness). They are called those who have blinded *Māra*, who

<sup>32</sup>M. I. 173-4.

consequently cannot see any trace of them. They are similar to deer who wander freely and at ease in a great forest, undetected by the hunter.

From this sutta one can see that the Buddha did not simply teach to abandon an involvement with objects of sensual pleasure. He also taught a proper engagement to these things, by maintaining an independence in relation to them. One thus does not become enslaved by them, and one does not permit them to cause harm and to create suffering.

The involvement with sense objects belonging to the second group of ascetics and brahmins above is the way of practice most emphasized for general Dhamma practitioners. The key principle in this way of practice is encapsulated in the term ‘with liberating wisdom’, which is a translation of the Pali *nissaraṇa-paññā*. It refers to wisdom that knows how to lead one to freedom. It can also be defined as ‘wisdom escaping the enticements by craving’ or ‘wisdom preventing entrapment by craving’.

The commentaries generally define *nissaraṇa-paññā* as an ability to reflect when using the four requisites, by focusing on the true purpose, benefit, or value of these things.<sup>33</sup> For example, one uses clothing primarily to ward off cold, heat, wind, and biting insects, and to cover one’s private parts, not for boasting or for show. One eats food in order to keep the body strong and at ease and so that one can perform one’s activities, not for amusement, intoxication, or a sign of extravagance.

The application of such wise reflection fosters inner independence, prevents enslavement to material objects, and helps to avoid the dangers and suffering stemming from spinning around in the vortex of moodiness, of joy and sorrow, pleasure and disappointment. Moreover, it generates a balanced use of the requisites, which is a boon for one’s life. Practice endowed with liberating wisdom (*nissaraṇa-paññā*) is thus referred to as ‘knowledge of moderation’.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>E.g.: DA. III. 1013; MA. III. 50; SA. II. 163; AA. II. 373; AA. III. 52; NdA. 464; NdA. II. 123. ‘An ability to reflect’ corresponds to the terms *paṭisaṅkhā yoniso* and *yoniso paṭisaṅkhā*, which are synonyms for *yoniso-manasikāra*.

<sup>34</sup>See: Nd. I. 495; in some passages *nissaraṇa-paññā* is described as the elimination of mental taints by way of using (the requisites) – see: M. I. 10; D. III. 130. Knowing

Someone who relates properly to sense pleasure will find it easy to access more refined forms of happiness, as such happiness is dependent on wholesome states of mind. When one has experienced refined happiness, this happiness then helps in turn to guide one's search for and partaking of sense pleasure, keeping it within correct boundaries. This is because one appreciates the value of more refined happiness. And when one reaches higher states of realization, comprised of ever more profound forms of happiness, one will not return to seek out sense pleasure again. {1037}

#### F. LIBERATED ENJOYMENT OF SENSE PLEASURE

Noble disciples (*ariya-sāvaka*) are endowed with liberating wisdom (*nissaraṇa-paññā*). They enjoy sensual or material pleasure with a thorough understanding, preserving an inner freedom and avoiding enslavement by material things. They use and consume things by recognizing both their benefits as well as their potential harm. They are able to manage things and manage affairs in a way that leads to the wellbeing of themselves, their families, their companions, their dependants, their coworkers, their community, and indeed of their entire society. Moreover, they are aware, both in regard to themselves and to others, of how to progress and develop on the noble path (*ariya-magga*).<sup>35</sup>

In reference to monks or monastic residents, who aim for higher forms of happiness and freedom, the Buddha taught to abandon sensual desire and to pass beyond material things. But in reference to householders, he did not emphasize the abstinence from sensuality.<sup>36</sup> Instead, he emphasized managing the consumption of material things and dwelling

moderation in eating is called *bhojane-mattaññutā* (mentioned frequently, e.g.: M. I. 355; M. III. 2. These references were cited earlier in chapter 10 on desire and motivation.

<sup>35</sup>Trans.: as mentioned in chapter 7 on awakened beings, the term 'learned noble disciple' (*sutavā ariya-sāvaka*) can in some cases refer to an 'unawakened virtuous person' (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*); moreover the term 'noble disciple' (*ariya-sāvaka*) refers in some cases to a 'disciple of the Buddha, the Noble One', rather than to a 'disciple who is a noble one'.

<sup>36</sup>There are many Pali terms for householders or laypeople, including: *gahaṭṭha*, *gihi*, *kāma-bhogī*, *sāgāra*, *āgārika*, *agārika*, *gehavāsī*, *gharamesī*, *gharavāsī*.

in contentment in a way that is safe from ill-effects and conducive to the greatest blessings for oneself and others.

Of course, liberating wisdom is also a key element for householders or laypeople, both in respect to enjoying sense objects (*kāma-bhoga*) safely – in a way conducive to benefit and free from affliction – and to guiding one to greater levels of wellbeing. The Buddha thus emphasized the constant application of such wisdom in the engagement with all things, by clearly recognizing three principal factors: the benefits, the dangers, and the escape, or in other words: the advantages, the drawbacks or faults, and the point of deliverance and freedom, which constitutes a state of completion, transcending both the advantages and disadvantages that are still inseparably bound by one another.

When teaching laypeople, who had either no understanding or only a basic understanding of the Buddhist teachings, and who did not yet aspire to renounce the household life, the Buddha usually began with basic levels of practice followed by more refined levels. This teaching by the Buddha is called the ‘progressive instruction’ or ‘gradual instruction’ (*anupubbikathā*).

The gradual instruction is comprised of five factors (three expositions – *kathā* – and two related subjects). (See Note 11.2) The three expositions are as follows:

1. *Dāna-kathā*: exposition on giving, renunciation, charity, and generosity.
2. *Sīla-kathā*: exposition on moral conduct, on refraining from exploitation of others, and on refraining from causing social conflict and enmity.
3. *Sagga-kathā*: exposition on ‘heaven’, i.e. a virtuous, wholesome life, which is endowed with happiness derived from sense objects (*kāma-vatthu*). This exposition highlights those individuals, including celestial beings, who live an upright life and enjoy various levels of sense pleasure. This third factor is the result of generosity and moral conduct. It points to a sense of responsibility in creating a wholesome life and society, and to experiencing a healthy form of sensual happiness.

## NOTE 11.2: EXPOSITIONS

In the Tipiṭaka and other scriptural texts only three ‘expositions’ (*kathā*) are mentioned: *dāna-kathā*, *sīla-kathā*, and *sagga-kathā*. The following two factors, ‘disadvantages of sensual pleasures’ (*kāmādinava*) and ‘benefits of renouncing sensual pleasures’ (*nekkhammānisaṁsa*), are not followed by the word *kathā*. They are related teachings describing the gist of the first three factors, especially of *sagga-kathā*, and point out the way to reaching more refined kinds of happiness. Later texts, however, added the word *kathā* to these two factors. Even in some of the Pali Tipiṭaka editions (the Burmese editions), commentaries, and sub-commentaries, the term *kāmādinava-kathā* was created and inserted into the text (unlike the term *nekkhammānisaṁsakathā*, which is only found in later texts).

This gradual teaching introduced those laypeople in the audience to the highest goal that they were struggling to find. They were able to recognize that when one lives one’s life in accord with the first two principles of generosity and virtuous conduct, one will experience a faultless form of happiness and enjoy abundant sense pleasures, as described in the third factor, and one thus achieves one’s wishes. {1038}

If the listener was prepared the Buddha would then continue by describing the disadvantages of sense pleasures (*kāmādinava*). He would explain that, however great the pleasure dependent on material objects may be, it still has a drawback or deficiency, paving the way to suffering and loss. When the listener understood this fourth factor well and wished for a way out, the Buddha would describe the benefits of renouncing sense pleasures (*nekkhammānisaṁsa*), i.e. he would point out a life of freedom, of independence from material things, and of unconstrained happiness, which becomes a constant inner quality. The listener would then become receptive and aspire to reach a happiness independent of objects of sensuality (*nirāṁsa-sukha*). This was how the Buddha would develop a receptivity and readiness in people. He would prepare their minds gradually, in a way epitomized by the expression of old: ‘cleansing and purifying a person’s disposition.’

The Tipiṭaka states that when the Buddha knew that the minds of his listeners were receptive, malleable, unclouded, joyous and bright – similar to a spotless cloth ready to receive dye – he would teach the Four

Noble Truths. When their minds were open, he would impart wisdom, enabling them to arrive at the truth (*sacca-dhamma*), to be a personal witness to truth, until there arose the ‘eye of Dhamma’ (*dhamma-cakkhu*) and they would enter the community of the noble ones (*ariya-puggala*), from stream-enterers upwards.

Most of these awakened individuals with the ‘eye of Dhamma’ continue to live as householders.<sup>37</sup> They still enjoy sensuality, but it is a sensual happiness integrated with the happiness independent of material things (*nirāmisā-sukha*), which acts as a guarantee, preventing sensuality from causing harm and indeed generating blessings and virtue. These noble beings act as pillars and exemplars, exercising authority in their communities. And they advance without fail, without decline, on the noble path.

In sum, however delicious, sparkling, refreshing, remarkable, or desirable sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*) or material happiness (*sāmisā-sukha*) may be, it still depends on external objects – it is not yet free and independent. It still involves some form of personal attachment and possession.

Furthermore, in the insatiable search for sense gratification, other people are bent on pursuing the same objects of pleasure, of which the finest and most desirable are of a limited and inadequate number. People vying for these things treat each other with distrust, giving rise to disagreements, conflicts, zealous guarding of possessions, and oppression. If people do not know how to control their desires, this oppression intensifies, leading to increased distress and unbounded destruction.

Even if one does own these material things to one’s heart’s content, they may disappear. And even if they do not disappear, they may lose their appeal, either by undergoing change themselves or as a result of a change in the individual. In any case they must eventually decline and disintegrate – they cannot be sustained in that desirable condition forever – and one must be separated from these things in the end.

<sup>37</sup>For an example of how awakened beings live the lay life and safely enjoy sense pleasures, see: Vin. I. 180-81.

Hand-in-hand with sense pleasure comes worry and anxiety. Although people may experience sensual happiness to fulfilment, apart from people's innate insatiability causing problems, that happiness itself is neither secure, reliable, nor replete. It is as if one is plagued by an imbedded and infected splinter or barb that causes irritation and annoyance. The pleasure is mixed up with suffering. The future is full of fear and anticipation, the past full of sorrow and regrets. It is not a pure, faultless, spacious, and complete form of happiness. {1039}

Although more refined forms of happiness are internal, independent, pure, and harmless, if one's enjoyment of this happiness is still mixed with mental defilement, one may succumb to indulgence, giving rise to heedlessness and neglect; one's responsibilities and the wellbeing of one's community will be undermined. Moreover, one may fall back to indulging in material pleasures and forget to put effort into spiritual practice in order to eliminate residual mental impurities, which are the root of suffering. One's practice will thus be faulty and compromised.

Therefore, both sensual happiness and happiness independent of material things experienced by those who still have mental defilements is not yet truly free or complete, because these people harbour a sense of self that gets caught up with things; they have not yet eradicated the root of suffering. They must engage in spiritual cultivation until they arrive at the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya*) – the state free from suffering, by which one does not grasp at anything, and nothing 'sticks' to the mind, just as water does not stick to a lotus leaf. A person's body lives in the world, but the mind transcends the world. One passes beyond both suffering and the happiness dependent on sensation (*vedanā*), including refined sensations generated in the mind, and one reaches supreme happiness, which does not involve 'feeding on' sensation. This happiness is completely satisfying and it is complete in itself. It can be compared to perfect physical health. Nothing disturbs or irritates the mind; it is clear, calm, pure, bright, and at ease.

When one has reached utter and total freedom, and there is no 'self' to get entangled in anything, one is happy in every situation and nothing remains to be done in respect to personal desires. If one seeks out happiness this is done for the sake of the world, for the wellbeing and happiness



of all beings. This is the supreme happiness of freedom from suffering; it lies beyond the reach of affliction, and it constitutes the highest goal of every human being.

Despite the drawbacks and disadvantages of sense pleasure, it is still one form of happiness, which has a bearing on the majority of people. Because of its potential for causing suffering, both for individuals and for society, it is very important to guard against and to rectify any harm it creates. In sum, sense pleasure must be managed carefully, and people ought to be encouraged to develop themselves in order to experience higher forms of happiness.

The skilful management of sense pleasure is a necessary asset at beginning stages of practice. Although sense pleasure contains defects it can still benefit one's life and help lead to a peaceful coexistence with others. Moreover, it is a basis from which people can develop themselves and discover greater blessings. For this reason, in systematic presentations of happiness, well-managed sense pleasure is classified as a basic benefit (*attha*) which is to be aspired to and reached. It is referred to as a 'present benefit' (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*): a visible, obvious, and immediate benefit. The benefit here refers precisely to the happiness derived from material things.

'Present benefit' (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*) refers to happiness on the material level (*rūpa-dhamma*). It is tied up with material things (*vatthu*), with objects of gratification and consumable things. Moreover, it pertains to communal living, to creating wholesome, supportive interpersonal relationships. In sum, this benefit involves:

- Diligence in performing one's work and in earning one's living, in order to obtain enough material wealth to look after oneself, one's family, and one's dependants, so that everyone is at ease.
- Maintaining wholesome social relationships and communal harmony; having a respectable position in society, in addition to receiving honour and prestige and having a supportive retinue or staff.

- Sustaining one's family in comfort; establishing one's family as a respectable model for others and in a way conducive to the well-being of society.
- Taking care of one's body, for instance by exercising and showing moderation in eating, so that one lives without illness and remains healthy. {1040}

In regard to more refined happiness, which is internal and independent of material things (*nirāmisā-sukha*), it too is a benefit and aspiration for life, referred to as *samparāyikattha*: 'future benefit', 'spiritual benefit', 'profound benefit', or 'inconspicuous benefit'.

In terms of 'present benefit', the happiness resulting from having abundant consumable goods is obvious for all to see. But in terms of 'spiritual benefit', helping another person to escape from suffering leads to even greater rejoicing and delight. Similarly, feeling deeply moved and inspired by truth and goodness, with an accompanying joy and peace, is a spiritual happiness not clearly visible to others. Moreover, such happiness connected to virtue bears results in future lives, which are also inconspicuous. For these reasons it is referred to as *samparāyikattha*: 'inconspicuous benefit' or 'future benefit'.

The meaning of the term *samparāyikattha* includes all forms of internal, refined forms of happiness, beginning with the joy derived from faith (*saddhā*), from living a virtuous life (*sīla*), from concentration (*samādhi*), and from jhāna, all the way up to the happiness of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-sukha*). For this reason, in most suttas only two kinds of benefit are mentioned: 'present benefit' and 'future benefit'. This is suitable when teaching people in general; it describes the happiness that they are familiar with in their everyday lives, and it introduces higher forms of happiness in a way that is easy to understand.

As mentioned earlier, much of the happiness classified as 'independent' or 'non-material' (*nirāmisā-sukha*) is not yet complete; it is still subject to reversal and potentially mixed up with attachment and heedlessness. Therefore, in relation to those people who have a good basis of understanding, it is sometimes necessary to make a more detailed distinction.

In this case the true happiness of the extinction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya*) – the happiness of the arahants or the happiness of Nibbāna – is distinguished from *samparāyikattha*, and given the name ‘supreme benefit’ (*paramattha*).

In sum, this term *attha*, which refers to the purpose or objective of life, can be divided simply into two kinds: visible benefit and inconspicuous (i.e. spiritual) benefit (including the supreme benefit). A more detailed division, however, is into three kinds:<sup>38</sup>

1. Visible benefit (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*) emphasizes physical health, material possessions, honour, friendship, and a happy home.
2. Inconspicuous benefit (*samparāyikattha*) emphasizes having a wholesome, refined, and happy mind by way of spiritual development.
3. Supreme benefit (*paramattha*) refers to having comprehensive wisdom, leading to true purity, clarity, happiness, and liberation.

Besides encouraging people to gradually reach these three kinds of benefit, the Buddha also taught to broaden one’s perspective, so that one develops these benefits not only for oneself but also for the sake of others. There is thus a second group of three benefits:<sup>39</sup>

1. Self-benefit (*attattha*): to generate the above three kinds of benefit for oneself; to develop oneself in order to reach these three benefits.
2. Benefit of others (*parattha*): to assist others in reaching the three above benefits by supporting them in spiritual self-development.
3. Mutual benefit (*ubhayattha*): the shared benefits and assets of a community or society (including the shared environment), which should be nurtured and cared for in order to support oneself and others in reaching the three aforementioned benefits. {1041}

<sup>38</sup>The division into three kinds is found at: Nd. I. 168-9, 178, 357; Nd. II. 57.

<sup>39</sup>E.g.: S. II. 29; S. V. 121-2; A. I. 9; A. III. 63-4.

Due to the importance of how sense pleasure is managed and engaged with, the Buddha gave teachings to householders on spiritual qualities leading to ‘present benefit’, for example on how to deal with material possessions in a correct and supportive manner. These teachings are scattered throughout the Tipiṭaka.

When providing teachings on visible benefit, besides emphasizing liberating wisdom (*nissaraṇa-paññā*), the Buddha also combined teachings on qualities conducive to spiritual benefit (*samparāyikattha*). This is because the qualities accompanying refined happiness act as a guarantee both for preventing sense pleasure from harming oneself and for preventing it from harming others or society. Instead, people will be able to apply their enjoyment of sense pleasure to assist others and provide for their wellbeing. Moreover, these teachings remind people to make the effort in developing more refined forms of happiness.

There are various names for the factors conducive to the development by householders in spiritual benefit (including the supreme benefit) which help to regulate people’s relationship to sense pleasure. The chief of these terms is *ariyā vaḍḍhi*: ‘noble growth’. There are five such factors:<sup>40</sup>

1. Faith (*saddhā*): firm confidence in the blessings of the Triple Gem, the gist of which lies with faith in the Tathāgata’s awakening (*tathāgatabodhi-saddhā*) – faith in the wisdom of the Buddha which enables people to be awakened themselves. This is equivalent to confidence in human nature, which can be trained to the point of excellence, of comprehensive wisdom and liberation. This confidence is considered the starting point of spiritual development.
2. Virtuous conduct (*sīla*): to conduct one’s life in a harmless way, by upholding the five precepts, which may be developed into the eight precepts.

<sup>40</sup> A. III. 80; A. IV. 220-21. The literal translation for *vaḍḍhi* is ‘profit’, ‘gain’. A. V. 137 describes noble disciples who grow in ten kinds of *ariyā vaḍḍhi*; five of these factors are material benefits (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*; i.e. they grow in cultivated land, in wealth and grain, in wives and children, in servants, workers and labourers, and in livestock), which are protected by five factors classified as spiritual benefits (*samparāyikattha*; i.e. faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom).

3. Learning (*suta*): to listen to, reflect on, and analyze teachings in order to gain an essential understanding of them, especially those teachings conducive to spiritual growth.
4. Generosity (*cāga*): charity; relinquishment; to lead the household life without being miserly; being receptive to the suffering of others and ready to share what one has and to offer assistance.
5. Wisdom (*paññā*): to gain a comprehensive understanding of the truth; to have insight into arising and dissolution; to extricate oneself from unwholesome qualities; to reach a state where mental defilements find no footing; to be able to bring suffering to cessation.

Of these five factors, the four essential factors are faith, virtuous conduct, generosity, and wisdom; learning here is considered expedient but optional. Of course it is favourable to have learning, especially to be one of great learning (*bahussuta*), but technically this factor is dispensable. Wisdom is the paramount factor. When wisdom is present there is less reliance on formal learning. By the same token, no matter how much one has learned, if one lacks wisdom one cannot reach true success. In any case, these five factors are considered assets to one's life.

Of the various teachings in the Tipiṭaka on managing sense pleasure there is one long teaching comprising the Siṅgālaka Sutta, which describes a system for conducting one's life as a householder, in reference to one's immediate family, to one's community, and to society in general. The commentators say that this sutta constitutes a 'discipline for laypeople' (*gihi-vinaya*) or a 'code of living for noble beings'.<sup>41</sup> {1042}

At the start of the Siṅgālaka Sutta the Buddha refers to this code of living as a 'noble discipline' (*ariya-vinaya*). And at the end of the sutta he speaks a verse describing the principles for building social stability and

<sup>41</sup>D. III. 180-93. The commentarial reference to this sutta as a discipline for laypeople: DA. [3/151]. For a systematized analysis of the Siṅgālaka Sutta, see the book 'The Buddhist's Discipline' (P. A. Payutto, © 2000, trans. by Dr. Somseen Chanawangsa). [Trans.: note that this sutta is also referred to as the Sigālaka Sutta.]

harmony, which are called the four ‘bases of social solidarity’ (*saṅgaha-vatthu*):<sup>42</sup>

*Giving gifts, kindly speech,  
Wholesome deeds, and impartiality in all things:  
Towards those worthy of such support,  
One should practise [these four things] properly.*

*These four things are people’s mainstay in the world,  
Similar to the axle-pin of a moving chariot.  
If they did not exist, no mother from her son  
Would receive honour or respect, nor father either.*

*Since the wise uphold these favourable qualities,  
They attain to a state of distinction,  
And are rightly praised by all.*

Both the teachings on ‘noble growth’ and on the four ‘bases of social solidarity’ pertain to a refined form of sensual happiness, which acts as a link between ‘material benefit’ and ‘spiritual benefit’. In shorter teachings by the Buddha, however, ‘material benefit’ or ‘present benefit’ (*ditṭhadhammikattha*) usually refers to material wealth, because economic factors are of such central importance to the life of householders and they incorporate almost all facets of a layperson’s life. When looking at only these select suttas, it is thus easy to get the impression that ‘present benefit’ refers exclusively to material wealth.

Below are some additional teachings by the Buddha on ‘present benefit’. Some of these emphasize material wealth, while others act as a bridge to realizing ‘spiritual benefit’.

To begin with, however, let us look at a sutta in which ‘present benefit’ refers to another aspect of sense pleasure not tied up with material wealth. Here, the emphasis is on attending to one’s physical health:

<sup>42</sup>Trans.: also known as the ‘principles of service’: generosity (*dāna*), kindly speech (*piya-vācā*), acts of service (*atthacariyā*), and even and equal treatment of others (*samānattatā*).

The Buddha was residing at Sāvattthī.... On that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala had eaten a pot-measure of rice with delicacies. Then when he had finished eating, cramped and discomforted, the king approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side.

Then the Blessed One, having understood that King Pasenadi had eaten and was cramped and discomforted, on that occasion recited this verse:

*‘When a man is always mindful,  
Knowing moderation in the food he eats,  
His ailments duly diminish,  
He ages slowly, and he lives long.’*

Now on that occasion the brahmin youth Sudassana was standing behind King Pasenadi of Kosala. The king then addressed him thus: ‘Come now, dear Sudassana, learn this verse from the Blessed One and recite it to me whenever I am taking my meal. I will then present you daily with a hundred kahāpaṇas as a cost for the meal.’

‘Yes, sire’, the brahmin youth Sudassana replied. Having learned this verse from the Blessed One, whenever King Pasenadi was taking his meal the brahmin youth Sudassana recited [it].

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala gradually restrained himself until his intake of food was at most a small-pot measure of boiled rice. {1043} At a later time when his body had become energetic and spry, King Pasenadi of Kosala stroked his limbs with his hand and on that occasion uttered this inspired utterance:

‘The Blessed One showed compassion towards me in regard to both kinds of good – the present good (diṭṭhadhammakattha) and the higher good (samparāyikattha).’

*Doṇapāka Sutta: S. I. 81.*

The following sutta on present benefit describes a proper engagement with sense pleasure and emphasizes the relationship to material wealth, but it too provides a link to higher, spiritual benefit. Note that this sutta

was given to the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, who was a stream-enterer. Note also that in regard to the first three kinds of happiness below, the term ‘clansman’ (*kula-putta*) is used, while in regard to the fourth kind of happiness the term ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya-sāvaka*) is used (indicating a rise to higher, spiritual benefit):

Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One said to him:

‘Householder, there are these four kinds of happiness that may be regularly achieved by a layperson who enjoys sensual pleasures.... What four? The happiness of owning wealth (*atthi-sukha*), the happiness of spending wealth for consumption (*bhoga-sukha*), the happiness of freedom from debt (*anaṇa-sukha*), and the happiness of blameless actions (*anavajja-sukha*).

‘And what, householder, is the happiness of ownership? Here, a clansman has acquired wealth by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained. When he thinks, “I have acquired wealth by energetic striving ... righteously gained”, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of ownership.

‘And what is the happiness of consumption? Here, with wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained, a clansman enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds. When he thinks, “With wealth acquired by energetic striving ... righteously gained, I enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds”, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of consumption.

‘And what is the happiness of freedom from debt? Here, a clansman has no debts to anyone, whether large or small. When he thinks, “I have no debts to anyone, whether large or small”, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of freedom from debt.



‘And what is the happiness of blamelessness? Here, householder, a noble disciple is endowed with blameless bodily, verbal and mental action. When he thinks, “I am endowed with blameless bodily, verbal and mental action”, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of blamelessness.

*‘Having realized the happiness of freedom from debt,  
One should recall the happiness of ownership.  
While spending one’s wealth,  
One sees clearly the happiness of material wealth (bhoga-sukha).  
When seeing things clearly, the wise one  
Knows both kinds of happiness, [and sees that]  
The other three are not worth a sixteenth part  
Of the bliss of blamelessness.’<sup>43</sup> {1044}*

A. II. 69.

The following sutta makes a clear distinction between present benefit and spiritual benefit, the latter acting as both a support and a constraint for the former:

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Koliyans<sup>44</sup> near the Koliyan town named Kakkarapatta. There the young Koliyan Dīghajāṇu approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said:

‘Venerable sir, we are laymen enjoying sensual pleasures, living at home in a house full of children. We use sandalwood from Kāsi; we wear garlands, scents, and unguents; we welcome gold and silver. Let the Blessed One teach us the Dhamma in a way that will lead to our welfare and happiness in this present life and in the future.’

‘There are, Byagghapajja,<sup>45</sup> these four things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a clansman in this present life. What four?

<sup>43</sup>Examples of blameless action (*anavajja*) include keeping the Uposatha observances, assisting and serving others, establishing public parks, planting woodlands, and building bridges (KhA. [123]; SnA. [2/96]).

Accomplishment in diligence, accomplishment in protection, good friendship, and balanced living.

‘And what is accomplishment in diligence? Here, whatever may be the means by which a clansman earns his living – whether by farming, trade, raising cattle, military service, government service, or some other craft – he is skilful and diligent; he possesses sound judgment in order to carry out and arrange it properly. This is called accomplishment in diligence.

‘And what is accomplishment in protection? Here, a clansman sets up protection and guard over the wealth he has acquired through perseverance, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained, thinking: ‘How can I prevent kings from confiscating it, thieves from stealing it, fire from burning it, floods from sweeping it off, and displeasing heirs from squandering it?’ This is called accomplishment in protection.

‘And what is good friendship? Here, in whatever village or town a clansman lives, he associates with householders or their sons – both young and old who are of mature conduct – who are endowed with faith, virtuous behaviour, generosity, and wisdom; he converses with them and consults with them. Insofar as they are accomplished in faith, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in faith; insofar as they are accomplished in virtuous behaviour, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in virtuous behaviour; insofar as they are accomplished in generosity, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in generosity; insofar as they are accomplished in wisdom, he emulates them with respect to their accomplishment in wisdom. This is called good friendship.

‘And what is balanced living? Here, a clansman leads a balanced life, living neither too extravagantly nor too frugally. He knows the way his wealth increases and declines, [aware]: ‘In this way my income will exceed my expenditures rather than the reverse.’ Just as an appraiser or his apprentice, holding up a scale, knows: “By so

much it has dipped down, by so much it has gone up....” If this clansman has a small income but lives luxuriously, others would say of him: “This clansman eats his wealth just like an eater of figs.” (See Note 11.3) And if he has a large income but lives austere, others would say of him: “This clansman may even die as a pauper.” But it is called balanced living when a clansman leads a balanced life.... {1045}

‘See here, Byagghapajja, the wealth thus righteously gained has four pathways to ruin (apāya-mukha): womanizing, drunkenness, gambling, and bad friendship, bad companionship, bad comradeship. Just as if there were a large reservoir with four inlets and four outlets, and a man would close the inlets and open the outlets, and sufficient rain does not fall, one could expect the water in the reservoir to decrease rather than increase....

‘The wealth thus righteously acquired has four pathways to gain: one avoids womanizing, drunkenness, and gambling, and cultivates good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. Just as if there were a large reservoir with four inlets and four outlets, and a man would open the inlets and close the outlets, and sufficient rain falls, one could expect the water in the reservoir to increase rather than decrease....

‘These are the four things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a clansman in this very life.

‘There are, Byagghapajja, these four things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a clansman in the future. What four? Accomplishment in faith, accomplishment in virtuous behaviour, accomplishment in generosity, and accomplishment in wisdom.

‘And what is accomplishment in faith? Here, a clansman is endowed with faith. He places faith in the awakening of the Tathāgata thus: “The Blessed One is an arahant ... the Enlightened One, the Exalted One.”<sup>46</sup> This is called accomplishment in faith.

‘And what is accomplishment in virtuous conduct? Here, a clansman abstains from the destruction of life ... from intoxicants, that

is, spirits and alcoholic beverages, which are the basis for heedlessness. This is called accomplishment in virtuous conduct.

‘And what is accomplishment in generosity? Here, a clansman dwells at home with a heart devoid of the stain of miserliness, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in relinquishment, one devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing. This is called accomplishment in generosity.

‘And what is accomplishment in wisdom? Here, a clansman is wise; he possesses the wisdom that discerns arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. This is called accomplishment in wisdom.

‘See here, Byagghapajja, these are the four things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a clansman in the future.’

*Enterprising in his occupations,  
Heedful in his management,  
Balanced in his way of living,  
He safeguards the wealth he earns.  
Endowed with faith, accomplished in virtue,  
Charitable and devoid of miserliness,  
He constantly purifies the path  
That leads to safety in the future.*

*Thus these eight qualities  
Of the faithful householder  
Are said by the Truthful One  
To lead to happiness in both ways:  
To good and welfare in this very life,  
And to happiness in the future.  
Thus for those dwelling at home,  
Their generosity and merit increase.<sup>47</sup>*

A. IV. 281.

<sup>44</sup>Trans.: the author uses the spelling ‘Kolīyans’.

<sup>45</sup>This was Dīghajāṇu’s traditional name.

## NOTE 11.3: RIPE FIGS

Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi in ‘The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya’ © 2012 quotes the Manorathapūraṇī: ‘One wishing to eat figs might shake a ripe fig tree and with one effort knock down many fruits. He would eat the ripe fruits and depart, leaving behind the rest; just so, one who spends the greater part of his earnings enjoys his wealth by dissipating it, so it is said: “This clansman eats his wealth just like an eater of figs”.’ See also the description of the *mayhaka* bird in the fig tree in the section titled ‘General Principles on Right Livelihood’ in chapter 17.

Although still enjoying sense pleasures, when laypeople are able to engage with this enjoyment in a way that generates present benefits and they gain a familiarity with more refined spiritual benefits, it can be expected that they will prosper and experience a reliable, harmless form of happiness. Moreover, they will help to generate lasting social wellbeing and prosperity. {1046}

### G. COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF HAPPINESS

When compared with more refined kinds of happiness it is normal that sense pleasure will be reduced in value. In comparison to the happiness of *jhāna*, for example, sense pleasure is described as: ‘ordinary happiness’ (*puṭhujjana-sukha*; the happiness of unawakened people); ‘contaminated (or festering) happiness’ (*mīḷha-sukha*);<sup>46</sup> and ‘inferior happiness’ (*anariya-sukha*). Furthermore, it is described as consisting of suffering, affliction, and obstruction, and constituting the wrong way of practice (*micchā-paṭipadā*).

<sup>46</sup>Trans. the author uses the alternative meaning of *bhagavā* here, as one who ‘analyzes the Dhamma’. Another epithet for the Buddha is thus the ‘Analyst’.

<sup>47</sup>There are similar teachings at: A. IV. 285-6, 322-3.

<sup>48</sup>Trans.: the author uses the spelling *mīḷha-sukha*.

In contrast, the happiness of *jhāna*, or ‘internal happiness’ (*ajjhata-sukha*), is described as: ‘happiness free from sensuality’ (*nekkhamma-sukha*); ‘happiness based on seclusion’ (*paviveka-sukha*); ‘happiness conducive to peace (and to realizing Nibbāna)’ (*upasama-sukha*); and ‘happiness conducive to awakening’ (*sambodhi-sukha*). It is free from suffering, distress and affliction, and it constitutes correct spiritual practice (*sammā-paṭipadā*), which leads to liberation, to Nibbāna.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Buddha frequently denigrates and points out the dangers of sense pleasure, this does not mean that he was set on condemning or despising it. {1035} From one perspective, the Buddha was simply trying to point out the truth behind sense pleasure. Ordinary people, however, who are often ensnared by mental defilements, often view his teachings as excessively severe. Moreover, by comparing sensual happiness cherished by most people with a more refined form of happiness, he devalued the former in order to elevate the latter.

Most importantly, however, sense pleasure is an unyielding and tenacious snare in which most people are caught up and from which it is difficult to escape. The Buddha thus heavily criticized sense pleasure, along with praising more refined forms of happiness, in order to urge people to make haste in their spiritual practice, to avoid complacency, and to experience supreme happiness.

Not all people who realize more refined kinds of happiness immediately abandon sensual happiness. Many people continue to live their lives by enjoying both kinds or both levels of happiness. In these circumstances such people have more options or have a greater advantage in regard to experiencing happiness.

In sum, the Buddha emphasized heedfulness and an awareness that, whether one abandons sensual pleasure or not, it is imperative to realize

<sup>49</sup> M. III. 233, 236. These descriptions are also found at: M. I. 454; M. III. 110-11 = Nd. II. 64; A. III. 30-31, 342; A. IV. 341-2. ‘Internal happiness’ (*ajjhata-sukha*), also called ‘blameless happiness’ (*anavajja-sukha*), in fact refers to any form of happiness beginning with the joy derived from virtuous conduct upwards; it is mentioned in many passages, including: D. I. 70; M. I. 180-81, 268-9, 346; M. III. 34-5; A. II. 210; A. V. 205-206.

more refined forms of happiness within oneself and to develop these until one reaches supreme happiness.

#### H. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF HAPPINESS

Some people fear that if they reach Nibbāna they will no longer be able to enjoy sense pleasure. In response, one can say: ‘Fear not. If you reach Nibbāna you will experience abundant happiness, greater than any happiness you now know. You will have many kinds of happiness to choose from. If you wish to enjoy sense pleasures, you may, and you will enjoy them more than you do now, because nothing in the mind will exist to spoil their sweetness.’ But by answering in this way other people may protest: ‘How is it possible that someone who has realized Nibbāna would return to enjoy sense pleasures?’

These are not matters one need worry about; they resolve themselves naturally and automatically. Those people who have realized Nibbāna are optimally suited to enjoy all kinds of happiness. Which level of happiness they choose to experience is up to their own discretion. (For example, it is well documented that those individuals who have experienced the happiness of Nibbāna access the four jhānas as an ‘abiding at ease in the present’ – *diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*.)

Having said this, it occurs naturally by itself that those persons who realize Nibbāna do not seek out sense pleasures. This is not because they are unable to enjoy such pleasures, but rather they have no inclination to do so. They have no mental defilements which would prompt them to indulge in sensuality, and they have experienced superior states and thus no longer see pleasurable sense objects as worthy of involvement.

This is similar to some people’s speculation that arahants, having clearly discerned the characteristic of nonself – the truth that human beings are comprised simply of a convergence of elements and possess no fixed, lasting identity – may be able to kill others blamelessly. But this clear knowledge and vision of nonself only occurs when the defilement of hatred prompting one to kill has been eradicated. It is therefore impossible for arahants to kill.

A comparison to awakened beings not seeking out sense pleasure is that of a person who was previously imprisoned. While in prison the prisoner relied on certain activities or objects for amusement and entertainment, as a way to forget about his discomfort and confinement. Later, when there is an opportunity to escape from prison, some people are so attached to the sources of entertainment that they refuse to leave, while others get caught in worry and indecision. Those who truly recognize and appreciate their freedom, however, will gradually disengage from those pleasurable activities, leave the prison, and soon let go of all longing for that state of incarceration.

The Buddha himself earlier delighted in sense pleasure and then later became familiar with more refined forms of happiness, both the happiness of *jhāna* and the happiness of *Nibbāna*. He thus knew all forms of happiness. His teachings were shaped by his own direct experience, acting as a solid confirmation of the validity of these teachings.

Let us review some of the disadvantages and flaws of sense pleasure, when one compares it to more refined forms of happiness, in particular the happiness of *Nibbāna*:

**A.** It creates a dependency on, even an enslavement to, external things; it is not free and independent. We can easily be deceived into thinking that we possess and control material things, but the greater is our attachment to them, the weaker is our power and the stronger is the enslavement.

There are two stages to this enslavement or dependency: {1054}

- Before obtaining sense objects, craving for sense pleasure dictates one's actions, so that one chases after things in order to experience pleasant sensations. If the desire is very strong, one will dedicate one's life to such a pursuit.
- When one has obtained these objects, they cause one to fret further by generating adoration, hate, greed, aversion, and delusion. One's behaviour is then shaped by these defilements. Craving prompts the search for sensation; sensation then reinforces craving. This cycle goes on perpetually.



Moreover, the inevitable, natural change and alteration of things is oppressive for people who harbour such craving, leading to grief and distress.

Internal, non-material happiness, on the other hand, is free and independent. It prevents people from indulging in sense pleasure, safeguards a safe engagement with sense pleasure, and averts the suffering arising due to the change inherent in conditioned things.

**B.** Because sense pleasure depends on external sense objects – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles – those people who indulge in sense pleasure effectively entrust their happiness, along with their entire fate, to these things. These external things are subject to myriad causes and conditions, which people have no control over. For this reason those people who entrust their happiness to these unreliable things open themselves up to disappointment and various difficulties. The more one fails to understand this dynamic, the greater is one's suffering.

**C.** Life tied up with sense pleasure revolves entirely around contact with the outside world, around contact between sense faculties and sense objects; this is an external, superficial dimension of life. Moreover, the endless search for sense pleasure is tiring and tedious. Internal, refined forms of happiness help to free people from this cycle of sense contact; they free people from an excessive reliance on the sense faculties. At the very least, they offer people a respite and rest, and introduce them to more profound aspects of their lives.

**D.** Because sense pleasure relies on external things, it requires sense objects to pass through the various sense bases in order to supply fuel for craving. If one does not obtain these desired things as fuel, one suffers. Internal, refined forms of happiness, however, do not rely on external things. Those people who are endowed with such happiness, although deprived of gratifying sense objects, still abide happily.

Furthermore, because of this reliance on external things, those persons indulging in sense pleasure are unable to dwell unoccupied. If they are idle, they feel restless and feverish for things to experience. This restlessness and fever are true expressions of suffering. People who suffer this yearning and fever tend to deceive themselves by overlooking

and ignoring this situation and instead focus exclusively on whatever gratification they have been able to acquire.

In addition, when people have found gratification, even if this involves highly agreeable objects, they are unable to enjoy this experience for long. If the experience becomes too prolonged, it becomes a form of endurance and the happiness transforms into suffering. Sense pleasure thus relies on a continual change and variation of sense objects, and for this reason the scriptures state that movement (*iriyāpatha*) conceals suffering.<sup>50</sup> Those who have accessed more refined forms of happiness are not tormented by the fever of yearning. They are able to abide in a particular state of happiness for long periods of time, according to their wishes, as illustrated in the story of the Buddha and King Bimbisāra (see below). {1055}

E. Sense pleasure is shaped by and subject to craving, that is, it is related to one's habitually accumulated likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions. These likes and dislikes can fluctuate and are erratic. The same object or action may be liked by one person and disliked by another; one person may see it as a source of pleasure, another as a source of displeasure.<sup>51</sup>

This fluctuation is true even for a single individual – on one occasion one sees or hears something and is pleased, while on another occasion the same thing causes displeasure. And in the case that two people encounter the same object and both like it, this may lead to mutual aversion, since they both desire the same thing. These situations can cause conflict within an individual and animosity between people. They are the source of all sorts of trouble and affliction.

Sense pleasure or material happiness is thus the opposite to internal, non-material happiness, which is available on any occasion. This latter

<sup>50</sup>Continuity (*santati*) conceals the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*), movement (*iriyāpatha*) conceals the characteristic of *dukkha* ('suffering', 'pressure'), and solidity (*ghana*) conceals the characteristic of nonself (*anattā*): Vism. 640.

<sup>51</sup>There was once a debate over which of the five cords of sensuality is the best; the Buddha replied that it depends on one's likes and preferences (S. I. 79-80).

happiness is invariably a boon; it bestows a sense of wellbeing and contentment to the person experiencing it and it is beneficial to everyone who is involved. The greater the number of people who experience it the better. Each individual enhances the happiness of others, because there is nothing to vie for. It therefore leads to peace and to the end of problems.

**F.** Sense pleasure is the result of the gratification of craving (*taṇhā*). If craving arises but is left unsatisfied and unappeased, problems arise immediately. These problems, or this state of dissatisfaction, is referred to as ‘suffering’ (*dukkha*). Suffering leaves harmful effects in its wake. These harmful effects either get locked up within an individual or the person vents them outwards, or both.

The harmful effects locked up inside refer to anxiety, despair, and other forms of mental distress. They can be collectively referred to as mental derangement or even as madness.

The harmful effects seeking an expression outwards may be given vent in a mild way, say by seeking out different forms of guidance and help. One may seek out guidance in ways that accord with wisdom and virtue, or one may seek help from sacred objects and supernatural powers. Some people try to cover over their suffering by indulging in coarse or increasingly passionate forms of sense pleasure. The harmful effects can also be expressed in violent ways, say by causing conflict and persecuting others or by causing destruction to one’s environment. Alternatively, one may breed self-hatred and undergo severe austerities or cause injury to oneself.

The following words by the Buddha are relevant here:

And what, monks, is the source and origin of suffering? Craving is its source and origin (*nidāna-sambhava*).

And what is the result of suffering?.... Suffering, I say, results either in mental derangement or in an outward search for relief. {1056}

A. III. 415-6.

The search for happiness through the gratification of craving causes problems at all stages, not only when one is denied gratification. Problems may also arise during the search for pleasing objects and after one has acquired such objects. While searching for objects one may injure or exploit others, causing them suffering and affliction. And after one has acquired the desired objects, one may become infatuated by them, increasing one's thirst and craving, thus causing additional problems. For this reason conscientious unawakened people must use discernment and apply virtuous qualities to guide their behaviour, in order to mitigate the hazards of craving.

One very useful method for safely enjoying sense pleasures is for people to have some access to non-material happiness, which acts as an escape (*nissaraṇa*). This escape is very effective for refining one's behaviour generated by craving, or it helps to keep this behaviour within wholesome boundaries. Happiness independent of material things stands in direct contrast to craving; it manifests when one is released from craving and it exists without relying on craving. Anyone who dwells in this kind of happiness is immediately freed from the perils of craving.

Because sense pleasure is flawed, can cause a great deal of harm, and is both cherished by and compelling for people, it need not be promoted. Therefore, the Buddha did not support the pursuit of sense pleasure and he discouraged people from setting it as the goal of life.

In Buddhism, the essential aim of performing wholesome deeds or making merit – whether this be through generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*sīla*), or cultivating the mind (*bhāvanā*) – is not to receive a reward in the form of sense pleasure, say of wealth, fame, respect, an entourage of followers, or rebirth in a heavenly realm. The true purpose of wholesome actions is to support spiritual development and to access true, lasting happiness, which leads to a reduction of mental defilement, a disengagement from evil, and an elimination of craving – the source of suffering. The person engaging in good actions thus experiences deeper, more refined forms of happiness – up to the happiness of Nibbāna – which bring peace and wellbeing to the individual and to society:

Not for happiness tarnished by defilement, not for future birth, does a sage give gifts. Indeed, a sage gives gifts for the end of defilement, for the absence of future birth.

Not for happiness tarnished by defilement, not for future birth, does a sage develop the jhānas. Indeed, a sage develops the jhānas for the end of defilement, for the absence of future birth.

Aiming for the state of peace (i.e. Nibbāna), inclining in this direction, devoted to this state, a sage gifts gifts. Sages set Nibbāna as the goal, just as rivers head for the heart of the ocean. {1057}

*Nd. I. 424-5.*

#### 11.4 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HAPPINESS

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha examined the advantages and disadvantages of all things. In the case that something still possesses both advantages and disadvantages, he would then describe how one may pass beyond them, that is, he would explain how further development is possible.

Looking at things in this way enables a continual development. When one reaches a particular point, one acknowledges both its advantages (*assāda*) and disadvantages (*ādīnava*). One then looks for the way out (*nissaraṇa*) leading to the next stage and one develops the necessary conditions to move on. In whatever work or activity one is engaged, the examination of these three factors leads to ongoing development. One does not get lost in thinking that one has reached completion; one does not stop making effort and become passive, negligent, and heedless, which results in missed opportunities.

Let us now look at the advantages and disadvantages of happiness. Rather than go into a detailed analysis of the many different kinds and stages of happiness, here the discussion will focus on some primary features of happiness that are related to other spiritual qualities and that pertain to people's everyday life.

One such spiritual quality, which is relevant to everyone and is connected to meditation, to spiritual practice, and to every aspect of learning, is concentration (*samādhī*). Happiness is expressly valuable to concentration. The Pali Canon states: *sukhapadaṭṭhāno samādhī*: happiness is a basis and criterion for concentration; it is a proximate cause for concentration.

The literal meaning of *sukha* ('happiness') is 'convenient' or 'easy'. One is free from pressure, obstruction, affliction, struggle, agitation, and anxiety. In other words, one is peaceful; happiness leads to peace. When the mind is peaceful, concentration arises easily. A happy and tranquil mind is prepared for concentration.

Happiness is a characteristic of a high quality of life. Arahants, for example, when they are not engaged in a specific activity, dwell in the state of mind referred to as 'abiding at ease in the present' (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*), which is most often a state of *jhāna*.

There are many disadvantages of happiness. In particular, happiness may lead to carelessness, infatuation, obsession, indulgence, procrastination, indifference, or laziness. {1127} Concentration, which is based on happiness, has similar disadvantages. In Pali, concentration is sometimes referred to as belonging to the 'same faction as laziness' (*kosajja-pakkha*).

At the same time, however, concentration belongs to the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*): concentration is directly associated with awakening; it lies 'alongside' awakening. Awakening is dependent on concentration.

Here, simply note that concentration is a factor of enlightenment, but that it is also associated with laziness. When one examines spiritual qualities, do not only look at their advantages; also acknowledge their disadvantages. Be careful – if one develops concentration incorrectly, one will give rise to laziness.

The Buddha in this case encouraged the application of mindfulness, for inspection and caution. When one attains concentration, one asks: 'Has this concentration deviated towards idleness and inertia? Has it become an impediment?' The heedless indulgence in the pleasure of

concentration is harmful. One must be careful and know how to apply concentration. Do not fall into heedlessness.

When people experience happiness, especially sense pleasure, it is very likely that they will become carried away, infatuated, and enchanted by it, resulting in heedlessness. When experiencing happiness, they lose a sense of urgency and do not wish to do anything else. Although there remain things to be done, they become negligent, indifferent, and indolent, resulting in a weak character.

For this reason, those people who have experienced happiness and yet remain unmindful, who are indulgent, apathetic, and heedless, become weak and corrupted. They may even meet with calamity and ruin. Many individuals, communities, nations, and even civilizations throughout history have fallen into this cycle of decline.

When looking at these disadvantages, it may appear that happiness is of very low value. But happiness is simply happiness; it is the corrupted and defiled human beings themselves who deal with happiness incorrectly and thus end up experiencing harmful effects.

Here, we must return to the subject of sense pleasure, which has a bearing on almost everyone's life. Although we have discussed sense pleasure already, here we will focus on it directly in relation to spiritual practice.

The dangers or disadvantages of sense pleasure – of happiness dependent on material things and serving personal gratification – are extensive, and people thus require the supervision or protection by way of the five precepts. This points to a basic drawback or weakness of sense pleasure: it is a cause for competition and exploitation among human beings.

The things providing gratification are external, and they are insufficient in number to fulfil the desires of everyone. Because each person desires things for himself, and wishes to obtain the maximum amount of these things, they see each other as adversaries. People thus conflict and compete with one another. This is followed by deception, dishonesty, and deceit, a search for followers and a pursuit of power, and various forms of persecution and abuse.

The pursuit of sense pleasure is the source of conflict and oppression between people and between nations. It is the source of war, leading to all kinds of suffering and affliction. People then search without end for a solution: their voices call for peace, but their hands brandish swords. This is the first danger of sense pleasure. {1128}

Social oppression, which spreads suffering outwards, has its root in the mind, i.e. an insatiable desire, which is a common characteristic of craving (*taṇhā*). Moreover, this insatiability, which conforms to a voracious hunger for things and an inability to feel one has enough, creates suffering within an individual.

The more people get, the more they want. A specific degree or amount of things that once provided happiness is eventually no longer satisfactory. The feeling of joy and excitement is replaced by indifference, apathy, and a sense of ennui. Once boredom sets in, those things that at one time seemed indispensable now must simply be endured. Those things that once provided happiness are now a cause for suffering. The nature of desire has changed; now one may wish for the object to go away, to disappear. This is one form of affliction.

At one time one may have been penniless. If one obtains \$30 one is over the moon, and when one earns a wage of \$30 a day one is exceedingly happy. Eventually one wishes to earn \$3000 a day. One imagines that with such a wage all of one's desires will be fulfilled and one will experience delight. Indeed, if it happens that one earns such a wage, at first one is blissful and content.

A closer look at this dynamic reveals the gradual expansion of craving in two ways:

First, when one obtains a regular wage of \$3000 per day, if one day one only obtains \$30, an amount that had at one time provided a great sense of joy, one is unhappy. The same thing that once provided happiness now causes suffering.

Second, although one may have been convinced that by earning a wage of \$3000 per day one wouldn't wish for anything more, eventually one feels apathy and boredom. One then thinks that one needs to earn a



wage of \$30,000 per day in order to feel satisfied. This target will increase without end.

The Buddha stated that even if one were to turn a mountain into gold, it would still not gratify the desire of one individual, because this desire is insatiable, as mentioned above. The Buddha emphasized this subject repeatedly, so that his disciples would recognize that human desire is limitless; craving is endless. This desire creates oppression and affliction in society, and it also creates layers of suffering within an individual. One aspect to this suffering is the feeling of boredom and apathy.

### 11.5 NATURE PROVIDES HAPPINESS

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Let us examine some of the different kinds of happiness. So far the discussion has covered the happiness derived from sense enjoyment, from contact with desirable sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects. This is a matter connected with the gratification of craving (*taṇhā*), with sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*), and with material happiness (*sāmisa-sukha*). We also discussed wholesome desire (*chanda*), which is associated with spiritual development, and leads to study, creativity, understanding, and an increase in happiness.

In terms of wholesome desire, it was mentioned earlier how a person experiences happiness both while engaged in work and while engaged in learning. There are more aspects, however, to this discussion of happiness derived from wholesome desire.

This increased happiness includes happiness on a social level: the joy of friendship; the joy of living with others with a heart of kindness and compassion; and the joy in families and communities of living together with mutual goodwill, care, and love, of rejoicing in harmony, and of being united in the virtues conducive to communal life (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*).<sup>52</sup>  
{1094}

<sup>52</sup>Also spelled: *sārāṇīya-dhammā* (see the section below: ‘Sharing of Material Gains within the Monastic Community’.)

There is also the happiness related to nature: the joy of living in nature; the contact with the peace and beauty of nature, including the trees, the wind, mountains, bodies of water, and the sky; the delight one experiences in flowering plants and in the sounds of the wilderness, for instance the calls of birds, the cries of wild animals, and the rumble of thundering skies.

Both the happiness in relation to society and the happiness in relation to nature are emphasized and praised in Buddhism. They are sometimes combined in a single teaching, of living together with kindness and in harmony even while residing in the forest, as is documented in the Gosiṅgasāla Sutta:

The Buddha went to visit three monks in the Gosiṅgasāla wood. He asked them:

How, Anuruddha, do you live in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes?

*M. I. 206.*

In that same wood, on another occasion, Ven. Sāriputta asked the following question from other great disciples:

The Gosiṅga Sāla-tree Wood is delightful, the night is clear and bright, the sāla trees are all in blossom, giving forth fragrant scents in all directions, similar to the scents of heaven. What kind of bhikkhu, friend ... could grace the Gosiṅga Sāla-tree Wood?

*M. I. 212-13.*

There are numerous poetic verses in the Tipiṭaka eulogizing nature. Take for example the following verses from the Mahāvessantara Jātaka:

Near those lotus ponds, flocks of cuckoos drunk on fruit call out captivating, melodious cries, filling the forest with reverberating sound. When the bushes bloom in season, a sweetness like honey drips from the blossoms, resting on the lotus leaves....

The breeze wafts myriad fragrances, drifting through the forest, as if inviting visitors to find delight in the perfumed flowers and branches. Swarms of bumblebees relish the scent of the blossoms, their buzzing echoing throughout.

*J. VI. 530.*

When Ven. Kāḷudāyī invited the Buddha to travel to Kapilavatthu in order to visit his father, he spoke approximately sixty verses praising the beauty of nature found in the regions along the path to be travelled. In the end, the Buddha accepted the invitation.

Here are two of these verses:

Fanned by breezes, the champaka trees, orchids, and laurel send out their fragrance. The crown of the trees, filled with blossoms, send down their colourful branches, as if thoughtfully extending their arms and paying respects with their scent. Venerable sir, the Victorious One, now is the right time to go.

Splendid parakeets and magpies, with sweet-sounding voices, fly and throng among the treetops, twittering and calling out on both sides of the path. Now is the time for the Lord to see his father.  
{1095}

*ApA. 532-7.*

In sum, the Buddha and the arahants, whose hearts are purified, find delight in the peace and beauty of nature, and abide happily in natural surroundings. Trainees (*sekha*) and unawakened persons find in nature a tranquil and refreshing environment, conducive to meditation and the development of wisdom.

In reference to the development of ethics, one can see here how virtue is developed along with happiness, how happiness is an important part of developing one's life, and how people are able to generate happiness within themselves. Wholesome desire is the catalyst behind this development, and an education or training based on such desire automatically helps to cultivate a strong ethical foundation.

Finally, there is the supreme happiness – the happiness of wisdom – which belongs to the stage of independent happiness.

Wisdom is a liberating factor. If one faces a stumbling block or obstruction, and one doesn't know how to respond, the situation is immediately clarified and resolved with the dawn of wisdom. When faced with confusion, not knowing which way to turn and where safety lies, the heart feels oppressed and stifled. But with the arising of wise understanding, the sense of oppression and affliction disappears. When encountering a problem and no solution is apparent, one may suffer greatly, but when wisdom provides an answer one is freed from suffering. Wisdom gradually provides freedom on many levels of one's life. When one is able to untangle the nexus of suffering, one reaches final and complete liberation, which is also perfect happiness.

## 11.6 HIGHER FORMS OF HAPPINESS

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### A. TIMELESS HAPPINESS

As mentioned earlier, a definition for happiness is the fulfilment of desire, yet this definition is not comprehensive. Technically speaking, this definition covers only mundane (*lokiya*) reality. A supreme, transcendent (*lokut-tara*) form of happiness also exists. To some, this explanation may appear abstruse. To clarify this matter it is useful to illustrate the different levels of happiness. Earlier, happiness was divided according to two distinct kinds of desire, but here it necessary to introduce the concept of 'non-desire'.

This new classification results in two main levels of happiness, and three sublevels: {1098}

#### 1. Happiness as the fulfilment of desire:

- A. Happiness as the gratification of craving – *taṇhā* (the fulfilment of unwholesome desire).
- B. Happiness as the fulfilment of wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*).

2. Happiness independent of the fulfilment of desire (= (C) ever-present happiness).

The second main kind of happiness is independent of both the fulfilment of craving and the fulfilment of wholesome desire. It is independent, unconstrained, and free because it is an internal attribute, it exists inherent in people's hearts, and it is ever-present. It is not dependent on obtaining or doing anything.

If one needs to satisfy the needs of some form of desire in order to experience happiness, this indicates that the happiness is not yet present. One must then wait for fulfilment, by pursuing or creating something. An independent kind of happiness, however, already exists within a person; therefore, it is free from the gratification of desire. It needs neither to be pursued nor to be created.

Here someone may ask the question: 'Are those people endowed with such happiness free from all desire: free from both craving and from wholesome desire?' Indeed, such people are fully endowed with wholesome desire. Yet their happiness does not rely on the fulfilment or gratification of this wholesome desire. Although they are replete in wholesome desire, their happiness is independent of all forms of desire; they are fully accomplished in the cultivation of happiness.

To reach this accomplishment, one is first brimful of wholesome desire, and then one transcends even this desire. Take for example the Buddha, who, as described in one particular passage, was endowed with eighteen attributes (*buddha-dhamma*). The relevant attribute here is that he possessed 'unremitting wholesome enthusiasm' (*natthi chandassa hāni*).

We see here the magnitude of the Buddha's commitment to perform beneficent deeds, which was prompted by his wholesome enthusiasm in the form of compassion. The Buddha worked tirelessly after his awakening, for the remaining forty-five years of his life. He worked day and night, undergoing many hardships, for the wellbeing of all human beings.

The Buddha and the arahants are filled with wholesome desire, but their happiness is independent of fulfilling this desire. Their normal, constant state is one of happiness.

Another way of describing the three levels of happiness is as follows:  
{1099}

1. Happiness requiring a pursuit (happiness gratifying craving).
2. Happiness created by oneself (happiness fulfilling wholesome desire).
3. Inherent, ever-present happiness (happiness independent of fulfilling desire).

The first kind of happiness requires a pursuit, because those objects of enjoyment that satisfy craving are external, material things. They must be sought after and consumed; one must seize these external things and have them make contact with one's senses.

The second kind of happiness is self-generated, because, in order to fulfil the desire to learn, the desire to know, the desire to study, the desire to perform a wholesome deed, the appreciation of nature, etc., one relies on one's own dedication and commitment. This happiness can be created without relying on external things.

The third kind of happiness is ever-present, for when happiness exists as an internal attribute – as an ordinary and natural state of mind – then it is constantly present. One need not seek or do anything to obtain such happiness.

One may wonder how to become a person who is able to enjoy all three kinds of happiness: the pleasure of seeking sense objects, self-generated happiness, and abiding, ever-present happiness. Wouldn't such a person be proficient? Indeed, stream-enterers are those individuals able to enjoy these three kinds of happiness.

It turns out that those persons who are truly accomplished in all three levels of happiness, i.e. the arahants, are fully satisfied by independent, unconstrained happiness. Although, if they wanted to, they could enjoy all three kinds of happiness, they are no longer interested in the first kind of happiness dependent on material objects. This will be discussed at more length below.

## B. IDEAL HAPPINESS

Happiness can be grouped or classified in many different ways. Let us examine the Buddha's classification of happiness into thirteen pairs.<sup>53</sup>

Here are some simple examples from this classification:

- Physical happiness (*kāyika-sukha*) and mental happiness (*cetasika-sukha*).
- Material happiness (*sāmisa-sukha*; happiness dependent on material things) and independent happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*; happiness independent of material things).
- Householders' happiness (*gihi-sukha*) and the happiness of renunciants (*pabbajita-sukha*).
- Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*; happiness derived from desirable and alluring sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles; happiness from acquisition and consumption) and happiness secluded from sensuality (*nekkhamma-sukha*; happiness free from sensuality, free from sensual allurements and enticements; the happiness of renunciation; happiness not tied up with acquisition.) {1102}

The Buddha gave this teaching to distinguish between the many different kinds of happiness. Moreover, through a familiarity with this teaching one understands the relationship between different kinds of happiness.

On a related subject, knowledge of the various kinds of happiness enables one to outline the ideal forms of happiness. Here, a recognition that happiness is the goal of spiritual training is connected to the teaching on the different planes of existence (or different states of mind), which a person can reach through spiritual cultivation.

The universe is traditionally divided into three planes of existence (*tebhūmaka*): the realm of sensuality (*kāma-bhūmi*, where beings are still tied up in sense pleasure), the realm of fine-material form (*rūpa-bhūmi*; the

<sup>53</sup>Occasionally this classification is into ten pairs.

plane of fine-material Brahmas – *rūpa-brahma*), and the immaterial realm (*arūpa-bhūmi*; the plane of immaterial Brahmas – *arūpa-brahma*). Another plane – the transcendent plane (*lokuttara-bhūmi*) – exists surpassing the threefold plane of existence.

In relation to the threefold plane of existence, the term *bhūmi* refers to a specific ‘world’ (*loka*) or sphere of existence occupied by beings native to that plane or realm. Alternatively, it refers to the particular state of mind developed by beings to reach such a plane.

This second definition, referring to one’s state of mind, can also be applied in relation to the transcendent plane. What this means is that a percentage of beings dwelling in a specific plane of existence, in particular some human beings in this world, may have developed various states of mind, and in effect have reached various planes, including the transcendent plane.

These planes (*bhūmi*) can be grouped as follows:

1. Sensual plane (*kāma-bhūmi*).
2. Fine-material form plane (*rūpa-bhūmi*) and the immaterial plane (*arūpa-bhūmi*); these constitute the realm of the Brahma gods.
3. Transcendent plane (*lokuttara-bhūmi*).

In relation to happiness, these three planes can be described thus:

1. Sensual plane, endowed with sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*): the ideal is to be a divine being (*deva*) or to be born in heaven (*sagga*); here, one has developed oneself and reached the supreme kind of sense pleasure. Although one is still endowed with the suffering (*dukkha*) of unawakened beings, one is free from oppression and punishment.
2. Brahma plane, endowed with the happiness of *jhāna* (*jhāna-sukha*): here, the ideal is to be born as a Brahma god.
3. Transcendent plane, endowed with the happiness of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-sukha*): here, the ideal is the fruit of arahantship.



Buddhism is a system of training for the spiritual development of human beings. It follows the principle that every individual should continually cultivate him- or herself and reach more refined forms of happiness. Moreover, at any one time different people exist at different stages of development. For this reason, the world should be a conducive place for each individual to make progress, according to which stage he or she is at.

Setting happiness to be the goal of spiritual training, human beings should develop themselves in the three planes mentioned above, in order to reach successively more refined levels of happiness.

Through moral training one develops physical actions in order to create a beneficial relationship to one's environment, and one cultivates morality in order to support others and to live together happily. In short, by developing generosity and virtuous conduct one attains the delights of heaven. {1103}

Through mental training, while abiding in such a conducive environment, one develops the mind in virtuous qualities, in particular the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*). Established in concentration, one's mind is steady, poised, and happy. One develops happiness of mind until one reaches the happiness of *jhāna*.

Through wisdom training, by relying on the accomplishments of mind development, one cultivates wisdom and insight. One sees things clearly according to the truth; one discerns conditionality; one knows how to successfully reach the goal; one is able to solve problems and dispel suffering; and one frees the mind and reaches the happiness of *Nibbāna*.

Heavenly beings amuse themselves with sensual objects and activities. Brahma gods are satisfied by a refined happiness of mind, including the happiness of *jhāna*. Arahants, having transcended the bonds of sense pleasure, fully realize the happiness of *Nibbāna*. Stream-enterers access the happiness of all three planes – of sense pleasure, happiness of the higher mind (*adhicitta-sukha*), and transcendent happiness (*lokuttara-sukha*) – having not yet abandoned any of these.

### C. SUPREME HAPPINESS OF THE BUDDHA

The Buddha asserted that he had realized a happiness surpassing the happiness of a great monarch, whose happiness is considered by most ordinary people as being supreme.

On one occasion the Buddha met with members of the Nigaṇṭhā order who were practising various forms of asceticism and self-mortification, and he spoke with them about the religious practices they undertook for reaching their desired goal.

The Nigaṇṭhā followers practised severe austerities because they believed that happiness cannot be achieved by way of happiness; it can only be achieved by way of pain. In order to support this belief they compared King Bimbisāra with the Buddha, saying that if one were able to achieve (supreme) happiness – the highest goal of religious practice – by way of pleasure, then King Bimbisāra would surely have attained this achievement, since his happiness and comfort exceeds that of the Buddha.

The Nigaṇṭhā said this because they held the common belief that, since King Bimbisāra possesses lavish wealth and great power, his ease and comfort must be greater than the Buddha's, who had relinquished his worldly possessions, wandered about in remote mountains and forests, and observed various religious practices; surely the Buddha suffered similar pain and difficulty as the Nigaṇṭhā themselves.

The Buddha, however, rejected their claim and proved their premise false by saying that King Bimbisāra does not have more happiness than the Buddha. On the contrary, the Buddha experiences greater happiness than the king. {1034}

From the perspective of ordinary people it was difficult to judge whether the Buddha had more happiness than King Bimbisāra, because most people, including the Nigaṇṭhā in this story, take as a measurement abundance at the external level, for example the amount of one's wealth, power, prestige, personal retinue, etc., all of which the Buddha had relinquished. In fact, it is impossible to use such external things as a gauge for someone's true, internal happiness, and therefore the Buddha did not submit these things as proof.

Indeed, measuring a person's internal happiness, which is invisible, is difficult to do. The Buddha thus used other criteria, which are clearly discernible to others, as a decisive way to determine a person's internal happiness. He did this by asking whether King Bimbisāra would be able to sit still for seven days – or even one day – without moving or speaking and experience uninterrupted happiness. The answer was 'no'. The Buddha went on to say that he himself is able to sit still and experience such uninterrupted happiness for two, three, even seven days. The Nigaṇṭhā thus conceded that the Buddha has more happiness than King Bimbisāra.<sup>54</sup>

The Buddha compared the pleasure derived from the five sense objects to a fire made from straw and twigs. Although it is bright, it is not resplendent because it is clouded by smoke. The happiness and bliss independent of material sense objects and free from unwholesome states, on the other hand, is like a fire burning without using grass and twigs as fuel. Its light is pure and brilliant, devoid of any stain.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup>M. I. 93-4.

<sup>55</sup>M. II. 203-204. In this sutta a fire not created from straw or wood (i.e. a fire without any smoke) is hypothetical; it could not be created at that time in history unless someone did so by way of psychic powers. These days, however, there are modern scientific achievements enabling such a fire.

## 11.7 PATH TO SUPREME HAPPINESS

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### A. DEVELOPING MORE REFINED FORMS OF HAPPINESS

Before describing more refined forms of happiness, it is helpful here to describe a basic form of happiness (*sukha*) and suffering (*dukkha*), that has a bearing on all other forms of happiness. The following definition was given by Ven. Sāriputta after he was asked by a wandering ascetic the following question:

‘Friend Sāriputta, what is happiness in this Dhamma and Discipline, and what is suffering?’

‘Dissatisfaction, friend, is suffering in this Dhamma and Discipline. Satisfaction is happiness.

‘When there is dissatisfaction (*anabhirati*), friend, this suffering is to be expected: when walking, one does not find happiness or contentment, when standing still ... when sitting ... when lying down ... when in a village ... when in the forest ... when at the foot of a tree ... when in an empty hut ... when in the open air ... when among a group of monks, one does not find happiness or contentment. When there is dissatisfaction, this suffering is to be expected.

‘[But] when there is satisfaction (*abhirati*), this happiness is to be expected: when walking, one finds happiness and contentment, when standing still ... when sitting ... when lying down ... when in a village ... when in the forest ... when at the foot of a tree ... when in an empty hut ... when in the open air ... when among a group of monks, one finds happiness and contentment. When there is satisfaction, this happiness is to be expected.’

A. V. 121-2.

Following is a list of analogies for the happiness inherent in the various stages of meditative absorption (*jhāna*). The last step before the attainment of *jhāna* is the abandonment of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*):

sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). When one abandons the five hindrances one experiences peace and contentment, which is the basis for experiencing the happiness of *jhāna*. There are five similes for this initial peace and contentment:

1. Similar to the joy and delight of a person who has borrowed money from a creditor, achieved success in his work, and paid off his debts, with money to spare for supporting his family.
2. Similar to the joy and delight of a person who has recovered from a serious illness, and regains his appetite and physical strength.
3. Similar to the joy and delight of a person who has been released from imprisonment, is able to travel about freely, and does not incur a fine.
4. Similar to the joy and delight of a person who has been emancipated from slavery, gains freedom and independence, and is able to move about as he pleases.
5. Similar to the joy and delight of a wealthy person who has carried his wealth across a long, dangerous, and remote area and arrived safely at his destination.

From here one experiences the increasingly refined forms of happiness inherent in the four (fine-material) *jhānas*:

In the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied attention (*vitakka*), sustained attention (*vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), a practitioner's body is permeated and suffused with bliss and joy; no part of the body is left untouched by this bliss and joy. This is similar to someone who in the morning sprinkles water on bath powder contained in a bronze basin. By evening the moisture has pervaded it inside and out so that none of the powder is dispersed. {1047}

In the second *jhāna*, which is accompanied by bliss, joy, and one-pointedness, a practitioner's body is thoroughly permeated and suffused with the bliss and happiness born of concentration. This is similar to a

deep lake whose waters spring entirely from below, with no other inflow including rainfall from above. The cool fount of water welling up would drench, steep, and pervade every part of the lake.

In the third *jhāna*, which is accompanied by joy and one-pointedness, a practitioner's body is thoroughly permeated and suffused with joy divested of bliss. This is similar to a lotus plant growing in the water, immersed in water, and nourished by water. The cool water drenches, steeps, and pervades every part of the plant, from its tip to its roots.

In the fourth *jhāna*, which is accompanied by equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness, a practitioner pervades the entire body with a pure bright mind. This is similar to a person who is completely covered from the head down with an immaculate white cloth.<sup>56</sup>

Following on from the happiness of the four fine-material *jhānas* is the happiness of the four formless *jhānas*, which similarly becomes increasingly more refined.

Although the happiness of *jhāna* is superior and more profound than sense pleasure, it has defects and flaws; it is not yet perfect happiness.

The Buddha stated that in the noble discipline (*ariya-vinaya*) the five strands of sensual pleasure (*kāma-guṇa*) are called the 'world' (*loka*); in other words, the 'world' is equivalent to the five sense pleasures. One who is attached to sense pleasure is still bound up in the world. One who has attained fine-material *jhāna* or formless *jhāna*, is described as one who has reached and dwells in the zenith or limit of the world. He or she is still connected to the world, however, and has not yet escaped or transcended it.

A person who passes beyond the last formless *jhāna*, who attains the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*), and is free from the mental taints through discerning the truth with wisdom, is

<sup>56</sup>D. I. 71-6, 207; M. I. 275; M. II. 15; M. III. 92-3; A. III. 25.

described as one who has reached the end of the world and has transcended the bonds that bind beings to the world.<sup>57</sup>

The ultimate and complete form of happiness belongs to someone whose mind is liberated – the happiness of one who has realized Nibbāna. This happiness includes the happiness associated with the cessation of perception and feeling, which is the tenth kind of happiness mentioned in the list above (see the earlier section on diverse grades of happiness).

The most notable defects of the happiness of jhāna are the following:

- The happiness of jhāna is still not completely free; it is still restricted and constrained by perception and other mental factors present in jhāna.<sup>58</sup>
- In a specific state of jhāna, it is still possible for mental application connected to perceptions of inferior states of jhāna to well up in the mind; the happiness of jhāna is thus still prone to disturbance or agitation.<sup>59</sup>
- Although the happiness of jhāna is a form of non-material happiness, it is still subject to attachment and it may give rise to grasping (*upādāna*). It can be an impediment for realizing Nibbāna and perfect happiness.<sup>60</sup>
- It is inadequate; it must be transcended or abandoned.<sup>61</sup>
- It is a conditioned phenomenon; it is fashioned by other mental causes and conditions; it is unstable, its very nature is subject to decline and cessation.<sup>62</sup> {1048}

<sup>57</sup>See: A. IV. 430. ‘The bonds that bind one to the world’ is a translation of *visattikā*, which is usually equated with *taṇhā* (‘craving’); it is sometimes translated as the ‘shackle of craving’.

<sup>58</sup>It contains *sambādha* (‘limitation’, ‘confinement’); see: A. IV. 449-50.

<sup>59</sup>It contains *ābādha* (‘affliction’); see: A. IV. 439-40.

<sup>60</sup>See: M. II. 237, 265.

<sup>61</sup>See: M. I. 455-6; M. II. 255-6.

<sup>62</sup>See: M. I. 352; A. V. 343.

Another important attribute of the happiness of jhāna is that it exists on the level of feeling or sensation (*vedanā*). It arises as a result of cognizing sense objects or of experiencing the pleasure of sense objects.<sup>63</sup> From this perspective, the happiness of jhāna shares some attributes with sense pleasure, i.e. it is a form of pleasurable sensation (*sukha-vedanā*). For this reason, the first nine forms of happiness can all be classified as happiness dependent on the cognition of sense objects.

## B. HAPPINESS BEYOND SENSATION

The distinctive form of happiness is the tenth and final form, which, although it is classified as happiness (*sukha*), is not a sensation (*vedanā*) nor does it require the enjoyment of sense objects. It can thus be called ‘happiness beyond sensation’. It refers to the happiness associated with the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*), a concentrative state in which, as the name implies, is free of feeling or sensation.

Some people may question how it can be a form of happiness if there is no sensation, because *sukha* is technically one form of *vedanā*. But as confirmed by these words of the Buddha, there is a happiness that is not a sensation:

Here, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a monk enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling. This is that other kind of happiness more excellent and sublime than the previous kind of happiness [of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception].

Now it is possible that wanderers of other sects might speak thus: ‘The ascetic Gotama speaks of the cessation of perception and feeling, and he maintains that it is included in happiness. What is that? How is that?’ When wanderers of other sects speak thus, they should be told: ‘The Blessed One, friends, does not describe a state as included in happiness only with reference to pleasant feeling.

<sup>63</sup>Sensations (*vedanā*) in jhāna are free from stress and are thus considered to be the most positive or favourable forms of sensation (M. I. 89-90).



But rather, friends, wherever happiness is found and in whatever way, the Tathāgata describes that state as included in happiness.’

*M. I. 400; S. IV. 228; cf.: MA. III. 115; SA. III. 80.*

The cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) is comparable to Nibbāna, and the happiness independent of the enjoyment of sense objects – or happiness free from sensation – in this state is similar to the happiness of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-sukha*).<sup>64</sup>

Ven. Sāriputta explains this matter in the Nibbāna Sutta, beginning with the statement: *Friends, this Nibbāna is happiness, this Nibbāna is happiness*.<sup>65</sup> Ven. Udāyī asks him how it is possible to have happiness in a state devoid of an enjoyment of sense objects. Sāriputta replies that Nibbāna, in which there is no enjoyment of sense objects (i.e. there is no sensation – *vedanā*), is itself happiness. He then goes on to explain in an indirect way by using the various states of concentrative attainment as a comparison. Here he does not simply compare Nibbāna to the cessation of perception and feeling, but he describes the comparable aspects of each jhāna, beginning with the first jhāna, as a way of explaining the happiness of Nibbāna. {1049}

In each level of jhāna it is possible for ‘mental application accompanied by perception’ (*saññā-manasikāra*) associated with the directly subordinate level of jhāna to well up in the mind. For example, it is possible that for someone who has attained the third jhāna, which is divested of bliss and endowed solely with joy and one-pointedness, to have perceptions of bliss well up.

This mental application accompanied by perception is considered a disturbance and affliction for the person dwelling in jhāna. (The Pali term used here for disturbance and affliction is *ābādha*, which often denotes ‘sickness’ or ‘illness’.) It is precisely this disturbance, affliction, and lack of ease that is referred to as ‘suffering’ (*dukkha*). This is similar to someone

<sup>64</sup>See: Vism. 705; VismṬ.: Paññābhāvanānisaṃsaniddesaṇṇanā, Nirodhasamāpattikathāṇṇanā; see also the Burmese edition of the sub-commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya: [2/184].

<sup>65</sup>A. IV. 415.

who abides happily; the transition from happiness to unhappiness occurs as a result of some form of disturbance or agitation.

Someone who is not disturbed by mental application accompanied by perception is thus fully absorbed in that state of *jhāna*. Therefore, even without considering the aspect of sensation, the ordinary, inherent condition of *jhāna* is recognized as ‘happiness’ (*sukha*). In other words, the inherent happiness of *jhāna* is discernible when one applies the conditions of disturbance and agitation for comparison.

The spaciousness and ease inherent in each level of *jhāna*, when there is no disturbance by mental application accompanied by perception, is an effective comparison for explaining the happiness of *Nibbāna*. The happiness of *Nibbāna* can thus be described as a state of freedom and fulfilment, in which there is no disturbance or stress.

Ven. Sāriputta here uses a method of explaining happiness by comparing it to suffering. A natural state of completeness, free from stress or agitation, is itself happiness.

Arriving at a freedom from suffering can be described in two ways. First, one may be oppressed and afflicted by something, or there is a sense of impairment and deficiency. To rectify this situation one must escape from the source of oppression or bring an original state of fulfilment back to completion. Second, one may be provoked, inflamed, aroused or stimulated. Similar to a sense of impairment and deficiency, here too one must try and return to an original state of fulfilment.

Ordinary people may refer to this gratification of desire, by rectifying an abnormal or dissonant situation, as a pursuit of happiness or a reaping of happiness. In reality, however, what has occurred is that *dukkha* (‘suffering’, ‘stress’) has arisen, and one has alleviated or stilled this *dukkha* and returned to a normal state of completeness.

This explanation is consistent with the definition of *Nibbāna* as a state free from illness, a state of perfect mental health. The Buddha said that one may not recognize good health – physical strength and wellbeing, and an ability to move about unrestricted – as happiness, because in that moment one is not necessarily enjoying any sense impressions. But when

one compares such health to illness and affliction, one appreciates the paramount importance of good health. In other words, when stricken by disease one clearly sees how good health, or a freedom from illness, is a sublime form of happiness.

Just as an absence of physical illness – a state of complete physical health and freedom from affliction – is genuine happiness, so too, a mind free from blemish, from latent anxiety, and from attachment to sense objects exists in a state of true happiness. It is spacious and expansive; having realized this happiness, one dwells with a ‘boundless mind’.<sup>66</sup>

The happiness, delight, clarity, and spaciousness of a liberated mind is the exclusive and exceptional province of awakened beings. It is difficult for unawakened beings, who have never shared this experience, to fathom or conceive of it. But they can at least have an intuition that it is something truly excellent and noble. {1050}

### C. PERFECT HAPPINESS

From the perspective of truth (*sabhāva*), happiness that is still a sensation (*vedanā*), or happiness that is dependent on the enjoyment of sense objects, is in fact a form of *dukkha* (‘stress’, ‘suffering’). This is because pleasurable sensation (*sukha-vedanā*) is the same as other forms of sensation – i.e. painful and neutral sensations (*dukkha-vedanā* and *adukkhamasukha-vedanā*): they are all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra-dhammā*).<sup>67</sup> All conditioned phenomena are subject to stress (*dukkha*; this refers to ‘dukkha’ in the context of the Three Characteristics), as illustrated in this discussion between the Buddha and one of the bhikkhus:

*Bhikkhu*: Venerable sir, while I was alone in seclusion, this reflection arose in my mind thus: ‘The Blessed One has spoken about three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*),

<sup>66</sup>A ‘boundless mind’ (*vimariyādikatena cetasā*); this term occurs in many passages, e.g.: M. III. 26; S. II. 173; A. I. 260.

<sup>67</sup>‘Conditioned phenomena’ here refers to ‘compounded things’ (*saṅkhata-dhammā*), which encompasses all five aggregates (*khandha*); it does not exclusively refer to ‘volitional formations’ (*saṅkhāra*), the fourth aggregate.

neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.... But the Blessed One has also said: ‘Whatever sensing (*vedanā*) of sense objects is classified as *dukkha*.’ Now with reference to what was this said by the Blessed One?

*Buddha*: Good, good, *bhikkhu*! I have spoken about three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.... And I have also said: ‘Whatever sensing of sense objects is classified as *dukkha*.’ That [latter clause] has been stated by me with reference to the impermanence of formations. That has been stated by me with reference to formations being subject to destruction ... subject to dissolution ... subject to fading away ... subject to cessation ... subject to change.<sup>68</sup>

S. IV. 216-17.

Whenever one truly understands that the three kinds of feeling are impermanent, shaped by causes and conditions, interdependent, and of the nature to decay and cease, and one abandons craving for these feelings, to the extent where the heart is liberated, one is independent of the enjoyment of sense objects.<sup>69</sup> One experiences supreme happiness, which is beyond sensation.

Feeling (*vedanā*) relies on contact (*phassa*) – on cognition – which arises from the coming together of a sense base (*āyatana*), e.g. the eye, with a sense object (*ārammaṇa*), e.g. a visual form; as a result there is ‘seeing’, ‘hearing’, etc. Feeling is dependent on sense objects; without sense objects feeling cannot arise. For this reason, feeling (*vedanā*) can be defined as ‘experiencing sense objects’ or ‘enjoying the flavour (*rasa*) of sense stimuli’.

Therefore, happiness that is a sensation must rely, as does all sensation, on sense objects. The happiness of *jhāna* relies exclusively on ‘mind objects’ (*dhammārammaṇa*). Sense pleasure, however, relies on all kinds of

<sup>68</sup>The classification of *sukha-vedanā* (along with *dukkha-vedanā* and *adukkhamasukha-vedanā*) as *dukkha* is also discussed at: S. IV. 205; It. 47; Sn. 143-4.

<sup>69</sup>M. I. 500. *Feelings are impermanent, dukkha, and subject to change. This is the disadvantage (ādīnava) of feelings* (M. I. 90).

sense objects, in particular on the first five objects, which are ‘material’ (*āmisa*) and referred to as the five ‘strands of sense pleasure’ (*kāma-guṇa*).

Unawakened beings live their lives by searching for sensual happiness, which is tantamount to entrusting their wellbeing and happiness to external sense objects. Whenever the five objects of sensual enjoyment are abundant, they amuse themselves and are cheerful. But whenever these objects undergo fluctuation and change, or they are in shortage and unacquirable, these people become discouraged and depressed.

This is in contrast to those individuals who are familiar with more refined forms of happiness, especially the happiness independent of sensation; they do not entrust their wellbeing to sense objects. Even if these things change and disappear they still abide in happiness, as confirmed by these words by the Buddha:

Devas and humans take pleasure in forms, delight in forms, rejoice in forms ... rejoice in sounds ... rejoice in scents ... rejoice in tastes ... rejoice in tactile objects ... rejoice in mental phenomena. {1051}

With the change, fading away, and cessation of forms ... sounds ... scents ... tastes ... tactile objects ... mental phenomena, devas and humans abide in suffering.

But the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One, has understood as they really are the origin, the instability, the advantages, the dangers, and the escape in the case of forms ... sounds ... scents ... tastes ... tactile objects ... mental phenomena, and therefore he does not take pleasure in forms, delight in forms, rejoice in forms ... rejoice in mental phenomena. With the change, fading away, and cessation of forms ... sounds ... scents ... tastes ... tactile objects ... mental phenomena, the Tathāgata dwells happily.

*S. IV. 126-8; cf.: M. I. 239; M. III. 285; Sn. 148-9.*

The experience of ordinary, unawakened people is limited and confined; they are familiar only with the happiness arising from sense pleasure. When they experience a satisfying degree of pleasurable sensations, they are caught up, infatuated, and beguiled by this pleasure and by the

objects of pleasure. And when they experience painful sensations, they become downcast or agitated. They yearn for and pin their hopes on the return of sense pleasure, because they know of no other escape from painful feelings apart from sense pleasure.

Noble disciples, on the other hand, who are familiar with more refined forms of happiness, are not caught up and enslaved by sense objects when experiencing pleasurable sensations. Likewise, when experiencing painful sensations, they are not dispirited or agitated, nor do they seek out sense pleasure as an escape. This is because they know of a superior escape (*nissaraṇa*) – a freedom independent of sense pleasure. They know of a more expansive form of happiness and they have insight into the true nature of happiness and unhappiness. They know of a happiness free from sensation; they must not always rely on the enjoyment of sense objects.<sup>70</sup>

It is difficult for ordinary people to understand this happiness independent of sensation, because they have no experience of it and know of nothing comparable to it. Having said this, to get an inkling of it one can point to a basic form of happiness inherent in people's minds which is separate from the happiness derived from enjoying sense pleasures.

This basic form of happiness is both a happiness in itself and also a support for the enjoyment of sense objects. It can be described as a mental state of clarity and calm, when there is no blemish, disturbance, or lingering anxiety in the mind. It can be called an empty mind, a pure mind, or a peaceful mind. A person endowed with such a state of mind can be considered as dwelling in happiness. Moreover, when a person with such a state of mind experiences sense impressions, whether they be sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tangible objects, he or she experiences the pleasure of this contact to the full.

This can be illustrated by looking at the opposite situation. Take for example someone eating, whose mind at that time is not calm, who is sad, depressed, or beset by some other form of distress. Even if the food is delicious and of the kind that he normally enjoys, on this occasion he may not find it delicious. He may have to force himself to eat or he may not be able to swallow the food at all. If, however, his mind is cheerful, he

<sup>70</sup>See: S. IV. 205-209.

will savour the flavour of the food fully. Even if the food is not the best, he may find it delicious.

Another example is someone whose body is dirty, grimy, sweaty, or itchy. Even if she sits and listens to music she won't feel at ease, or if she tries to do some detailed work she won't be very effective. But if she takes a shower and cleans her body, she will feel at ease. She will derive the greatest amount of pleasure from sense contact and be able to complete meticulous kinds of work. {1052}

Persons endowed with such internal or basic happiness are also able to enjoy the external happiness derived from sense objects. Besides benefiting from both kinds of happiness, internal and external, their mental capabilities are also enhanced. On the contrary, those people who are deprived of this internal happiness lose out on both counts, both in terms of internal and external happiness. Moreover, their mental capabilities are also compromised.

It is possible to cultivate this basic form of happiness and to make it more pure, prominent, and profound than most people are familiar with. One can get a sense of the happiness of Nibbāna by way of this comparison. In sum, Nibbāna is both a form of happiness itself and it enhances one's ability to experience happiness.

When people relate properly to sensuality, reduce their infatuation with pleasurable sense objects, no longer entrust their happiness to these objects, and stop indulging in sense pleasure, they are prepared to experience the refined happiness of jhāna. When they have experienced the happiness of jhāna and yet still wish to enjoy sense pleasure, they do so in a way characterized as natural and gentle. Generally speaking, they won't perform unwholesome deeds for the sake of obtaining sense pleasure, because they see greater value in the happiness of jhāna. In addition, the happiness of jhāna relies on a basis of spiritual virtue.

When one experiences the happiness of jhāna, the mind becomes absorbed in the refined meditative object associated with jhāna, of which there are many levels of gradually increasing profundity. At the final stage it is as if one disappears into this state of extreme subtlety (this can be compared to what people describe as a 'mystical state'). These are

supreme meditative attainments which are difficult to reach. Someone who is able to relinquish the attachment to this extremely refined state of absorption in these meditative attainments – who has both uprooted an attachment to sense pleasure and an attachment to *jhāna* – who has indeed relinquished an attachment to all things, reaches perfect liberation: *Nibbāna*.

*Nibbāna* is the opposite of these aforementioned conditions, whether it be sense pleasure or meditative attainment (*jhāna-samāpatti*). This is because the state of sense enjoyment and the state of *jhāna* both require an engagement with sense objects, a holding onto sense objects, a merging with sense objects; one is entrusting oneself and subject to sense objects. *Nibbāna*, on the other hand, is a state of detachment, liberation, and freedom.

Although *Nibbāna* stands in direct contrast to these other states, a person who realizes *Nibbāna* is fully prepared to enjoy all levels of happiness, including sense pleasure and the happiness of *jhāna*. They can enjoy happiness in the most optimum way, without any danger or harm. To sum up, those people who realize *Nibbāna*, besides experiencing the happiness of *Nibbāna* itself, are able to enjoy all the preceding kinds of happiness and to savour the enjoyment of these to the fullest.

Those who realize *Nibbāna* but did not previously pass through the various stages of concentrative attainment are not qualified to experience some of these attainments, but they have still reached *Nibbāna* and experience the supreme happiness of liberation (*vimutti-sukha*). There exists no greater happiness than the happiness of liberation.

When one abandons sense pleasure, one is entitled to the happiness of *jhāna*. When one abandons the happiness of *jhāna*, one is entitled to the happiness of *Nibbāna* and the happiness of liberation, which is secure, peaceful, and bright, and one is able to return to enjoy all the previous kinds of happiness. (The fact that awakened beings renounce sexual intercourse and abandon or disengage from concentrative attainments – *jhāna-samāpatti* – enables them to reach superior forms of spiritual attainments – *samāpatti*.) In order to reach the freedom of *Nibbāna*, one must



first relinquish everything, including the bliss of jhāna. By relinquishing everything, one obtains all. {1053}

## 11.8 REVIEW OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF HAPPINESS

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Here is a summary of the various stages and kinds of happiness:

1. *Vedayita-sukha*: happiness as a sensation; happiness involving the enjoyment of sense objects.
  - A. Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*): happiness stemming from the five cords of sensuality (*kāma-guṇa*); happiness derived from the five forms of sense contact (*phassa*).
  - B. Happiness of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*): happiness as the fruit of jhāna:
    - Happiness associated with the four fine-material jhānas.
    - Happiness associated with the four immaterial jhānas.
2. *Avedayita-sukha*: happiness that is not a sensation; happiness not involving contact with sense objects:
  - C. *Nirodhasamāpatti-sukha*: happiness connected to the attainment of cessation; i.e. dwelling in the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*).

This above classification of happiness accords with the ten stages of happiness described earlier.

Following is an alternative, threefold classification of happiness, which is similar to the preceding one yet is slightly more flexible or non-specific:<sup>71</sup>

1. Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*).
2. Happiness of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*).
3. Happiness of Nibbāna (*nibbāna-sukha*).

<sup>71</sup>This classification accords with the Buddha's words at Ud. 11, where he describes three kinds of happiness: sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*), divine happiness (*divya-sukha*), and happiness of the destruction of craving (*taṇhakkhaya-sukha*). For more on this threefold happiness see Appendix 3.

The individuals who experience these three kinds of happiness are as follows: {1058}

1. Sense pleasure is enjoyed by unawakened human beings and by awakened beings belonging to the stage of stream-enterers and once-returners.<sup>72</sup>
2. Happiness of jhāna is accessed by unawakened human beings and by awakened beings of every stage, from stream-enterers up to arahants, especially those who have previously developed that specific level of jhāna.<sup>73</sup>
3. Happiness of Nibbāna is accessed by awakened beings of every stage, from stream-enterers up to arahants. (If one is referring to the happiness of fruition attainment, however, then this is accessible to those individuals who have reached that specific stage of awakening. And if one is referring to the happiness of the ‘attainment of cessation’ then this is accessible only to non-returners and arahants who have previously reached the eight concentrative attainments.)

A classification according to different types of individuals appears this way:

1. Unawakened human beings enjoy sense pleasure and may experience the happiness of jhāna.
2. Awakened beings at the stage of stream-entry and once-returning experience sense pleasure, the happiness of jhāna, and the happiness of Nibbāna (in the form of happiness of fruition attainment).
3. Awakened beings at the stage of non-returning and arahantship experience the happiness of jhāna and the happiness of Nibbāna

<sup>72</sup>And including the devas of the six sense-sphere celestial abodes (*kāmāvacara-sagga*).

<sup>73</sup>And including all Brahma gods (the sixteen kinds of fine-material Brahmas and the four kinds of immaterial Brahmas).

(both in the form of happiness of fruition attainment, and, if they have reached the eight concentrative attainments, in the form of happiness of the attainment of cessation).

Although Buddhism does not encourage people to act solely for the sake of obtaining happiness, it constantly acknowledges the truth that happiness is an essential aspect of human life and gives meaning to Dhamma practice. One can say that it is an anchor and support for Dhamma practice. Regardless of whether one is focusing on Dhamma practice in particular, or on human conduct in general, the happiness meant here is the basic happiness inherent in people's minds, which they can contact by themselves at any time that they are ready. They need not rely on contact with objects in the outside world. This happiness brings a degree of independence to one's life.

The vital importance of happiness in Dhamma practice has been explained above. Note in particular that a Dhamma practitioner who has not yet experienced a deeper happiness independent of sense objects cannot yet be assured that he or she won't return to seek out sense pleasures. Even as a renunciant, if one has not yet experienced this profound, non-material happiness, one is not yet safe. The mental defilements can overwhelm the mind, leading one to relinquish the holy life. The Buddha encouraged unawakened people to develop this internal, non-material happiness. Besides increasing one's degree of happiness and enhancing the quality of one's life, this internal happiness provides an escape from the tyranny of craving, which leads to endless agitation and heightened problems, both personal and social.

It is fair to say that if human beings are not willing to take an interest in and get to know this non-material happiness, the unrestrained rush for sense pleasure will create a superficial kind of life, full of distress, anxiety, boredom, grief, and misery. Moreover, it will be accompanied by competitiveness and mutual exploitation, until people lead themselves and the entire world to utter annihilation. {1059}

Given that ordinary, unawakened people who are immersed in the pursuit of sense pleasure need to experience an inner happiness, it is twice as important that those people who determine to distance themselves

from or to renounce sense pleasure have access to such happiness. This is even more true for those individuals who go forth as renunciants, who engage in higher spiritual practice, or who devote their lives to some ideal. If they are unable to access such internal happiness, their renunciation or devotion will fail to have a stable protection. It is likely that they will fall away from their ideal and return to an unwholesome mode of living. In short, if one lives a life of renunciation, one must be happy with renunciation; if one devotes oneself to an ideal, one must be happy about a life of devotion.

In a wider context, if we are unsuccessful at helping people to recognize and appreciate this internal happiness, the craving for sense pleasure will overwhelm the human race. It will be the final factor in determining the fate of the world, regardless of the undertakings by religious leaders and moral philosophers.

### 11.9 HAPPINESS AND ETHICS

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Very often when people talk about religion or religious practice they use the expression ‘religion and ethics’. The development of happiness is inextricably linked to improving one’s life, to improving society, and to developing other aspects of spiritual practice. In this context it is necessary to state that the development of happiness is equivalent to the development of ethics, and conversely, ethical development is equivalent to the cultivation of happiness. If one can understand this connection then one will understand the true meaning both of ethics and of happiness.

When people hear the word ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’ they often get the sense of acting against one’s will. For example, when speaking about ethics, people often think of needing to refrain from certain harmful or evil behaviour, which gives the sense of force or constraint.

In truth, ethical development is one aspect of developing happiness. True ethics belongs to the ‘ethics of happiness’. If ethics is merely a system of going against one’s will, or is tied up with suffering, then it is not true ethics; it will not lead to true success. This is not to say that

ethics does not involve some form of constraint and self-control. It does involve constraint, of which there are two kinds:

1. Early stages of practice may involve some constraint, in the same way that positive growth may require the removal of negative qualities. Yet when one enters the correct path and one's ethical conduct is true, growth is unhindered. Negative qualities fall away and one need not spend time removing them. Positive qualities increase to the state of completion, at which point one's life is fully devoted to sharing goodness with others.
2. The second form of constraint is related to personal disposition. There are some people, referred to as engaging in 'difficult, arduous practice' (*dukkhā paṭipadā*), whose disposition it is to be forceful in practice. Yet their willingness and eagerness for constraint leads to self-discipline. Instead of suffering about constraint, they delight in training. They have the potential to grow and succeed.

Ethics overlaps with spiritual training. According to the Buddha's teachings, human beings require spiritual training; they only reach excellence and 'nobility' by way of training. Spiritual training is equivalent to spiritual development. People reach spiritual success by way of training themselves. This is an aspect of human nature; one cannot progress by simply following one's raw instincts. For this reason one can see that spiritual training is linked to human nature. People can only grow and prosper by engaging in spiritual training.

If spiritual training unfolds correctly, it must be endowed with happiness and it must be a training of happiness. If people are unhappy while engaging in such practice, it can be assumed that they are not training correctly. {1081}

When people engage in spiritual training, their lives undergo development and increase in virtue and wholesomeness. This life of virtue and rectitude is referred to as 'ethical conduct' (*cariya-dhamma*).<sup>74</sup> Ethics and

<sup>74</sup>Trans. the term *cariya-dhamma* is only found in the Thai language. For more on this term, see the section 'The Path as the Holy Life' in chapter 12 on the Middle Way.

spiritual training thus must go hand-in-hand. In fact, one need not use the term ‘must’ here, because when people practise correctly these two elements naturally proceed in unison. When people engage in correct spiritual training, their lives improve and they experience greater happiness. Spiritual training is thus a cultivation in happiness. Moreover, every aspect of a person’s life will be developed.

It is in this way that these factors are connected: spiritual training is the development of happiness, spiritual training is equivalent to ethical development, development in ethics is the cultivation of happiness, etc. It is as the Buddha said: if one attends to the correct causes and conditions, one need not make an appeal – the dynamics of nature will proceed automatically. When rapture (*pīti*) arises, the body and mind are refreshed and relaxed. One need not ask for this to happen, or even to have this intention. Relaxation (*passaddhi*) then follows naturally, according to things being ‘just so’.

If a mother hen wishes for chicks to hatch, she incubates the eggs. At the proper time the chicks peck through the eggshell and emerge. Yet if the hen does not sit on the eggs, despite clucking loudly all day in front of the coop, her efforts will be in vain, the eggs will rot, and no chicks will appear.

Soon after the Second World War, technology was not as advanced as it is today, and before people could get in a car and drive away, they would have to use all their strength to turn the hand-crank. Sometimes they would be utterly exhausted by the time the engine turned over. Nowadays, however, one only need to turn one’s fingers an inch on the ignition and the engine starts.

Here we see both the connection and the distinction between human processes and the processes of nature. If we are to benefit from the processes of nature, then we must seek ways for them to complement human activities. The amount of strain and difficulty we experience depends on how well we can link our activities to natural processes and have these take over for us. If people are able to set up their activities effectively and to link them with dynamics of nature, they will abide in joy and at ease. And if people can accomplish this they will not have to

act against their will. There will be no need for other people or for the government to exert pressure on them to act. Our responsibility is simply to discern causes and conditions, and to then respond to them correctly. We need neither appeal to things to be a specific way nor to resist them.

There are some people, who rather than resist the processes of nature try to regulate their desires. They wholeheartedly practise self-restraint, and this restraint eventually becomes a form of self-training. This is another natural unfolding.

Spiritual training is a way of developing people in happiness and in other virtuous qualities. When they live a virtuous life they live an ethical life. This is how ethics and training are defined in Buddhism. {1082} Here we use the term ‘Buddhism’ simply as a means for communication. If Buddhism teaches the truth then it teaches nature, it teaches how things naturally exist, how things exist according to their own nature. A simple definition for Buddhism is thus a ‘teaching of natural truths’.

In sum, for spiritual training or ethical development to be true and effective it must include a cultivation of happiness. Spiritual training and ethical development are synonymous with a development of happiness. If spiritual training is still accompanied by a lack of enthusiasm and resistance, one will be unable to experience happiness. This is not genuine training and its associated ethical discipline will be endowed with force and compulsion. Likewise, this is not true ethical conduct.

#### **A. HUMAN REGULATIONS AND A SYSTEM OF PRECONDITIONS**

Many people harbour the misunderstanding that by inciting craving and increasing greed people will work harder in order to obtain consumable goods. They claim that such excess will spur the economy and lead to greater wealth for all. At first glance this appears to be true, but these people do not see things correctly and are thus mistaken.

Thinking in this way reveals a certain intelligence in engaging with craving within a system of preconditions. Yet however skilled one is in manipulating craving, it is almost impossible that such a method of thinking will create someone like Albert Einstein. The best it can do is produce technocrats working in business economics (who may create

excitement or alarm as a result of their research, which is often not of great consequence. For problems to truly be solved, people need to possess wholesome enthusiasm to match their intelligence).

Take a simple example from everyday life, of looking after one's physical body. One person endowed with wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*; see the earlier section on different kinds of desire) cares for his body, wishing for it to be strong, healthy, and clean. Another person subject to craving is prone to laziness and does not normally show concern for the body; later, when craving kicks in and he wants to appear enticing to someone else he will try to make himself as physically attractive as possible. Which of these two forms of behaviour will be more conducive to the wellbeing of the body?

Now let us turn our attention to the system of preconditions required for engagement with craving. Earlier a distinction between the process of wholesome desire and the process of craving was described. In the process of craving a fixed sense of self or self-identity arises. Now we come to a second distinction. When craving acts as the motivation for action, it creates a system of preconditions that acts as the driving force for society (it is also the mechanism behind 'unsustainable' development). When craving arises, people want to consume something. But when the object has not yet been obtained, they look for ways to acquire it. Here, things do not unfold according to the process of causes and conditions, but rather they link up with a set of preconditions.

People may object here and say: 'Craving is also a desire for action.' But this is not so – craving prefers idleness. Craving wishes to consume, to obtain, to acquire. But if the desired object has not yet been obtained, what can one do? Here, one must accord with the stipulation: 'In order to get this, one must do that; one cannot obtain the desired object without acting in this particular way.' This is how craving prompts activity within a system of preconditions. {1083}

Here, one acts not out of wholesome enthusiasm, but because the action is a prerequisite for obtaining something. As the action is not a response to a true wish to act, the person does not experience happiness.



There is not a wholehearted desire to act, and so the action is accompanied by suffering.

Craving only spurs action because of preconditions; if one does not act, one does not obtain the desired object, the consumption of which provides happiness. The act itself, however, is done begrudgingly, and one does not know how long one must wait in order to obtain the object and to fulfil gratification. The entire waiting process is filled with suffering. The long wait in order to obtain an object of gratification produces stress. In the end this process is unsustainable and rather than leading to true development, it leads to stress. Unsustainable development results in a perpetual state of stress.

With wholesome enthusiasm, on the other hand, one wishes to act in order to bring about improvement. One acts with the constant desire to act, and one is thus happy throughout the duration of the deed. One experiences no boredom or stress. This happiness is inherent to this process; it results directly from the existing causes and conditions. This principle applies to one's studies, one's work, indeed to all one's activities: if one acts with wholesome enthusiasm, one will find success and happiness throughout.

Wholesome enthusiasm is essential. The Buddha compared it to the light of the dawn. Just like the golden light of the dawn is the precursor to the rising of the sun, so too, if one is endowed with wholesome enthusiasm, it can be expected that one will flourish in spiritual training and in the Noble Eightfold Path.

The dynamic of wholesome enthusiasm does not require a lengthy explanation, because it follows a natural process, according with causes and conditions. Things become complicated because of an overlapping system of preconditions set up by human beings. Human beings nowadays are almost entirely dependent on a system based on preconditions. They have used their intelligence to establish conventional measures overlapping with natural laws, in order to obtain results based on specific prerequisites.

Natural laws – laws of conditionality – exist inherent in nature. Conventional laws are created and subscribed to by human beings in order to

meet and proceed according to specific preconditions. These two overlapping laws play an important role in modern civilization. An example of this pertains to the domain of work.

Imagine a government complex, for example a state university, with spacious grounds and elegant buildings. People wish for this to be a place of delight, to have fresh, green lawns and parks with various species of flowering shrubs. How should one fulfil this desire? Here, people use their intelligence to divide the labour and create a system of agreed-upon standards.

We know that trees, plants, and grass thrive when they receive the proper nourishment and nutriment, including water and fertilizer. This pertains to natural causes and conditions, to fixed laws of nature. Knowing this, people then consider how they can propel or induce these natural causes and conditions. Here is where people establish an overlapping set of rules and criteria. {1084}

Human laws are conventional truths (*sammati*); they are agreements based on mutual knowledge and recognition. The Pali term *sammati* refers to a shared understanding combined with a mutual agreement and acknowledgement. Human laws are based on mutual contracts and agreements.

For example, one may hire a person for \$250 a month to be a gardener in order to water and prune the plants, work the soil, remove weeds, etc., in order for the park to be a place of beauty and delight. Here, rules, i.e. a set of criteria, have been established. The work as a gardener is a precise and definite cause, producing the effect of receiving a monthly salary. The salary appears to be the clear result of working as a gardner. In fact, there are two overlapping laws at work here:

1. Laws of nature: the plants will only grow if there is a sufficiency of various factors, like fertilizer and water. These laws are certain and absolute.
2. Human laws: these are secondary laws established to induce the various factors required for the dynamics of nature. These are conventions, regulations, or laws established to create a position

of gardener funded by a monthly salary. These human laws deal with human factors.

The factors pertaining to human laws help to propel the factors inherent in nature, so that they proceed in a way that fulfils the desires of human beings. But as mentioned above, human laws are based on conventional agreements. They are not certain and definite like natural laws; they can be altered, distorted, or subject to manipulation and deceit.

For example, the employer may not honour the agreement and only give the person \$200 per month. If the gardener does not consent, he may need to dispute this matter or file a formal complaint. Conversely, the employee may not dedicate himself to the work, and instead go off to sleep or go drinking with his friends. Come the end of the month he demands his salary, but he has not acted in accord with the laws of nature. Here, although he receives \$250, or even \$300, there is no way for the plants to thrive.

Of these two overlapping sets of laws, human laws are subject to distortion. People may not follow through with their promises and agreements. The result is that people get into arguments and are caught up in the stipulations attached to these conventional laws. Such human conventions can thus potentially cause all sorts of problems; they are not truly reliable. The essence of human laws does not rest with the laws themselves, but rather with people. If one wants these laws to be successful, one needs to train people to be honest. In the end, the essential factor is education; people need to learn to love the truth and to abide in honesty. {1085]

Human laws are based on a system of preconditions. If one works for one month as a gardener one receives \$250. This appears to be a clearly defined cause and effect. But what does a closer examination reveal? Working for a month as a gardener cannot in itself produce a salary of \$250. The money only comes by way of a proviso. This is an example of a provisional system or a system of preconditions.

Some people will only do the work in order to fulfil the preconditions. One may do the gardening work simply to receive the salary, but in one's heart one has no desire for the plants to prosper and grow. If the gardener

only desires the results of the human stipulations and is not interested in the direct results of the natural laws, he is not endowed with wholesome desire; he is not interested in the welfare of the plants. He is prompted not by wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*), but by craving (*taṇhā*): he only wants the money. Craving is the driving force leading the person to act according to the terms within the agreed-upon conventions. If the gardener has no true desire for the plants to flourish, he will not love his work; rather, he will have to force himself to work. The work will thus be burdened with a sense of suffering.

This is one of the vital problems for people in the present age. As civilization develops, people's suffering increases. People's work, activities, and education is beset by suffering because they are caught up in this system of preconditions. They are caught up in a system of craving.

#### **B. SYSTEM OF PRECONDITIONS IN HARMONY WITH NATURAL LAWS**

Craving is normally accompanied by two other factors. As a group of three these factors are referred to as *papañca-dhammā* (mental defilements that cause complication, proliferation, and perturbation). Here are simple definitions for these three factors:

1. *Taṇhā*: the desire to obtain.
2. *Māna*: the desire for prominence.
3. *Diṭṭhi*: narrow-mindedness (attachment to personal views and beliefs).

These three defilements focus and centre on one's sense of self; they are factors of selfishness. They cause problems within a system of preconditions. Whenever they act as the force behind a system of preconditions, they cause all sorts of confusion and turmoil. The problems are not limited to suffering inherent in people's work and education; every sort of human problem is caused by these defilements, leading to distress and agitation.

An awareness of these three defilements enables one to find a solution to problems. The solution lies in applying one's intelligence to find

ways for human conventional laws to link up with and support natural laws. Clever people establish conventional laws which help lead natural dynamics in a direction producing results consistent with their desires and objectives. If we want a tree to grow then we provide the necessary care, like pruning, watering, and adding fertilizer. Through division of labour one organizes a gardener to devote his time and effort to this task. One reassures this person that in respect to earning a living, he will be provided with an adequate income. The gardener needs not be anxious and can fully devote himself to this work. In this way one establishes a bridge between human conventions and natural laws, enabling people to create optimum causes and conditions aligned with natural dynamics. {1086}

If the gardener possesses wholesome enthusiasm, he wishes to see the plants flourish and he wants to act in order to bring about this state of completion. If he is reassured about sustaining his livelihood, he can devote himself fully to this task. In this way he experiences happiness and receives a salary. The work is successful and the worker is happy. In this way the system of human regulations is coordinated with the causal dynamics of natural laws, so that they proceed effectively in line with the wishes of human beings.

If, however, the gardener is devoid of wholesome enthusiasm acting as the catalyst for natural dynamics, the work will not be successful. If he acts simply from craving, desiring only the results promised by a system of preconditions, he will be unhappy because he will have to force himself to work, and the gardening work itself will be unfruitful.

If this lack of wholesome enthusiasm is prevalent, all human systems and institutions will be distorted, imbalanced, and corrupted. Work will be unsuccessful and people will be unhappy. Moreover, when people are devoid of wholesome enthusiasm and dominated by craving, they do not exert themselves in their work; they avoid their work and are dishonest and deceitful, giving rise to corruption and waste. The consequence is that one must emphasize secondary systems of supervision and control.

When craving takes hold of these systems of supervision, new overlapping systems of control need to be established. The three defilements of

perturbation (*papañca-dhamma*) then cause further turmoil and distress. In the end human society is led to ruin and calamity, as is described in an old Thai poem: ‘When the baht is spent, the tiger dies.’ (See Note 11.4) For this reason it is important that a system of preconditions does not destroy or crush wholesome enthusiasm. One needs to be alert and use one’s intelligence to ensure that the system of preconditions supports wholesome enthusiasm, which mobilizes desirable natural processes.

In today’s age, which is dominated by systems based on greed, it is still possible for wholesome and virtuous development to occur, because enough people possess an adequate degree of wholesome enthusiasm, even if this is not always obvious. We need to prevent a system of craving from becoming the dominant dynamic, which eclipses wholesome enthusiasm until it gradually recedes and eventually disappears. Instead, we ought to make wholesome enthusiasm the mainstay; although craving may still cause some trouble, people will retain an adequate degree of stability and safety.

It is necessary to acknowledge that human systems of preconditions are the driving force in the world. What are our options when we realize that people exist at different levels of spiritual development, and that most people are still committed to a system based on craving? It is not sustainable for people to simply follow their desires. It is essential that those people responsible for establishing the system of preconditions are endowed with wholesome desire, and that they ensure that wholesome desire is given a prominent role within such a system. Moreover, they should set down decisive measures of heedfulness for all people to use while engaged in developing themselves.

This key subject of desire tends to get overlooked. It is vital that one is able to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome desire. When one has understood this matter it will be easy to determine how to solve problems, and one will develop happiness with confidence. {1087}

## NOTE 11.4: POEM 'LOKA NITI'

From the poem 'Loka Niti' (โลกนิติ). [Trans.: written in 1831. The story goes that a zoo acquires a tiger, for which one baht is allocated each day to keep it well-fed. The keeper responsible for feeding the tiger embezzles 25 satang each day. When the director notices that the tiger is not filled out he sends an inspector to find out what is going on. When the inspector discovers the truth, he demands 25 satang as hush money from the keeper. The tiger gets thinner, prompting the director to send a more senior inspector. He too demands 25 satang as hush money, and the tiger is soon just skin and bones. The director sends the chief inspector, but he demands the remaining 25 satang for himself, causing the tiger to perish.]

### C. DERIVING THE GREATEST BENEFIT FROM SYSTEMS OF PRECONDITIONS

A frequently asked question in the modern age is how wholesome desire functions in the domain of work. The term 'chanda' can be simply translated as 'pleasure', 'liking', or 'delight'. Take for example a job interview, during which one is asked: 'Do you like this kind of work?' The term 'like' here is ambiguous. One person may answer, 'I like it', but imply that he likes the good salary or the fact that the work requires little exertion and provides a lot of free time. This is one kind of liking. Another person may reply, 'I like it', on the grounds that the work conforms to her skills, and that it is beneficial and constructive to society. The terms 'like' and 'desire' encompass both 'craving' (*taṇhā*) and 'wholesome enthusiasm' (*chanda*). For this reason it is important to clarify how one uses these terms.

It requires discernment to understand the real meaning of the question, 'Do you like this kind of work?' which is: 'Does this work fit your skills and do you see the value of this work?' It is not a matter of only liking the work because of a high income or an opportunity to be lazy and have lots of time off, which stems from selfishness and craving. If we have wholesome enthusiasm we truly love our work, because we recognize its value; we see how it benefits society and helps develop our nation.

If the social benefit of work is not clearly evident, or if one does not recognize the wider value of one's work – and yet the work is required – one can generate wholesome enthusiasm with the attitude that the work

is valuable for self-development and leads to improvement in our own lives. One aspect of work is that it is a domain for personal growth. Every kind of work or activity, whether it involves a task that we enjoy or not, is an opportunity for personal development. The more difficult is the task, the greater is the opportunity to train, to sharpen skills, and to increase intelligence.

If one can summon wholesome desire and generate a wish to train, one will enjoy even those things previously found unpleasant and one will delight even in difficult work. The more challenging the task, the more one gains. By the time the task is complete, one has passed through an extensive period of self-development.

Our daily work and activities take up the most amount of time in our lives – approximately eight hours, or one third, of each day. The remaining sixteen hours or so are taken up by sleeping or travelling, or of simply being fatigued. For this reason one needs to make the most out of these eight hours of productive activity. If one needs to force oneself to do this work then one is in trouble; these eight hours will be wasted and one's life will be filled with unhappiness. It is thus vital to generate wholesome desire, to recognize the importance of having love for one's work. One can tell oneself that by having such love one will develop oneself, develop one's capabilities, develop one's ability to solve problems, develop wisdom, and develop the mind. One will grow in endurance, energy, self-restraint, mindfulness, and concentration. This wholesome enthusiasm will bestow meaning to one's work and will increase one's happiness.

When engaging in displeasurable work, the mind is stifled, without a sense of relief. This mental constriction and confinement is suffering indeed. The mind then gets caught in a cycle of such suffering. When the mind finds a way out of this impasse, one feels relieved and happy. Therefore, whenever one is experiencing difficulty, one should generate such wholesome desire. Then every activity will be endowed with such zeal, and as mentioned above, one will recognize that at the very least one has a valuable opportunity to develop oneself. {1088}



Most often when working one must encounter other people. If one is not plagued by stifling thoughts or emotions, these encounters are also an opportunity for self-training. One can train for example in speech. What sort of speech is effective, non-offensive, and conducive to friendship and cooperation? All such activities are opportunities for training.

Work may be defined as those tasks necessary to accomplish. Whole-some enthusiasm is the desire to perform these tasks, along with a desire to understand the details of this work. The desire to act is thus inherently an aspect of training and of study. True training is comprised of the desire to know and the desire to act. By generating this desire to know and act, the essence of training has been reached. The desire to train, to learn, and to act is the same as the desire to understand. When willingly engaged in a task, one trains oneself and is engaged in study. Both formal learning and formal work are aspects of training, because in both cases one is improving one's life. If one practises correctly, one's entire life will be a form of training, of self-development.

Technically speaking, one can use the term *chanda* in reference to all activities; it does not simply refer to one's work. There are two aspects to this term:

1. *Chanda* as a desire for a natural state of completion. Here, one wishes for all things with which one is engaged to be well and in good order, and to reach a state of natural completeness and fulfilment.
2. *Chanda* as a desire to accord with causes and conditions; one wishes for success directly in accord with causes and conditions. For example, every profession has a natural objective. The objective of the medical profession, for instance, is to cure people from illness; the objective of the teaching profession is to instil goodness and knowledge in children or in pupils.

We should ask ourselves what the direct purpose of our specific individual profession is. Government work and the work by state institutions, for example, requires a clear objective. Before beginning a job, we should clearly investigate its objectives, and we then ask ourselves whether we

agree with and approve of them. When we decide to then undertake the task, we can attend accurately to these objectives. And through our enthusiasm and determination we seek to bring about results consistent with these objectives. This is *chanda*.

As for a salary or financial remuneration, this is a matter belonging to the system of preconditions. With wholesome desire and wisdom, one sees that money is a support for devoting oneself fully to one's work in order to fulfil its objective, without needing to worry about how one will earn one's livelihood or to seek some other form of occupation. Although one abides by a system of conventions, one understands and benefits from it.

When people possess wholesome enthusiasm and understand the true purpose of their work and the nature of the agreed-upon terms, the system will not be seen simply as a way to force people to work. One will discern that it aims to promote wholesome desire, so that people can commit themselves fully to their work and be freed from financial worries. If people have wholesome desire, are determined to perform their work in order to fulfil its true purpose, have a love for this form of success, and receive an adequate financial recompense, they and their families will abide in wellbeing.

This correct, virtuous way of practice provides people with two kinds of happiness. First, they derive happiness directly from their work, knowing that they have attended to it correctly. Second, they feel assured by the wages or salary, knowing that it will be a support to further dedicate themselves to their activities. They are pleased that their work progresses well, and they are confident that their enthusiastic efforts lead to results consonant with the work's true objective, to the wellbeing of an institution or the nation, in a smooth and lasting way. This is how a system based on wholesome desire operates. {1089}

#### **D. FUN IN LEARNING, HAPPINESS IN TRAINING**

Now let us turn our attention to education. In the process of learning it is imperative to generate wholesome enthusiasm, for if this does not occur, people will not experience real happiness while learning. The best

one can hope for in such a case is to have fun, which is the happiness of someone dedicated to pleasure, similar to the pleasure derived from watching a play or a movie.

If wholesome enthusiasm has been generated, whether one's learning process is fun or not becomes a minor, insignificant matter. Granted, having fun fosters motivation and interest in students, and it is an instrument for facilitating an understanding of the gist of the subject at hand. Having fun, however, is not the essence of education; it is not an essential part of the true learning process. In connection to the explanation above, having fun is simply a supportive factor, which one must know how to apply in order to aid wholesome desire and to enter the true learning process.

Education begins with wholesome enthusiasm, and it is vital that children possess such desire. Although amusement for children is useful when it successfully helps to generate wholesome desire, without wholesome desire one must rely entirely on having fun, and one must constantly increase this sense of fun. Needing to constantly entertain the children is wearisome for the teachers, who need to come up with new ways of providing the students with fun activities.

It is true that an ability to make learning fun is an admirable skill, but it is important to also instill wholesome enthusiasm. It is necessary to distinguish these two qualities, and to ensure that fun is not simply a way of gratifying the desire for pleasure, which is often the case say by watching a movie. Otherwise, the teacher resembles an actor, and the pleasure derived by having fun is a form of feeding craving.

This feeding of craving, by amusing oneself with sights, sounds, etc., gives rise to problems, which then need to be rectified. The basic problem is an attachment to such enjoyment, along with a sense of apathy and boredom, which requires people to seek increasingly greater amounts and degrees of stimulation.

Using such entertainment in teaching will at first provide much fun for the students, but eventually they will grow accustomed to and bored with it. The next time one must add to the amusement, or introduce new forms of entertainment, thus increasing the stimulation and gratification. This becomes an endless cycle. The teachers become fatigued and the

students themselves are at a dead end, spinning around in a vortex of craving. The students become addicted to such entertainment, only seeking amusement. Rather than being fascinated with learning, they wait for the next performance or show. They do not have the desire to learn and to seek knowledge by themselves. In this way the flow of craving is strengthened.

If one is not careful, children will not be interested in learning; instead, they will only delight in the aspects of entertainment. They will not advance to acquiring vital information, and they will not generate wholesome enthusiasm. For this reason, it is essential that one understands the proper role of entertainment and fun in education. Having fun helps to create an initial interest in learning; it is a preliminary and external factor in the true process of learning. It acts as a link to something greater, not as an end goal.

The true purpose of external factors in education is to generate internal factors within an individual. {1090} Teachers are an outside influence (*paratoghosa*; ‘a voice of encouragement and guidance’); ideally they are a positive influence and act as virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*). They transmit knowledge and promote certain kinds of seeing, listening, and thinking, in order for the pupils to generate their own interest and enthusiasm, which then becomes the driving force in their studies. Besides transmitting specific information, the true success of a teacher thus rests with his or her ability to help generate wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*) within the students. If teachers do not have this aim, then all they can do is entertain the students, which eventually leads to apathy and boredom on the part of the students, and fatigue on the part of the teachers.

Teachers, virtuous friends, or other external influences need thus to act as a medium, linking external factors with internal factors, and helping students to generate virtuous qualities within themselves. Otherwise, teachers reinforce in the students the characteristic of being dependent on others. If teachers understand the true responsibility of the teaching profession, they will seek ways to facilitate an understanding in the students of the subject materials and to induce an interest in learning.

If students develop this wholesome enthusiasm, they can progress in their studies independently. Although the teacher is not present, they will say: 'I have a subject of study to pursue. I want to research this matter. I wish to go to the library and read up on this subject.' They will derive happiness from this research because it satisfies their interest in learning; it fulfils the desire to gain knowledge. In this way learning will progress naturally and automatically.

If we are able to generate the wholesome desire as the starting point in our studies, our entire way of life and pursuit of happiness will change. And the new kind of happiness that gradually increases throughout this process is exceptional and unexpected. Before, we only relied on craving, seeking to obtain and consume things. We excitedly pursued desirable sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles for consumption. When we experienced these things we felt gratification. Yet when we encountered undesirable objects we were displeased, irritated, and distressed. Our happiness and unhappiness was entirely dependent on likes and dislikes subject to craving, and our views on happiness were limited to this dynamic.

When one gives rise to wholesome enthusiasm, one experiences a new form of desire. One wishes to truly learn about things and to act in order to bring about improvement. When one obtains knowledge or does things well, one is happy, and this happiness increases exponentially.

One's relationship changes even to those things that are unpleasant and were formerly distressing. When one sees that there are aspects to undesirable things that are worthy of study and investigation one wants to understand them. One asks such questions as: 'How is this object bad?' 'Why is this object undesirable?' One begins to appreciate unpleasant things because they provide an opportunity for learning. Wholesome enthusiasm leads people to appreciate and even to derive joy from undesirable things and situations. This happiness stems from gaining knowledge and from one's own skilful actions. {1091}

Note that wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*) is associated with and must be accompanied by wisdom (*paññā*). This is unlike craving (*taṇhā*), which is accompanied by ignorance (*avijjā*) and requires no wisdom. Craving can

arise at all times, while wholesome desire is only developed with the help of wisdom.

How is wholesome desire accompanied by wisdom? Say one encounters a disagreeable, unpleasant object, which is rejected by craving. Yet when wisdom recognizes that the object is beneficial in some way, wholesome enthusiasm participates in the process. The desire to know and the desire to act are set in motion, and happiness follows along with the fulfilment of this desire.

With the introduction of wholesome enthusiasm, likes and dislikes based on craving lose almost all of their influence and power. Those things previously considered unacceptable by craving – those things which used to be deplorable and cause affliction – now, with the power of wisdom and wholesome desire, are able to provide happiness.

In this way, one who begins a true form of education and training is able to find happiness even from those things that do not offer gratification to craving. This process of learning then develops, whereby preferences and aversions gradually lose their ability to overwhelm and sway the mind. One's attention, thoughts, and happiness centres around knowledge and skilful action. This is how someone like Albert Einstein comes to be.

On a practical level, if one is able to establish an education system promoting a basic level of wholesome enthusiasm, the nation will have an increased number of 'creators', who will offset those 'consumers' who have no desire to act, other than to find ways to satisfy their craving.

In sum, this process involves a delight in the goodness and completion of something. If the object has not yet reached such a state of goodness and completion, one wants to act in order to help bring about this state, and one wants to know what needs to be done to accomplish this (alternatively, the desire to know precedes the desire to act). When one has gained the necessary knowledge, one is able to act according to one's wishes. When one completes the action and satisfies one's desire, happiness follows, and this happiness increases the more one accomplishes.

The desire to know and the desire to act function in unison. These aspects of desire lead to and are accompanied by happiness and true

learning. If these two aspects of desire are absent, learning will be difficult and students will be unwilling and unhappy. If one is able to generate wholesome enthusiasm, learning will proceed automatically, in the same way as the Buddha stated that with dawn as harbinger, the rising of the sun is guaranteed.

In connection to society, to the relationship with other people, wholesome desire (*chanda*) can be expanded into four spiritual qualities, referred to as the four ‘divine abidings’ (*brahmavihāra*; literally, ‘qualities characteristic of Brahma gods’ or ‘supreme spiritual qualities’): lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Here, one can see how the development of desire runs parallel to the development of happiness; in fact these two forms of development are identical. As one elevates desire from craving to wholesome enthusiasm, and as one develops this enthusiasm, happiness is expanded and deepened. {1092}

#### E. JOY IN LEARNING AND JOY FROM LEARNING

Although deriving happiness in one’s studies is important as part of the process of learning, it is not enough. Happiness is not simply a stage in learning or in spiritual practice, but rather it is the most essential part and the goal of one’s studies. If one understands the true nature of happiness, one will discern that study or training is in itself a development of happiness in order for the student or practitioner to be truly happy.

The genuine development of happiness requires a fulfilment of spiritual qualities, which are present in those people who are accomplished. I have written several books on this subject of happiness as the goal of education or of spiritual training; let us review some of the material in these books.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Some of these books were written as long as twenty-five years ago, and in some cases I can no longer find a copy; all that remains is the title along with a basic outline of the text. These texts include: ‘Education: a Tool for Development’ (การศึกษา: เครื่องมือพัฒนาที่ยังต้องพัฒนา; 2530 BE); ‘Reflections on Reforming Education’ (a talk given on the 44th anniversary of the establishment of the

The true purpose of education is to provide people with happiness. It is not enough for people to enjoy their studies; education also needs to lead people to happiness. People then dwell in a normal state of happiness. Moreover, the learning process itself is also endowed with happiness.

Does modern education provide people with happiness, or does it make people simply hunger and yearn for happiness? An incorrect form of education leads people to discontentment; it becomes an instrument for sucking happiness out of people and making them thirst for it.

The further one studies in such a defective system of education, the greater is one's thirst for true happiness. One is in want of happiness while studying, and one graduates from this system with yearning. One then rushes ahead in order to find personal happiness, competing for it and creating suffering and hardship for others.

When people who are deprived of happiness experience suffering, they vent their frustrations out on others and seize whatever happiness they can find for themselves. If children are taught in such a harmful way, upon completion of their studies they will seek to maximize their own personal happiness. {1093}

In this modern, technically developed age, one sees how people are caught up in the pursuit of happiness, to the extent that they no longer have the time for others. They are in a constant state of want and pursuit of happiness, and they keep expecting it to arrive in the future. The thirst for happiness is rampant throughout the entire society, including in family households, schools, and workplaces. The mind state of happiness deprivation is widespread, apparent throughout society. For this reason we must emphasize that true education makes people happy and teaches people to look for happiness in the correct ways.

Those people who have passed a correct system of education are able to solve problems, dispel suffering, and establish themselves in happiness. They cultivate themselves in order to reach more refined forms of happiness, and they share their happiness with others in a wide-ranging way.

Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development); and 'Peace Comes from Freedom and Happiness' (2537 BE).



People who suffer from some form of problem often vent their frustration on others, and although this is an attempt on their part to find some kind of ease, their actions cause harm to others and to society. This includes those children who have some kind of difficulty and consequently act out in negative ways. On the contrary, those people who abide in happiness tend to share their joy with others, even when there is no direct intention to do so. Thus, to increase happiness in the world, we need to increase happiness in individuals.

This corresponds with the Buddha's aim in relation to society: *abyāpa-jjhaṃ sukhaṃ lokaṃ*: 'to create and abide in a world that is happy, free from oppression.' This is our task as human beings: to create a happier world, to reduce oppression, to offer mutual support and assistance, and to abide in collective, lasting happiness.

#### **F. DESPITE THE GLUT OF CONSUMABLE OBJECTS, HAPPINESS IS ON THE WANE**

One of the consequences of the inability to know what is enough and the constant pursuit of happiness is that people develop the characteristic of being prone to suffering and find it increasingly difficult to be happy.

Compare this with children. Most children, from the early days before they could walk, laugh openly, smile with delight, and are easily amused. Little things that they obtain or see give them happiness. But as people grow up, they find it more and more difficult to find happiness. As mentioned above, those things that at one time provided happiness are now considered boring, leading to indifference and a lack of enthusiasm. In order to be happy, things must accord with a long list of desires and preconditions. And yet these people still don't experience real gratification. They chase after things without ever reaching their destination. It becomes more and more difficult to satisfy them.

When it becomes increasingly difficult for people to be happy, they also become more easily agitated. Before, going without certain things, living with certain inconveniences, and being required to perform certain tasks was not a problem. These situations didn't cause suffering. {1129} Later on, they may become well-off, own an abundance of things, and be

extremely comfortable. They can order others to do their own work – the only muscle in the body that gets exercised is the index finger. But they may become attached to this ease and convenience. If they lack anything, if something doesn't arrive exactly on time, if they don't get what they want, or they must do something requiring effort – all of these situations become a source of suffering. They thus become more prone to suffering and they accumulate suffering.

This runs counter to true spiritual development. If one is engaged in proper spiritual development, as one gets older one should be more proficient at being happy, one should be able to increasingly generate internal happiness, and one should find it easier to be happy and be less prone to suffering. Those who are developing spiritually must be simultaneously developing in happiness; their happiness must be increasing. Within the ordinary sphere of human living situations or responsibilities, they should feel confident about experiencing happiness. They can make the claim to others: 'Don't waste your time trying to make me unhappy; you won't succeed.'

These days, however, the reverse seems to be occurring. People seem to find it increasingly difficult to discover happiness, and they are unnaturally more prone to suffering. Many children in the IT age seem to have this trait. One cause for this is that the upsurge in technological advances permits a quick gratification of desire in regard to consuming material things, and it increases material comfort. The drawback is that people become more easily jaded, or else they feel they cannot live without these comforts. In order to feel satisfied, they must acquire things as quickly as they desire them.

The real reason, however, is an inadequate and incorrect spiritual practice. The result is that, instead of technological growth helping to promote true happiness, it ends up crippling people's ability to experience happiness. People then become incapable of experiencing true happiness. This is what happens when people deal with technology incorrectly. They fail to derive the true benefit from it; instead of receiving its positive effects, they receive its negative ones.

The greater the abundance of material things, and the greater the ease and convenience in society, the more important it becomes for people to train their minds and develop the ability to find happiness. If people simply get caught up in pursuing pleasure from external objects, they will find it increasingly difficult to be happy. At the same time, they will neglect the training in an increased capability to experience happiness. Besides squandering an opportunity to develop themselves, they may eventually be incapable of any form of happiness. For this reason, give heed to developing one's capability to experience happiness.

Otherwise, there will be no end to problems. People's own search for happiness will be futile and their internal suffering will intensify. Mutual oppression in society will increase, and the world will become a more troubled place. There will be no hope for peace. If one develops happiness correctly, however, all internal dilemmas will be resolved. Various spiritual factors will be activated and set into place, because, in a correct spiritual practice, the vital spiritual factors are naturally linked and integrated. {1130}

Sense desire – the desire for material objects – is thus fraught with danger, and it is the cause for various kinds of wrongdoing. People desire sense pleasure within a 'system of preconditions'. (See the earlier material on this subject, which is linked to the material here.) The result is that the extent and range of immoral conduct is amplified. This is how craving operates within a system of preconditions, in which people seek desirable objects by avoiding, or by half-heartedly conforming to, the direct processes of nature. Our responsibility is thus to help people to develop wholesome desire and to integrate human laws with natural laws.

This gives an outline of the advantages and disadvantages of happiness. The essential point is that one applies 'liberating wisdom' (*nissaraṇa-paññā*) in regard to all forms of happiness, beginning with sense pleasure, until one reaches the freedom from mental defilement. While experiencing happiness, be vigilant and know moderation. This way one will remain strong and avoid mental weakness.

## 11.10 PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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### A. SUMMON WISDOM TO DEAL WITH SUFFERING

In the development of happiness it is important not to neglect the term *dukkha* (suffering). An acknowledgement is made that suffering exists, and that it is both placed in opposition to and paired alongside happiness. People need to gain a comprehensive and clear perspective of these matters, rather than practise avoidance and leave unresolved issues to fester in the mind.

Moreover, if one is happy yet suffering still exists, then that happiness is not true and reliable. Therefore the development of happiness implies the simultaneous reduction, removal, disappearance, and cessation of suffering. The expression ‘development of happiness’ can thus be replaced with the expression ‘cessation of suffering’ – these refer to one and the same process. And for this process to be complete, regardless of how much happiness a person may experience, one must reach the stage of the utter cessation of suffering.

Technically speaking, to counter the sense that the development of happiness is open-ended and without a clear end-goal, it is referred to as the ‘cessation of suffering’. The term ‘cessation’, which is a translation for the Pali term *nirodha*, carries with it specific linguistic problems, in that its meaning is not altogether clear and it may give rise to misunderstanding. When people hear the phrase ‘cessation of suffering’, they may understand that this refers to a gradual yet constant elimination or removal of suffering existing in the heart. In fact, the true meaning of *nirodha* refers to the non-arising of suffering, or to the complete and utter freedom from suffering. On the highest level, *nirodha* refers to Nibbāna, a state completely free from suffering.

Occasionally the term *anuppāda-nirodha* is used, translated as ‘cessation by means of non-arising’, that is, absolute or complete cessation. For the sake of convenience, we may thus translate *dukkha-nirodha* as the ‘non-arising of suffering’ or ‘freedom from suffering’.

Partly for ease-of-mind of the listeners, when this subject is discussed, the term ‘suffering’ is often avoided and instead the process is described as the ‘development of happiness’. Note, however, that by doing so one is not neglecting the subject of suffering, and eventually one will need to address it accordingly. The expression ‘development of happiness’ necessarily implies the proper management of suffering. {1104}

An essential aspect of suffering is one’s attitude and relationship to it. If one fails to understand the importance of this point, then one will be unable to truly develop in happiness. Here we are referring to the duty or responsibility (*kicca*) vis-à-vis suffering. If one gets this wrong, then one’s entire spiritual practice will be misdirected and end in failure. People often neglect this essential factor.

As suffering is the first noble truth, let us review the duties or responsibilities pertaining to all four of the noble truths:

1. Suffering (*dukkha*): a state of pressure and affliction, acting as a basis for human problems; alternatively, anything that has the capacity to create problems. The associated responsibility here is *pariññā*: thorough or comprehensive understanding.
2. Cause of suffering (*samudaya*). The associated responsibility is *pahāna*: abandoning, eliminating, or ending.
3. Cessation of suffering (*nirodha*). The associated responsibility is *sacchikiriya*: realizing, seeing clearly, actualizing, or attaining.
4. Path (*magga*): the way leading to the end of suffering. The associated responsibility is *bhāvanā*: cultivating, developing, practising, or undertaking.

Without going into a lengthy analysis of these four responsibilities here, note however that they are of fundamental importance. They exist inextricably paired with the Four Noble Truths. For if one practises any one of the Four Noble Truths incorrectly, in respect to its associated duty or responsibility, one’s progress in the Dhamma will come to naught and one’s efforts will be in vain; it will be impossible to awaken or to realize the Dhamma.

In respect to the first noble truth, the Pali states: ‘With suffering there should be thorough understanding’ (*dukkhaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*). Suffering must be understood by way of wisdom – suffering is there to be understood. A simple example of this is that before one is able to solve a problem, one must first understand the nature of the problem.

The definition of *dukkha* is not limited to the general concept of physical and mental pain and discomfort. The term also refers to everything that has the potential to create a sense of oppression when one fails to respond to it correctly. For this reason the subject of suffering requires comprehensive understanding. In sum, suffering is a matter to be taken up and dealt with by wisdom. It is not something to be stored up and accumulated in the heart, until it oozes out or goes rancid and one loses one’s radiance and joy.

If one encounters suffering, welcome it with wisdom. Don’t allow the mind to get caught up with it, or as people informally say, ‘Don’t obsess over your emotions.’ Don’t burden or oppress the mind with suffering. And if the mind has already allowed it entry, don’t let it smoulder. Hasten to send it on to wisdom. If one simply stores up suffering within the heart, one suffers in vain; one does not dispel it and one’s life becomes stuck. Yet if one allows wisdom to deal with it, besides finding solutions to end it, one’s whole life moves forward.

It is not the mind’s responsibility to deal with suffering; this responsibility rests with wisdom. The mind’s task is not to bear suffering, but rather to apply wisdom. The principal agent in this matter is wisdom, which solves problems and dispels suffering. Wisdom brings suffering to an end, and at the same time generates happiness.

The mind’s responsibility is to witness happiness. One should develop the mind’s proficiency for experiencing happiness, and develop wisdom’s ability to solve problems and dispel suffering. A healthy mind is endowed with happiness; and healthy wisdom is capable of dispelling suffering. For the mind to be truly healthy and happy, wisdom must completely dispel suffering. {1105}

Spiritual practice needs to be accurate, by attending to the duty corresponding to each of the Four Noble Truths. If one oppresses oneself

by accumulating suffering – causing internal distress, frustration, and depression – one is responding to suffering incorrectly. Instead, one needs to change course and summon wisdom to help.

Happiness is classified as part of the third noble truth – cessation (*nirodha*). It is recognized that there are relative degrees of happiness which need to be developed until one reaches supreme happiness. The responsibility here is *sacchikiriya*: to realize, actualize, or perfect happiness. This development of happiness should be attended to as a regular and constant part of one's life. The ability to be happy is the starting point of spiritual practice. For this reason one needs to establish oneself correctly from the outset, so that one goes in the right direction and proceeds with confidence.

## **B. PRACTICE BEING FREE FROM SUFFERING**

The spiritual journey begins with an understanding of happiness. As one progresses along the journey, there is another key principle that directly benefits one's practice. This principle has to do with how one relates to happiness, and it also pertains inherently to one's relationship to suffering.

In the Devadaha Sutta the Buddha outlines this method of practice in regard to happiness. It contains four factors:<sup>76</sup>

1. To refrain from creating extra suffering for oneself.
2. To not forsake righteous happiness.
3. To not indulge in any sort of happiness, even righteous happiness.
4. To strive in order to bring an end to the cause of suffering (i.e. to strive in order to realize higher forms of happiness, all the way to supreme happiness).

<sup>76</sup>M. II, 226-28.

1. It is common for people to create unnecessary suffering for themselves. They may be abiding in a state of wellbeing, free from distress, yet still inflict suffering on themselves. Examples of this are those people who drink excessive amounts of alcohol or indulge in addictive drugs. Many of them start out healthy, yet still consume these things, even though they clearly know that they are harmful, both physically and mentally. Although they possess this knowledge, they create suffering and problems.

On a more subtle level, people often gather and accumulate various sense impressions, like sights or sounds, that are slightly bothersome or annoying. Trivial things done or said by others – things that are part of the past – are stored up in people’s minds. Later, when they are alone, they dig these things up and proliferate over them, causing misery and unhappiness. This is another example of piling suffering onto oneself.

In respect to householders, it is not considered blameworthy to have some degree of mental proliferation – to elaborate on one’s experiences – but the encouragement is to think in positive rather than negative ways. Negative mental proliferations are called ‘unwholesome formations’ (*apuññābhisaṅkhāra*), which are marked by greed, hatred, and delusion, and which generate suffering. {1106}

Mindfulness (*sati*) should be applied here as a restraint, in order to cease thinking in negative ways. Instead, one thinks in wholesome ways and creates positive mental formations (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*), beginning with joy (*pāmojja*). Joy is then followed by bliss (*pīti*) and tranquillity (*passaddhi*). This is the way to solve problems and to generate happiness.

The Buddha described the ascetic practices of the Nigaṇṭhā (Jains), who clearly inflicted suffering on themselves. Instead of using a blade to shave their heads, they used tweezers to pull out each hair, one at a time. They devised all sorts of strategies to increase suffering. They would drive in nails or thorns to their sleeping platforms and lie on these; they would abstain from food and water for long periods; in the cold season they would immerse in chilly rivers; in the hot season they would stand out in the blazing sun.



The Buddha described these practices of self-mortification as examples of self-inflicted suffering. These are examples from history. The reader can think of comparable ways in which modern people unnecessarily pile suffering onto themselves.

2. Righteous happiness can be found in everyday situations. Take for example those laypeople who earn their living honestly. They use their money for enjoyment and to support their families and dependants, according to the teaching on the four kinds of happiness for householders (*gihi-sukha*): the happiness of having wealth; the happiness of spending wealth; the happiness of being free from debt; and the happiness of performing virtuous and blameless deeds – of performing good deeds by way of body, speech, and mind – happiness that causes no harm to anyone. This kind of righteous happiness should not be neglected or forsaken.

There are numerous kinds of righteous happiness. There is the happiness stemming from generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*sīla*), and cultivation of the mind (*bhāvanā*). There is the elevated happiness of developing tranquillity meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Alternatively, there is the happiness of lovingkindness and compassion, or the happiness of the four principles of service (*saṅgaha-vatthu*; see below).

In sum, these kinds of happiness should not be renounced or objected to (those people who adhere to a doctrine of extreme asceticism aim to inflict more suffering on themselves, and they thus shun happiness).

3. Non-indulgence in any form of happiness is a vital factor and indicates an advanced level of spiritual development. Experiencing righteous forms of happiness is already an excellent step in spiritual practice. But problems can arise due to such happiness, namely, people may get attached to or blindly absorbed in it. This attachment or indulgence leads to laziness, heedlessness, and decline. One who is able to escape from this pitfall has reached an important stage in practice.

When one has reached this stage, happiness is unable to dominate the mind:

- First, one does not fall into heedlessness. Happiness does not become a harmful influence.
- Second, one does not lose one's independence; one is not enslaved by happiness.
- Third, one has the opportunity to develop higher forms of happiness.

4. The effort to bring an end to the cause of suffering leads to perfect happiness. As long as the source or seed of suffering remains, there is still the potential for suffering to resurface; suffering is still latent. At this stage happiness is still imperfect; here, the cause of suffering must be completely eliminated.

This final factor explains why the term 'cessation of suffering' is so widely used. It points clearly and definitively to the necessary task. As stated earlier, the expression 'development of happiness' is useful, but it is open-ended; it does not clearly indicate the final goal of practice. {1107} Although this process can be described in both a positive and a negating way, only a negating description is decisive and clear: suffering is completely removed, with perfect happiness remaining.

The expression 'to strive in order to bring an end to...' indicates how the elimination of the cause of suffering goes hand in hand with effort. The causes for suffering do not necessarily vanish immediately. Rather, one gradually reduces greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), and weakens craving (*taṇhā*), conceit (*māna*) and fixed views (*diṭṭhi*). In this way, one practises according to the Path, by developing virtuous conduct, concentration and wisdom. Mental defilements diminish and ignorance decreases. Relatively speaking, this is the same as gradually increasing happiness.

This fourth factor can thus be paraphrased as the 'development of happiness', but for the sake of clarity, one adds the qualification: 'to develop happiness to perfection'. This is why the earlier definition in parentheses states: to strive in order to realize higher forms of happiness, all the way to supreme happiness (*parama-sukha*).

For this fourth factor to be fulfilled, one must link it with the third factor, of not indulging in any form of happiness – of not getting stuck, acting heedlessly, abandoning oneself to some form of pleasure, or ceasing to make effort. The fulfilment of the third factor enables one to reach the fourth factor and to reach spiritual perfection.

Another way of describing the proper relationship to happiness is to focus on four main factors of spiritual practice:

1. Heedfulness: this factor applies to everyone. It is an important reminder, because happiness induces fascination, captivation, procrastination, inertia, laziness, and carelessness. One thus needs to take care not to fall into heedlessness. History shows us that almost every successful person, family, society, nation, or even civilization, having reached a level of prosperity and growth, tends to become indulgent and careless, and eventually falls into ruin and destruction.

This is a crucial issue for families, and parents must take great care. Even the supreme virtue of lovingkindness can be excessive, in the case when parents pamper and pander to their children, and do not apply equanimity (*upekkhā*) as a balancing force. Eventually their children become weak, careless, indulgent, emotionally stunted, and unable to face the challenges of life. The family will consequently be undermined and ruined.

This is true also for individuals. At first one may strive to establish oneself in the world, yet when one is wealthy and happy, one may become indulgent and heedless, eventually falling into decline. In sum, one should beware against carelessness in regard to states of happiness.

2. Taking favourable opportunities: when one encounters suffering, one generally feels oppressed, stifled, and obstructed. Everything one does feels difficult, and great effort is required. The advantage to this sense of obstruction and difficulty, however, is precisely because of the need for increased effort in the face of suffering. As a result there is learning, training, and development. When one

acts appropriately in response to suffering, one grows and reaches great success.

The Pali term *sukha* ('happiness') can also be translated as 'fluent', 'smooth', 'convenient', or 'easy'.<sup>77</sup> When things are convenient, smooth, and easy, one should hasten to accomplish necessary deeds. When one experiences happiness, one should use this valuable opportunity for getting things done. {1108}

Using this opportunity to act is better than allowing happiness to lure one into a trap of enchantment and fixation, which only leads to indulgence and heedlessness. With the assistance by firmly established wisdom, one goes in the opposite direction, of using the opportunity provided by happiness to strive to get things done. This generates even greater spiritual growth and development.

One who has developed in this way is able to derive benefit from both happiness and suffering. Indeed, the term 'Dhamma practitioner' implies the ability to use wise reflection and to discern the advantages in every situation, to think in such ways:

- 'There is happiness. Good. Conditions are easy, convenient, smooth. This provides an opportunity to accomplish things to the utmost.'
- 'There is suffering. Good. Conditions are challenging. I need to make great effort. Bring them on. I will proceed undaunted.'

3. Independence: independence, or freedom, is the goal of Buddhism. True independence is founded on freedom of the heart – mental freedom. A prominent feature of this mental freedom is freedom in relation to happiness.

Independence follows on from the first factor, of heedfulness – of not being dominated and led astray by happiness. The first factor, however, is one of negation – of countering the urge to indulge

<sup>77</sup>Trans.: note Sir Monier Monier-Williams's definition of *sukha* in 'A Sanskrit-English Dictionary': 'Said to be from *su* + *kha* and to mean originally "having a good axle-hole"; running swiftly and easily....'

– whereas this fourth factor passes beyond, to a level of inner freedom.

Those who are spiritually developed are endowed with happiness, but they remain unattached to this happiness. Those who are fully developed experience free, independent happiness, yet are in no way bound or reliant on this happiness. For those individuals still in training, establishing this independence permits them to develop further.

4. Further development: this refers to the recognition that one still needs to make progress in one's spiritual practice.

These four factors work together in harmony. They lead to supreme happiness and to the complete removal of the source of suffering. One both abides in happiness and develops happiness; and one experiences happiness throughout this entire process of spiritual development.

### **C. HAPPINESS IN THE HOUSEHOLD**

For the sake of practical application, it is useful to look at three aspects of happiness that the Buddha often mentioned: sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*), happiness in society, and happiness in spiritual development.

The Buddha spoke at length on the subject of sense pleasure, because it pertains to everyone in the world. Sense pleasure stems from contact by way of the sense doors; it relies on sense engagement and is dependent on material things. It is the happiness of obtaining something for one's own personal consumption. The improper response to and mismanagement of sense pleasure is the source of myriad problems in the world, both personal and social, including interpersonal conflict, competition, and persecution. If one is to solve human problems effectively, one must address this issue; one must encourage people to develop wisdom in order to manage sense desire and sense pleasure correctly. At the very least, the advantages of engagement with sense pleasure should outweigh the harm. In any case, the subject of sense pleasure has been covered at length earlier in this chapter. Here, let it suffice simply to mention it as one aspect of happiness highlighted by the Buddha. {1109}

The second kind of happiness – happiness in society – is derived from friendship, goodwill, and living together with kindness and compassion. The two primary sets of principles pertaining to this form of happiness are the four ‘divine abidings’ (*brahmavihāra*) and the four ‘bases of social solidarity’ (*saṅgaha-vatthu*). Moreover, if one wishes for society or a democracy to be truly stable, one needs to foster the six ‘virtues conducive to communal life’ (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*; see below).

The primary emphasis for this kind of happiness focuses on the divine abidings, which have been explained above. Here, for the sake of practical application, we can look at the key example of how these mental states exist in family situations, beginning with the happiness of parents when they witness the wellbeing and happiness of their children.

Parents are often used as an example when explaining the four divine abidings of lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity, because it is in their nature for parents to possess these qualities. Mothers, in particular, epitomize these qualities, and are thus used as a standard in scriptural explanations. Mothers wish for their children to be happy, healthy, and content, free from pain and illness. To see her child happy fulfils a basic wish of a mother, which in turn makes her happy. This wish for the child to be happy and healthy is called lovingkindness (*mettā*).

If their child falls ill, parents will be anxious and concerned. They will strive to treat the illness, find a cure, and restore the child to good health. They will not feel happy until the child is cured. When the child completely recovers from the illness, the parents are satisfied; their wishes have been fulfilled and they experience happiness. This wish for the child to be free from suffering and to recover a state of wellbeing is called compassion (*karuṇā*).

If the child grows up well, is physically attractive and graceful, excels in his or her studies, finds good work and is promoted to a good position, i.e. the child prospers and thrives, the parents are delighted and the wish for their child to blossom and succeed is fulfilled. This wish for the child to thrive and discover ever greater happiness, and the shared rejoicing when this wish is fulfilled, is called appreciative joy (*muditā*).

According to most people, the parents are now fully endowed with virtuous qualities. But according to the four divine abidings, completion has not yet been reached. The parents can comfort their children, but they have not yet truly helped them grow. The children are not yet truly mature, or one can even say that the children are not grown up – they will remain dependent on their parents for emotional support.

One needs to remember the fourth factor of equanimity (*upekkhā*). In the case that children need to learn how to take responsibility for their lives and their actions, parents must let go and refrain from acting on behalf of their children. Instead, they should stand back and watch their children lead their own lives, in their own fashion. The parents do not interfere and meddle in their children's lives. This equanimity begins already when the children first learn how to stand, all the way up to the time they leave the home, get married, and look after their own families.

At this time when children leave home and start their own families, parents are discouraged from barging into their children's new homes and interfering in their affairs. They should refrain from trying to organize and rearrange their children's lives. Otherwise they become a source of suffering for their children, creating conflict and discomfort for them and their spouses. {1110}

When one recognizes that one's children are growing up and that the time has come for them to look after themselves, one steps back and observes. If one sees that they require some help or support, one provides assistance – one doesn't abandon them. One can still offer guidance and advice, but one refrains from interfering too much.

This wish for the child to abide in a correct and purposeful way, to not behave in a faulty or errant manner, and to live righteously – while the parents maintain dispassion, objectivity, and impartiality – is called equanimity (*upekkhā*). This factor of equanimity needs to be emphasized, because many people misunderstand it and thus do not know how to apply it effectively. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is the link between emotions and knowledge. It is the balancing point between love and insight, the meeting point between the mind (*citta*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

In regard to the first three divine abidings, it is recommended to combine these with wisdom so that they lead to beneficial results. But in everyday life, it is not always certain that wisdom will play a participatory role. For example, it is possible to love without being wise. Equanimity, however, stems directly from wisdom – it can only arise accompanied by wisdom. (Equanimity without wisdom is a counterfeit equanimity and may be referred to as ‘stupid indifference’.)

With the balancing influence of equanimity, the practice by parents of the first three divine abidings helps children to develop emotionally and promotes mental health. The children will be able to feel love, goodwill, and compassion. But if things are imbalanced by the absence of equanimity, parents simply coddle their children, which makes them weak and dependent on others. If the parents are strongly prejudiced in favour of their children, the children will become demanding and spoiled. They will expect others to please them, and they will be unable to sympathize with other people. Indeed, equanimity is the driving force in spiritual development, particularly in regard to intelligence, fortitude, skill, and a sense of responsibility.

Although it is both normal and necessary for parents to apply equanimity when raising their children, they are often not aware of this quality and do not know how to benefit from it in the maximum way. Take for example a mother who loves her infant son dearly and nurses and feeds him. Yet in order for the child to grow up, it is appropriate for him to learn how to use a spoon, a fork, a bowl, etc., and to be able to look after himself. One day the mother knows that it is time for the child to learn how to feed himself. She teaches him how to use a spoon and lets him learn from trial and error. She lets go and observes his progress. She repeats a similar lesson for peeling a banana or peeling an apple. This is equanimity.

Parents then ask themselves: ‘What should our children be able to do? What skills should they master?’ They continue to apply equanimity, by presenting their children with tasks or challenges and offering advice. They then let go, observing how their children stand on their own feet. Eventually, the children become proficient in many areas.



If parents only express kindness and compassion, their children will tend to remain passive; if they combine these qualities with equanimity, their children will become observant and industrious. {1111} When parents express only kindness and compassion, they experience the immediate and temporary satisfaction of seeing their children happy, but if they can also apply equanimity, their happiness will be long-lasting, because they will witness their children's ongoing progress and success. Parenting is a model example of how to develop happiness on a social level. Parents, and other leaders and guides in society, need to cultivate these four divine abidings, in particular the factor of equanimity.

Equanimity calls for truth and correctness. It encompasses a desire for our loved ones to be established in rectitude, righteousness, and impeccability. This is a supreme form of desire, and when this desire is fulfilled, one experiences a profound and abiding happiness. When individual homes and families live happily and are established in righteous principles, they act as core units for helping to create prosperous, happy, and civilized societies.

#### **D. DEVELOPING SENSE DESIRE: FROM COMPETITION TO COOPERATION**

In regard to sense desire, which is tied up with selfishness, when people develop the four divine abidings and their minds begin to radiate these qualities outward, their selfishness is reduced. They will not be exclusively caught up in trying to obtain things in order to seek personal gratification. Now, they also begin to consider the happiness of others. This wholesome desire – along with the happiness of seeing others possess attractive physical features, good health, contentment, etc. – acts as a counterbalance to selfish impulses.

The wish for others to be happy is a form of lovingkindness (*mettā*), a form of friendship (*mitta*). The wish for them to be free from suffering is compassion (*karuṇā*). Sharing in happiness when others succeed is appreciative joy (*muditā*). And when others have the potential to make mistakes, one wishes for them to abide in righteousness and correctness; one thus adopts equanimity (*upekkhā*) in order to safeguard and maintain the truth – the Dhamma. When people are endowed with these four qualities, their minds are radiant and expansive, deserving of the title

*brahma* ('divine', 'elevated', 'sublime'). Their happiness will increase, and, importantly, this happiness will be shared by others.

If one simply remains at the level of sense desire, one's happiness will surely be competitive. If I win something, you must lose, or you must do without. If you seize something, I go without. If I derive happiness, he derives none, or else he suffers, and vice versa. In sum, one vies for happiness; one does not share one's happiness.

This is one crucial disadvantage of sensual or material pleasure. The reason the world is so troubled, so full of oppression, brutality, and killing, is because of this scramble for sense pleasure. As a response, people need to develop themselves in order to reduce the dangers of sense pleasure and increase the blessings of higher forms of happiness.

The happiness of the four divine abidings is shared. When others experience happiness, we too are happy. A mother is not happy until her children are happy; once they are happy, she too is happy. This is a shared, collective happiness. {1112} Here, one has developed happiness to another level, to social happiness. One has graduated from a competitive form of happiness, where everyone simply fends for himself and vies for limited objects, to a shared, collective happiness. This is also a crucial stage for ethics, helping to promote true peace in the world.

The Buddha gave great emphasis to developing social happiness, especially in the context of the four divine abidings. The four divine abidings help in developing the quality of one's mind, but for real success one needs to also practise the four 'bases of social solidarity' (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) and the six 'virtues conducive to communal life' (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*).

Because the management of sense desire is linked to the development of social happiness, it needs to be included in this discussion. The Buddha encouraged people to manage sense desire in a correct, righteous fashion, free from harm. At the very least one should minimize the dangers of sense desire, and use it in positive, beneficial ways.

The Buddha acknowledged that sense pleasure is a form of happiness. He went on to say that it has advantages (*assāda*) and disadvantages (*ādinava*), and that there exists a way out (*nissaraṇa*) or a solution to

sense pleasure (i.e. a way to escape from its disadvantages). Indeed, the escape from sense desire is precisely the development of higher forms of happiness, beginning with the development of social happiness. There is no problem here if one still delights in sense pleasure. Along with the restraint of keeping the five precepts, the cultivation of social happiness prevents people from getting overly caught up with themselves and from competing with others. Instead, there will be more mutual assistance and cooperation. At the same time, people will experience another form of happiness which is more stable and enduring than sense pleasure.

Many people are unaware that the habitual pursuit of personal gratification eventually leads to being more susceptible to suffering. And this susceptibility to suffering fosters an inclination to suffer.

Let us return to the subject of shared happiness. To begin with, when one sees others happy and well, one shares in their happiness, a feeling referred to as lovingkindness (*mettā*). Next, one wishes for others to be free from suffering and cured from illness, and one shares in their happiness when they escape from these problems; this is referred to as compassion (*karuṇā*). Compassion has other, additional benefits.

Imagine that one falls ill and experiences great discomfort. If one is preoccupied with one's own problems, thinking, 'Why must this happen to me?' the suffering will be even more intense. Some may even think, 'Let others suffer from this disease instead – why does it have to be me?' These kinds of thoughts only increase the suffering.

If one is endowed with compassion, when facing illness, one will not brood over one's own problems. Rather, one will consider other human beings, thinking: 'Here I am faced with this illness and experience great discomfort. Yet there are other people in the world who are poor and destitute, who have no friends or relatives, who have no money to buy medicine or nurses to care for them. What must it be like for them? Yes, it's true that I am very ill, but I have friends and relatives to care for me, and doctors who are attending on me. At least I have adequate food and shelter. Think of the suffering for those people who are ill and who lack all these things?' By thinking in this way the severity of one's own illness

is reduced. The fact that one is sick will lessen in importance. It may even happen that one does not feel the discomfort any longer. {1113}

When one is able to further develop compassionate thoughts, one's illness becomes a reminder; one thinks: 'Were I not to have this illness, I probably would have forgotten to take into consideration those other people who suffer from illness. Now that I am reminded, how can I offer them assistance?' This is how illness reminds us to help those numerous people who are destitute and hardpressed, who have no friends or relatives, or people to care for them. They need our help to be freed from affliction. Illness is an impetus for compassion. Besides spurring us to look for ways to help others, our own suffering will be abated and sometimes even disappear. One's own illness will lose its significance.

The divine abidings are vital. They do not simply remain as passive emotions in the mind, but actively bear fruit in far-reaching ways. The Buddha stressed their cultivation, and the source or root of this spiritual development is wholesome desire (*chanda*). In this chapter the focus has been on wholesome desire in a social context, as one way of describing the importance of this spiritual factor.

Besides teaching people how to manage sense desire, which has the potential to create intense suffering, one also needs to encourage people to develop social happiness, by having them cultivate wholesome desire in respect to others through kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. In this way people will share their happiness with others, and they will be impelled to offer mutual assistance. At the very least, it will help to offset and reduce the harmful effects of sense desire.

#### **E. JOY LEADS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

The third kind of happiness referred to above is the happiness in spiritual development. This kind of happiness is generated from within an individual. It arises simultaneously with the overall development of one's life, and it accompanies progress in Dhamma practice. The development of the body, moral conduct, the mind, and wisdom may be referred to as spiritual cultivation or Dhamma practice. When this development progresses, one experiences this spiritual happiness.

The Buddha gave a teaching on five factors of happiness in spiritual development, which are collectively given the unusual name of ‘concentration of the Dhamma’ (*dhamma-samādhī*). Although this group is not exclusively referred to as ‘happiness’ (*sukha*), happiness is one of the factors. Moreover, all of the other factors are attributes of happiness and are connected with happiness. Since our present discussion is on happiness, we can thus refer to this group as ‘factors of happiness’.

The five factors contained in this group refer to specific mind states, which can be called ‘happy mind states’ (*sukha-bhāva*). The Buddha repeatedly stressed that someone whose Dhamma practice bears fruit will grow in these five qualities. Conversely, if someone practises the Dhamma, yet these five qualities fail to arise, there will be no hope of true success. {1114} One example the Buddha gave is of someone who listens to the Dhamma and then investigates it. If he or she practises correctly, wisdom deepens and these five mind states arise.

Similar to social happiness, these five factors of happiness in spiritual development are based on wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*), and they unfold in an ordered sequence. But they are not expressed outwardly; they exist as direct and immediate attributes of the mind. These factors are as follows:

1. Joy (*pāmojja*): cheerfulness; gladness. This is a fundamental attribute of the mind, which people should sustain at all times. In the Dhammapada it states:

Full of joy,  
confident in the Buddha’s teaching,  
A bhikkhu will attain the peaceful state,  
The stilling of formations, the bliss [supreme].

*Pāmojjabahulo bhikkhu pasanno buddhasāsane adhigacche padaṃ  
santaṃ saṅkhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ.*

*Dh. verse 381.*

Another verse describes a monk who has practised well and correctly, and ends:

Full of joy,  
He will make an end of suffering.  
*Tato pāmojjabahulo dukkhassantaṃ karissati.*

*Dh. verse 376.*

Joy is a vital innate quality, indicating that one is progressing in spiritual practice and has the potential to develop further. When one is full of joy, it is possible to realize Nibbāna, or one is close to Nibbāna.

2. Delight (*pīti*): bliss; rapture. With joy, there is delight.
3. Tranquillity (*passaddhi*): serenity; calm; physical and mental relaxation. This factor acts as the link between the body and mind. If the body is tense, the mind is tense; if the mind is stressed, the body is stressed. With delight, there is tranquillity and relaxation.
4. Happiness (*sukha*): sense of mental refreshment; ease; absence of affliction and stress. With the arising of tranquillity, there is happiness.
5. Concentration (*samādhi*): one-pointedness of mind; steadiness of mind; absence of mental disturbance; attention rests on a chosen object as desired. With the arising of happiness, there is the potential for concentration.

Concentration acts as the link to wisdom; it prepares the mind for the effective application of wisdom. And when wisdom is developed, every other aspect of spiritual development is optimized and progresses smoothly. The presence of these five factors is crucial to the spiritual development of human beings. When people are endowed with these factors their education and work proceeds effectively, and their entire Dhamma practice is steady and reliable.

If people practise incorrectly, the opposite qualities, like trouble and stress, arise. There is then an absence of joy, delight, tranquillity, and

happiness, and the mind remains scattered. One then experiences inner disturbance and obstruction. The mind is imbalanced and ill-at-ease. The result is a lack of progress or success. {1115}

If one possesses these five complementary factors, they will automatically be integrated with spiritual qualities connected to society, in particular the four divine abidings. When one generates lovingkindness towards others, one engages in self-development. The performing of benevolent deeds is simultaneously a way to practise the Dhamma within oneself. By acting kindly, one develops spiritually. At the same time, by radiating a sense of lovingkindness, joy arises within. Joy is then followed by the other qualities, for example of delight.

Similarly, when one compassionately aids someone who is suffering, once that person is healthy and at ease, one experiences delight, which is then followed by other qualities, including happiness.

If one is continually cheerful, relaxed, and calm, wherever one goes one enhances one's social environment. Whomever one meets and speaks to feels at ease, and shares in one's happiness. One thus induces happiness and engenders spiritual qualities in others. One supports others' spiritual development.

When one walks on the correct path, these positive factors arise in a natural sequence; they are all interconnected; they are all aspects of happiness.

A simple method of Dhamma practice is thus to maintain one's mind in a state of cheerfulness. Ideally, one combines this with lovingkindness. Although it may not be one's intention, one's complexion will appear pleasing and attractive to others. One will have many cooperative and helpful friends, one will live with others in peace, one's community will prosper, and one's work will reach success.

Here, let us compare these three kinds of happiness: sense pleasure, social happiness, and happiness of spiritual development.

Sense pleasure is derived from external, material things, obtained for one's own personal benefit. Each separate individual desires or covets these things, and thus sense desire breeds competition and conflict. It

therefore requires caution and constraint. The purpose of the five precepts is to regulate sense desire, to manage the pursuit and consumption of material things, and to prevent people from creating an excessive amount of trouble and oppression for each other. However much people consume or contest for material things, one can wish that it does not reach the extent that the world becomes engulfed in flames. The five precepts exist as a reminder that sense desire requires supervision and restraint.

Social happiness is generated by providing happiness to others and to society. It stems from a heart of lovingkindness and compassion – the desire to see others at ease – and is thus a shared, mutual happiness. The five happiness factors of spiritual development, beginning with joy, arise from within a person and have no negative effects on others. They may arise by doing good to others, and they are the starting point of spreading goodness outwards. So although it is an internal, personal happiness, it brings about a connection with others. It fosters virtue and mutual assistance.

The latter two kinds of happiness cause no harm. Rather, they are supportive to both the individual and to society. They help people to mitigate the harm from pursuing sense pleasure, and they introduce people to a way of enjoying sense pleasure promoting mutual wellbeing. Moreover, they bring a refinement to people's lives, and provide people with a way out leading to higher levels of spiritual development. These two kinds of happiness should thus be given great emphasis. {1116}

#### **F. A CULTIVATED MIND IS EASILY CONTENT**

As mentioned earlier, sense pleasure is the most important matter for ordinary human beings. But, because it involves vying with other people, one must manage it well and practise restraint. The five precepts were established in order to ensure that the pursuit of sense pleasure and consumption of desirable objects remains within proper boundaries. However much one seeks pleasure and competes with others, don't let it be a cause for severe trouble, to the extent that the world enters an era of oppression.



When human beings are established in the five precepts, society is relatively stable, but this is no guarantee that people will be very happy. To improve the life of individuals and society, people must develop themselves further. This is the purpose of the eight precepts.

After one has sought pleasure by relying on external material things for seven or eight days, one sets aside one day in order to live more simply and to reduce one's dependency on these things. The time one normally uses to gratify one's own desires, one uses for other objectives, by keeping the eight precepts on the observance day (*uposatha*), which falls on either the eighth or fifteenth day of the waxing moon, or the eighth, fourteenth, or fifteenth day of the waning moon, i.e. about four times per month.

The five precepts focus on the non-harming of other people. In the eight precepts, the third precept is changed to abstaining from sexual activity, and three additional precepts are added. Both the variation on the third precept and the additional three precepts are matters concerning the individual; they do not directly pertain to other people. The three additional precepts are:

- 6th precept: to refrain from eating at the 'improper time', that is, after midday; on this day one need not pander to the tongue.
- 7th precept: to refrain from singing, dancing, music, and various forms of entertainment that please the eye and ear.
- 8th precept: to abstain from indulging in the pleasures of tactile sensation derived from lying on soft and luxuriant mattresses.

One day each week is reserved for self-training. It is an easy method of developing happiness independent of external things.

Although the Buddha acknowledged that seeking pleasure from material things is a personal matter, he said that if people are not careful, their happiness will become dependent on these things. Eventually, no amount of these things will suffice to provide them with happiness. They will keep trying to acquire more until they end up oppressing others. To maintain one's independence, one thus needs to train oneself.

One may have pampered oneself with good food and delicious flavours for seven days. On the eighth day, one practises by applying the sixth precept, in order to see whether one can still be happy without following the desires of the palate. {1131} Instead of delicious tastes, one now emphasizes physical health and quality of life. Rather than following the desires of the palate, one eats just enough to sustain the body.

The same goes for the eyes and ears. For seven days one entertains oneself by way of sights and sounds. On the eighth day one applies the seventh precept and learns to live without these amusements. One uses one's time instead for other purposes, for instance by practising meditation, assisting other people, or benefiting society.

One may normally sleep on a thick and comfortable mattress. On the eighth day one experiments by sleeping on a thin mat, to see if one can be happy without relying on these comforts.

By keeping these precepts, people are more vigilant and avoid an over-dependence on and indulgence in material things. Such a training in virtuous conduct makes people easily happy, not prone to suffering, and mentally strong. It is conducive to the further development of happiness; it is the link to mental development and wisdom development.

One may wish to verify or determine to what extent one's happiness is independent of material things. To do this, consider the following kinds of people:

Many people abandon themselves to the pursuit of sense pleasure. They must eat delicious food, entertain themselves with various amusements, e.g. television, and sleep in luxurious beds. And they are continually in search of more of these things and more exceptional things. Eventually their happiness becomes dependent on these things, which become indispensable. They are not able to live contentedly by themselves, because the only channel for accessing happiness is by way of these material things.

Some people's happiness is completely tied up with these gratifying sense objects. If they have to do without, they become agitated, thinking:

‘I must have these things; otherwise I’ll die.’ In this case, they have utterly lost their independence.

Those people who train themselves by way of the eight precepts, however, are able to live simply and find it easier to access happiness. They gradually become more self-reliant and flexible, and thus maintain their independence. In regard to gratifying sense objects, they will say: ‘I can take them or leave them. If I have them I’m comfortable, but I can live without them. Even if I must lay on a mat or on a wooden floor, I can sleep.’ Moreover, they are less likely to suffer chronic back pain. (Some people with chronic back pain are ordered by their doctors to sleep on the floor!)

Later, one may gain a new level of proficiency. One will recognize that these fancy and extravagant things are unnecessary. {1132} In reference to these things, one will say, ‘I can take them or leave them’, or even, ‘If I have them it’s okay, but it’s fine not to have them, because I’ll have more freedom and independence.’

Already an initial training in these matters will bring about greater independence, enabling us to use our time more beneficially and to find it easier to experience happiness. We will be able to derive an adequate and ample value from sense objects; we won’t be driven to increase the quantity or degree of these things, while our level of happiness remains the same.

While dwelling alone one is able to experience happiness. If one encounters pleasurable sense objects, one engages with them with wise discernment. They may supplement one’s already existing happiness. Simply beware that these things do not become essential for one’s happiness, otherwise one will lose one’s independence.

In reference to the observance days (*uposatha*), the Buddha encouraged people to use the time they would normally be seeking pleasurable sense experiences to engage in beneficial activities (*anavajja-kamma*). When one is not devoted to ministering to one’s own personal pleasures, one is left with a lot of free time. On the observance days one can use this spare time for wholesome purposes, say by seeking knowledge, reading Dhamma

books, teaching children, meditating, helping orphans, or visiting the elderly.

This is another stage of spiritual practice. When you have the opportunity, try and keep the Uposatha precepts once every eight days. They are not that difficult and their benefits are great. They help maintain one's independence, enable one to live happily with few material possessions, are conducive to meditation and good health, enhance the quality of one's life, and provide one with extra time to engage in wholesome activities.

### G. HAPPINESS OF GIVING LEADS TO PEACE IN SOCIETY

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha gave great importance to social happiness. The focus so far has been on internal spiritual qualities, by demonstrating how people's wholesome mind states are connected to and have an effect on social happiness. The discussion has shown how people's happiness has many aspects, one of which is happiness on a social level. To complete this discussion, we need to also look at those principles pertaining to a more active engagement in society.

We can begin by asking the question: 'When someone feels kindness and wishes to make others happy, or feels compassion and wishes for others to be freed from suffering, what is the most fundamental expression of these wholesome mind states?' This is connected to a related question: 'What quality did the Buddha most often speak about in relation to householders?' The answer is 'giving' (*dāna*), that is, generosity.

Buddhism begins with generosity. The Buddha presented a threefold practice for laypeople called the three bases of meritorious action (*puñṇakiriya-vatthu*),<sup>78</sup> which is paired with the threefold training of the monastic community. Simply speaking, the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*) is the practice for the monks and nuns, while the three bases of meritorious action – of generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*sīla*), and spiritual cultivation (*bhāvanā*) – comprise the practice for laypeople.

<sup>78</sup>They are sometimes referred to as the ten bases of meritorious action.

The first factor of meritorious action is generosity (*dāna*). In all the important groups taught by the Buddha of spiritual qualities pertaining to the general public, generosity is always the first factor. What does this term ‘giving’ (*dāna*) imply? It implies that, generally speaking for the average person, the pursuit, possession, division, and consumption of material things are the most predominant activities, the main issues in people’s lives. Of all these activities dealing with material things, they merge at the activity of consumption.

What is the basic line of thinking, the basic mental preoccupation, for most people? Due to the pressure of wanting to survive, people struggle to obtain things for themselves. This repeated thought pattern of trying to get things, to obtain things, eventually becomes habitual; it becomes an underlying tendency of the mind. Yet the pursuit, acquisition, and accumulation of things is relentless; people generally do not know what is enough. Moreover, material things are limited in number, giving rise to competition and oppression, which escalates until the whole world is in conflict.

The solution to this problem begins with giving, with generosity. At the very least generosity should be used to offset acquisitive tendencies, but if possible, one should embed this quality as a habit, as a natural disposition of the mind. If one only thinks about acquiring things, one will end up exploiting others and one will experience inner turmoil. To balance the act of acquisition it is thus essential to also practise generosity. {1117} Sharing with others is thus paired with the pursuit, acquisition, and consumption of things for one’s own personal benefit. It is considered the fundamental spiritual quality for laypeople and for the wellbeing of human society.

Generosity acts as a foundation for developing higher spiritual qualities. The three bases of meritorious action (*puññakiriya-vatthu*) provide a broad outline of such development, as generosity, moral conduct, and cultivation of the mind. When the Buddha taught laypeople whose knowledge of Dhamma was still at a beginning level, he would generally lay a gradual foundation by teaching what is referred to as the fivefold ‘progressive instruction’ (*anupubbikathā*). This teaching begins with generosity (*dāna*), which is then followed by talk on morality (*sīla-kathā*), talk on

heavenly pleasures (*sagga-kathā*), the disadvantages of sensual pleasures (*kāmādīnava*), and the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhammānisaṃsa*).

Generosity is part of the four ‘principles of service’ (*saṅgaha-vatthu*), the virtues making for social integration: generosity (*dāna*), kindly speech (*piya-vācā*), acts of service (*atthacariyā*), and even and equal treatment of others (*samānattatā*).

Generosity is the first factor in the ten royal virtues (*dasarāja-dhamma*; virtues of a ruler): generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*sīla*), self-sacrifice (*pariccāga*), integrity (*ājjava*), gentleness (*maddava*), self-control (*tapā*), non-anger (*akkodha*), non-violence (*avihiṃsā*), patience (*khanti*), and conformity to righteousness (*avirodhana*).

Generosity is even the first factor in the ten perfections (*pāramī*), the virtues perfected by bodhisattas: generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), effort (*virīya*), patience (*khanti*), honesty (*sacca*), determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), lovingkindness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Generosity is the first factor in several other groups of spiritual qualities. Its importance is obvious. Even if one is starving and close to death, it is generosity that may save one’s life.

Generosity helps to alleviate suffering and generates happiness in societies that are competitive or oppressive due to the pursuit of personal pleasures. Besides its own inherent benefits, generosity is also a supporting factor for other qualities, including moral conduct (*sīla*). The sharing of material things makes it easier for people to maintain virtuous conduct. On a basic level, when people receive things from others, they are less likely to try and seize them through unlawful means.

People have varying degrees of moral steadfastness. Some people will not steal from others if they are not truly in need, but if they are destitute they may revert to stealing as a way to survive. Generosity, say in the form of charity, can help this situation. (Of course, there are some people who have a very weak immunity to immoral behaviour and will try to seize things from others whenever they feel the slightest need. In such cases, one may need to come up with other ways to address this problem.) In any case, when there is mutual sharing and caring, the incidents involving

theft and violation of others' property will diminish. Generosity thus helps to protect moral standards in society.

Generosity is also a support for the cultivation of the mind. Even those practitioners who develop tranquillity and insight meditation (*samatha-vipassanā*) prize the value of generosity. The Buddha stated how, in the context of tranquillity and insight meditation, generosity is both an 'adornment of the mind' (*cittālaṅkāra*) and an 'embellishment of the mind' (*citta-parikkhāra*). {1118}

The practice of generosity and self-sacrifice helps to enhance and beautify the mind. It makes the mind receptive, obliging, and intent on goodness. It fortifies the mind, integrates wholesome intentions, and prepares the mind for relinquishment. It makes the mind clear, spacious, relaxed, and bright. It is conducive to concentration, to mental purification, and to higher spiritual states. The delight and happiness of generosity alone is greatly beneficial to one's meditation, to the development of tranquillity and insight. For this reason, laypeople who have reached a level of awakening are still dedicated to the act of giving and sharing.

The term *dāna* encompasses a wide range of meanings, including: 'generosity', 'charity', 'liberality', 'open-handedness', and 'hospitality'. As mentioned earlier, it is the basis for a happy, harmonious society. Generosity is of key significance in Buddhism, both in the Buddhist teachings and in Buddhist history. Here, in the Buddhist country of Thailand, one can observe that Thai people give easily, relinquish things easily, and are charitable by nature.

Giving needs to be done correctly and carefully, however. It needs to be accompanied by wise reflection, by taking precautions against harmful side effects. Moreover, it needs to be integrated with other aspects of spiritual practice. One shouldn't think: 'I have reached the stage of meditation; I no longer need to participate in giving.' This is incorrect. Generosity supports meditation practice. As mentioned above, it acts as an adornment for the mind, enabling one's tranquillity and insight meditation to bear fruit.

## H. SHARING OF MATERIAL GAINS WITHIN THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY

So far the emphasis has been on the lay community; let us turn our attention to the monastic community. Do not believe that the life of the monastic community, of the monks, revolves only around formal meditation practice.<sup>79</sup> The terms ‘meditation’ or ‘Dhamma practice’ can either be given a too narrow definition, or else their definitions are vague and ambiguous, to the point that one sometimes needs to avoid these terms or to use them with care. In fact, every valid activity of a monk can be described as ‘Dhamma practice’, and anyone – monk or layperson – who engages in proper ‘giving’ (*dāna*) need accord with this principle of Dhamma practice.

By examining the monks’ life in relation to the formal discipline (Vinaya), one sees how this life is communal, and one also sees how it is distinguished from lay-life. The communal life of a monk, which is guided by the formal discipline, is at heart connected to essential Dhamma principles, because the gist of the Vinaya corresponds to the Dhamma – to principles or teachings of truth. Yet this connection needs to be discerned accurately. The communal life of the monks is based on harmony, which is generated and sustained by way of the formal discipline. As soon as we focus here on harmony, we have immediately linked up with the Dhamma. At this point we can look at those principles which act as a foundation for harmony.

A repeated teaching in both the Suttanta Piṭaka and the Vinaya Piṭaka is that on the six virtues conducive to communal life (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*), which are applied directly for sustaining the stability of the monastic community. {1119} This is a teaching for practical application. For example, one accesses the internal spiritual virtue of lovingkindness and expresses it outwardly in daily life. These six virtues are given great importance in the context of monastic community life. Let us review these factors:

1. Physical acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-kāyakamma*): acting out of mutual consideration and cooperation.

<sup>79</sup>Trans.: note that the term ‘monk’ here can be interpreted as genderless, referring to both monks and nuns.



2. Verbal acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-vacīkamma*): speaking out of kindness and well-wishing. For example, one advises and offers instruction by using polite and courteous speech.
3. Thinking of others with lovingkindness (*mettā-manokamma*): maintaining thoughts of well-wishing and concern for others; remaining in good spirits.
4. The sharing of gains (*sādhāraṇabhogī* or *sādhāraṇabhogitā*): sharing one's material gains, say of requisites or food, with others so that everyone can partake of them. (*Sādhāraṇabhogī* literally means eating or consuming things as public, common goods, for the benefit of all.)
5. Keeping equal moral standards (*sīla-sāmaññatā*): keeping equal standards in light of the formal rules of conduct (Vinaya); refraining from making oneself objectionable or disagreeable to one's community.
6. Being endowed with right views along with one's companions (*diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā*).

To return to the subject of generosity, one may ask, since monks do not earn a livelihood, do not seek or accumulate material things, and do not own wealth or property, how are they able to give? Here, we won't discuss the 'gift of Dhamma' (*dhamma-dāna*), which in reference to monks is often paired with the material gifts (*vatthu-dāna*; *āmisā-dāna*) by laypeople. In regard to monks and material things, generosity or the act of giving is represented by the fourth factor of the virtues conducive to communal life above, namely, the sharing of gains (*sādhāraṇabhogī*).

If one overlooks a study of the formal discipline (Vinaya), one will not appreciate the importance that Buddhism gives to people's relationship to material things. In the context of monastic life, the Buddha gave great emphasis to the sharing of material requisites. The Vinaya contains key principles and guidelines for sharing gains in a righteous and thorough way. Besides focusing on these matters of material gain, the Vinaya also addresses a system of communal living. Indeed, the sharing of gains is an aspect of communal life. And as stated earlier, the Vinaya is linked with

the Dhamma at the principle of social harmony (*sāmaggī*), which ensures social stability and happiness.

If one is to truly understand Buddhism, one's focus should not simply be on the Dhamma teachings, which emphasize spiritual qualities. Buddhism is not merely a collection of Dhamma teachings. It also includes the Vinaya, which address social issues and material concerns. By having a more comprehensive overview, one will get to the heart of the term 'Dhammavinaya'. {1120}

### I. GOODNESS IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS ACTIVELY SUPPORTS SOCIETY

Both in respect to the monastic community and to the lay community, the basic foundation for social happiness rests with the same group of spiritual qualities: lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) – the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*). But when establishing a system of practice in social situations, another set of factors must be defined – based on the foundation of spiritual qualities above – which can be applied in the domain of conventional reality.

The six virtues conducive to communal life (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*) practised by the monks are based on the four divine abidings. But it is difficult to establish this same set of six virtues in the context of lay-life. Take for example the fourth factor, of equally distributing material gains. This is realistic and achievable in the monastic community, but very difficult to implement in everyday society. Generally, the best people can do in this context is to defer to this principle of sharing everything with others, or else they sidestep the issue altogether. For this reason, another group of factors was established as a practical guideline for lay society. If asked what these factors are, I wonder how many Buddhists are able to answer.

As an aside, I have observed that lay Buddhists are generally not able to properly distinguish between internal, spiritual factors and practical principles applied in external, social circumstances. For example, many people refer to spiritual qualities like lovingkindness and compassion, and talk about them as if they are principles for practical application in society. This causes confusion and misunderstanding for the speaker as well as for others. (See Note 11.5)

## NOTE 11.5: MISUNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLES

Take for example the case of Dr. Joseph L. Sutton from Indiana University who in 1962 came to work in Thailand. During the time that the Graduate School of Public Administration was founded at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Dr. Sutton wrote an analysis of Thai society in regard to Buddhism and development in his book 'Problems of Politics and Administration in Thailand' (Bloomington: Institute of Training for Public Service, Department of Government, Indiana University, 1962).

He cited a passage by Albert Schweitzer stating that in Buddhist societies benevolent acts do not require any real action at all, because, according to the Buddhist teachings, all one needs to do is stay at home and spread thoughts of lovingkindness (here, I am simply paraphrasing the passage).

Thai people are probably at fault here, by practising incorrectly and giving Dr. Sutton the impression expressed in this passage. It thus behooves the Thai people to understand the Buddhist teachings correctly and to redeem themselves.

As mentioned above, the six virtues conducive to communal life are based on the four divine abidings. Yet it is obvious that in this teaching, lovingkindness is not simply an emotion stored in the heart; rather, it is applied outwardly as physical acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-kāyakamma*; enthusiastic assistance of others), verbal acts of lovingkindness (*mettā-vacikamma*), and thoughts of lovingkindness (*mettā-manokamma*). In the context of lay society, the four divine abidings are expressed as principles of practical application in the teaching of the four bases of social solidarity (*saṅgaha-vatthu*).

Earlier we discussed generosity (*dāna*) in the context of inner development, as part of the three bases of meritorious action (*puñṇakiriya-vatthu*). Here, we will discuss generosity in the context of practical application for householders, as part of the four bases of social solidarity. {1121}

The four bases of social solidarity (*saṅgaha-vatthu*; also referred to as 'principles of service' or 'virtues making for group integration') are applied to external, social situations; they are paired with the internal, spiritual factors of the four divine abidings:

1. Generosity (*dāna*):

- A. One gives to others in an ordinary situation, in order to express one's love and well-wishing, one's kindness and consideration. This is giving with lovingkindness.
- B. One gives to others who are distressed or sick, in order to offer assistance. This is giving with compassion.
- C. One gives to others who have performed a benefit to society, for example to a skilled inventor, in order to offer support and encouragement. This is giving with appreciative joy.

2. Kindly speech (*piya-vācā*):

- A. One speaks kind, polite, and courteous words in ordinary situations. This is speech with lovingkindness.
- B. One speaks comforting words and offers wise advice when others are confronted with difficulty. This is speech with compassion.
- C. One speaks words of rejoicing and admiration when others perform good deeds and engage in meritorious, wholesome acts. This is speech with appreciative joy.

3. Acts of service (*atthacariyā*):

- A. One helps others and provides support, by wishing them well. These are acts of service with lovingkindness.
- B. One helps others, by way of one's physical efforts or by way of one's wisdom and proficiency, to escape from difficulty when they are faced with hardship and affliction, say from floods and fires, or a workload exceeding their strength. These are acts of service with compassion.
- C. One helps others when they perform beneficial actions, for example when they organize an almsgiving ceremony in a monastery, by lending a hand and encouraging their acts of goodness. These are acts of service with appreciative joy.

4. Even and equal treatment (*samānattatā*): fair and just treatment of others. This factor corresponds with equanimity (*upekkhā*). Equanimity is expressed by way of this even and equal treatment, by non-favouritism, by non-discrimination, by refraining from disparaging or exploiting others, by just behaviour, and by integrating oneself and living in harmony with others.

When one reaches the stage of practical application, one needs to engage on this level of the four principles of service. One should not simply recite the four divine abidings in a vague and ambiguous way. Otherwise, the criticisms, say by the Western author mentioned in the last footnote, are justified. Rather than condemn the critics, we should explain to them the truth of the matter.

By practising in accord with these four principles, one fosters happiness and harmony in one's community. One helps to create an environment conducive to each individual's wellbeing, success, and development. Moreover, acting in order to benefit society is inherently a form of self-development. For this reason it is said that serving others is a form of spiritual practice. By acting in order to benefit others one automatically benefits and develops oneself. {1122}

Take for example a bodhisatta, who engages in Dhamma practice and develops the perfections (*pāramī*) by helping others. Indeed, the very act of helping others constitutes his or her Dhamma practice. In order to effectively help others, one must apply wisdom and skill, and be cultivating an advanced stage of spiritual practice.

By successfully helping others, we ourselves undergo a spiritual transformation. Our wisdom faculty and other spiritual capabilities are strengthened. In order to practise the Dhamma correctly, one must thus accord with two teachings by the Buddha:

- First, the Buddha presented the pair of factors consisting of non-harming of oneself and non-harming of others.
- Second, he taught the pair of factors: attending to personal wellbeing (*attattha*) and attending to the wellbeing of others (*parattha*).

This second teaching less commonly consists of three factors: self-benefit (*attattha*), benefit of others (*parattha*), and mutual benefit (*ubhayattha*). These two factors, of attending to one's own personal matters and attending to the concerns of others, are always paired with one another.

### J. MUTUAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS EVERYONE

In terms of the monastic community, apart from emphasizing the sharing of material gains, the Buddha also gave great emphasis to communal harmony (*sāmaggī*). This harmony stands in contrast to a schism in the sangha (*saṅgha-bheda*), which if created intentionally counts as one of the five 'crimes bringing about immediate results' (*anantariya-kamma*), the most severe form of evil deed. This reveals the prime importance the Buddha gave to communal harmony. For the lay community, the Buddha also emphasized the importance of unity and concord, by maintaining the four bases of social solidarity (*saṅgaha-vatthu*).

Of all the Buddha's male lay disciples who were praised as being preeminent (*etadagga*), there are two who stand out as supreme: the householder Citta, who was foremost at preaching the Dhamma, and Hatthaka,<sup>80</sup> who was foremost at uniting other people.

Hatthaka was proficient at creating communal harmony by way of the four bases of social solidarity. As a leader he was able to use these four factors to bring about a firm and stable harmony amongst his community. The Buddha praised these two individuals as being the standard-bearers of the Buddhist male lay community. (The female lay community also contained a pair of supreme disciples who acted as standard-bearers: Khujjuttarā, who was foremost in great knowledge, and Nandamātā, foremost in meditative proficiency.)

The reason why I am emphasizing this subject is that contemporary Buddhists seem to view Buddhism as a matter dealing almost exclusively

<sup>80</sup>Trans.: the author spells his name as Hatthakāḷavaka.

with the individual.<sup>81</sup> They do not seem to realize the importance the Buddha gave to communal and social issues. I believe Buddhists need to establish a more balanced perspective.

In sum, in relation to the monastic community, the Buddha emphasized the principle of harmony (*sāmaggī*), while in relation to the lay community he emphasized the four bases of social solidarity (*saṅgaha-vatthu*). In both cases, the focal point is communal harmony. In the case of the monks and nuns the Buddha spoke in a more general, abstract sense, whereas in regard to the laity he spoke about material possessions. Buddhism thus gives great emphasis to communal and social issues, which are intimately connected to personal issues.

Granted, personal issues are an essential aspect of spiritual practice. For people to develop spiritually, things must proceed according to laws of nature pertaining to the individual. {1123} Even on the level of the body, after swallowing food we must digest it ourselves; no one can help us to do this. If we are unable to swim, no amount of strident instructions by another, or even divine intervention, will enable us to swim. If we are unable to do multiplication, our friends cannot calculate the answer and beam it into our brains. If we are suffering, no matter how much others love us, they won't be able to imbue us with happiness. And if we lack wisdom, others are unable to infuse us with it. For this reason, one must be able to rely on oneself; one must train oneself and cultivate the necessary natural conditions oneself.

Having said this, Buddhism recognizes the well-wishing, support, and encouragement by others as an essential external condition for people's spiritual development. As guides and teachers, wise and well-meaning people are able to apply social systems to act as a catalyst initiating natural dynamics within an individual (most notably wise reflection). Once these dynamics set in, the process of development reaches fulfilment.

This is how other people are able to help. To begin with they express kindness and well-wishing, and then they actively assist as an external influence. For example, a teacher provides instruction to foster wisdom

<sup>81</sup>Trans.: the author is making this observation in relation to Thai Buddhists, but I think it is a valid observation in relation to Buddhists worldwide.

in his or her pupils, but if the pupils do not wish to learn, the teaching is in vain. The teacher is unable to automatically transfer knowledge into the pupils' minds. The pupils need to combine this teaching with internal factors. When one knows how to investigate, is determined to listen, and possesses skilful reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), the information one has learned (referred to as *suta*) is transformed into wisdom. The teacher is unable to inject this wisdom into the student.

I have often pointed out how laypeople go to monks and ask for moral conduct. They chant: *Mayaṃ bhante tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāma*: 'We request the five precepts.' Yet the monks reply: 'We are unable to confer on you moral conduct – this is something you must develop yourself.' So what is to be done? The monks know that moral rectitude arises from proper spiritual practice; it is not something that one person can give to another. They thus tell the laypeople: 'After reciting these precepts, go and keep them, go and follow them; true morality will then arise within you.'

The laypeople ask for morality (*sīla*) and the monks give them precepts or training rules (*sikkhāpada*). They recite: *Pāṇātipāta veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*: 'I undertake the precept of refraining from harming living creatures,' etc. By keeping the precepts, morality arises within the individual. Laypeople may ask for concentration from the monks, who will reply in a similar way, saying: 'This is not something I can bestow on you; you must develop it yourself. But I can teach you meditation techniques for you to practise. By developing these you will generate concentration.' The same goes for wisdom. The monks will reply: 'I can't give you wisdom, but I can share information and teachings for you to reflect on and investigate. In this way you will generate wisdom within yourselves.'

- When laypeople ask for morality, the monks give them precepts to undertake.
- When laypeople ask for concentration, the monks give them meditation techniques to develop.



- When laypeople ask for wisdom, the monks give them teachings to examine. {1124}

To sum up, spiritual practice vis-à-vis society – acts of service for one's community or society – bears two important fruits on the personal level:

- First, when one acts for the benefit of society, say by offering assistance to others, these very actions constitute spiritual practice – they are an exceptional opportunity for spiritual practice.
- Second, by acting in this way one creates a conducive environment for spiritual practice, which benefits everyone, including oneself.

This second factor is very important. If society is filled with turmoil and oppression, how is one able to practise the Dhamma? Studying, seeking out books, sitting in meditation – all of these activities are obstructed. In the monastic community it is essential that the monks foster peace, harmony, and cooperation, creating a conducive atmosphere for each individual to engage in Dhamma practice and perform regular duties conveniently and at ease. A peaceful community enables people to increase their acts of service for others, which in turn increases the personal benefits mentioned above, strengthening a wholesome cycle.

Buddhism gives great emphasis to society. When examining Buddhism, one should not look solely at the Dhamma teachings; rather, one should also investigate the formal discipline – the Vinaya. Moreover, there are distinct spiritual factors which help to bridge the Dhamma and the Vinaya, and which are highlighted in regard to one's relationship to society and to the material world.

When one performs good deeds for society with a mind of kindness and compassion, one experiences joy and delight. One thus obtains a vital spiritual factor. When one witnesses someone become freed from suffering, one's joy increases. By helping others, one's society becomes more joyous and one's own happiness grows, which is conducive to other spiritual factors.

In this context, bear in mind these two groups of factors:

- In relation to society, one applies the four bases of social solidarity (*saṅgaha-vatthu*), which are based on the four divine abidings of lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. The four bases of solidarity create a collective happiness.
- In relation to the individual, one is endowed with the five factors constituting ‘concentration of the Dhamma’ (*dhamma-samādhī*): joy, delight, tranquillity, happiness, and concentration. These factors facilitate spiritual practice and act as internal ‘assets’ or a personal ‘capital’. In particular, one should try and foster the first factor of *pāmojja*: joy, cheerfulness, gladness.

Awakened beings, including stream-enterers, act as exemplars in this context. The Buddha described how noble beings maintain both personal happiness and social happiness. He compared stream-enterers, who diligently attend to both their individual practice and to communal activities and helping others, with a mother cow, who while grazing looks over her shoulder to look after her calf, checking to see that it is getting enough to eat:

Monks, just as a cow with a young calf, while she grazes watches her calf, so too, that is the character of a person who is accomplished in right view (i.e. a stream-enterer). Indeed, a noble disciple attends earnestly to those necessary affairs concerning his companions in the holy life, yet he is [also] ardently attentive to the training in higher morality, the training in higher mind, and the training in higher wisdom.

*M. I. 324.*

The Buddha wished for people to behave in a similar way as these stream-enterers. {1125}

## K. THE WISE LEARN FROM SUFFERING

It is now time to reiterate the advantages and disadvantages of happiness. But before we do, let me say some more about suffering, because one must pass beyond suffering in order to reach happiness, and suffering too has advantages and disadvantages.

People dislike suffering because it is oppressive, stifling, troubling, and frustrating. This is the very definition of suffering, and so it's normal that people find it displeasurable. A person endowed with wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), however, is able to benefit from suffering. How so? When people are oppressed by suffering and feel frustrated, they struggle to escape. If they know how to strive correctly, however, besides increasing the likelihood of successfully escaping the suffering, the very endeavour makes them strong, provides them with valuable life experiences, and is conducive to spiritual growth on many levels. If people are able to reflect wisely and develop the proper relationship to suffering, they will prosper. But if they deal with suffering incorrectly, besides remaining caught up in it, they will aggravate the situation.

Take for example someone who is born poor or destitute. If he is unable to reflect on his situation wisely, but instead sits around miserable, depressed, and despairing, he simply exacerbates the suffering and sinks deeper into misfortune. If he responds to the situation correctly, however, strives to rectify it, and reflects wisely, he is able to overcome that suffering and may even reach great success.

Occasionally, the struggle to escape from suffering becomes established as a social system. Take for example the system of market-economy competition which is spreading from the West and becoming the dominant worldwide economic system, as part of what we call 'globalization'. This system of competition compels people to struggle with the pressures of suffering. It is strongly connected to the doctrine of 'every man for himself' or the system of individualism. As one struggles, without being able to rely on anyone else for help, one must be fiercely determined and generate energy. This makes people strong, proactive, and constantly ambitious.

A certain diligence and vigilance is required to succeed in this system, which results in progress. A deeper analysis of how desirable this progress is, or what pros and cons this system of competition has, will have to wait for another time. In any case, the diligence arising from the pressure of this competitive system is not true diligence, because it is simply a reaction and struggle against a feeling of coercion. It is not diligence stemming from wisdom, and it leaves many problems in its wake, both personal, e.g. stress, and social, e.g. the absence of relationships based on friendliness and goodwill. Many of these problems consequently require great effort to solve. Having said this, a diligent and vigilant person is still better than someone wallowing in heedlessness and indulgence.

Occasionally, leaders in society must apply, or even generate, this kind of pseudo-diligence in order to rouse people from their slumber. This is better than allowing them to sink into heedlessness, curl up in depression, or be at a complete loss over what to do.

People should learn how to benefit from suffering. When afflicted by suffering, they will then make effort and grow strong. And they will look for skilful ways to solve problems, to free themselves from suffering. The attempt to free oneself from suffering is an opportunity to develop oneself spiritually. First and foremost, one develops wisdom. By the time one has solved a problem and passed beyond it, one's wisdom is sharper. All aspects of one's life will be developed and become more proficient, including one's physical behaviour, speech, and mind. Moreover, one will become more mentally strong, for example one's mindfulness and concentration will be improved. {1126} One can thus learn how to benefit from suffering. For this reason the Buddha stated that a wise person can be happy even while encountering difficulty. One is able to be happy even amidst suffering. Suffering can thus be a boon if one is able to benefit from it.

## 11.11 CONCLUSION

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### A. HAPPINESS IS REACHED BY HAPPINESS

In order to clarify the Buddhist viewpoint on happiness let us return to the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, stating that the highest goal of Buddhism is to be reached by way of happiness, or by way of a practice endowed with happiness. It is not to be reached through suffering, or by way of a practice of pain.

On one occasion Prince Bodhi had the following conversation with the Buddha:

*Prince Bodhi:* Venerable sir, I believe thus: ‘Happiness is not to be gained through happiness; happiness is to be gained through pain.’

*Buddha:* Prince, before my awakening, while I was still only an unenlightened bodhisatta, I too thought thus: ‘Happiness is not to be gained through happiness; happiness is to be gained through pain.’

The Buddha went on to say that due to this thinking he went forth as a renunciant and studied with both Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, until he had gained the same knowledge as these two eminent teachers. He then travelled further until he arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā, and undertook extreme ascetic practices, tormenting himself in various ways and fasting, until his body was emaciated:

Because of eating so little my limbs became like the jointed segments of eighty-stem vines or black-stem vines ... my haunches became like a camel’s hoof ... the projections on my spine stood forth like corded beads<sup>82</sup> ... my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the rafters of an old roofless barn ... my eyes sank far down in their sockets, looking like the reflection of stars in a deep well ... my scalp shrivelled and withered as a freshly cut bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun ... my belly skin adhered to my backbone; thus if I rubbed my belly skin I touched my backbone

and if I rubbed my backbone I touched my belly skin ... if I urinated or defecated, I staggered and fell over there. Because of eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed. {1060}

In the end, the Bodhisatta reflected:

Whatever recluses or brahmins in the past ... in the future ... in the present have experienced painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to awakening?

I considered: ‘I clearly recall that during the ploughing ceremony of my father the Sakyan king, I was sitting in the cool shade of a jambolan tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, and I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. Could that be the path to awakening?’ Then, following on that memory, came the realization: ‘That is the path to awakening.’ I asked myself: ‘Am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?’ And I thought: ‘I am not afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states.’

M. II. 93.

The Bodhisatta then ate solid food, restoring his strength. He practised the jhānas up to the fourth jhāna and subsequently was fully awakened.<sup>83</sup>

The Buddhist practice for reaching the highest goal incorporates happiness. The caveat here, however, is that a practitioner must not get

<sup>82</sup>Trans.: I use Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation here; the author simply presents the Pali: *vaṭṭanāvallī* (although the spelling in Thai is rendered *vaṭṭanāvalī*).

<sup>83</sup>Members of the Nigaṇṭhā order believed that happiness can only be attained by way of pain and therefore undertook various forms of extreme ascetic practices; see: M. I. 94.

caught up in the happiness, nor allow it to overwhelm the mind. The mind remains independent, allowing the person to progress to higher states and to eventually realize complete deliverance. Having reached this liberation, one is able to enjoy all levels of happiness without it dominating the mind or leading to infatuation and difficulty.<sup>84</sup>

On some occasions, when drawing a comparison or when playing on words, the Buddha referred to the assiduous practice of the four jhānas as an ‘indulgence’ in happiness (*sukhallikānuyoga*), but it is a beneficial indulgence, conducive to awakening.

The reason the Buddha defended the practice of the jhānas is that renunciants at that time tended to undertake severe practices of self-mortification. In comparison, the Buddhist monastic practices appeared easy and comfortable. Members of other religious traditions frequently criticized the Buddhist monks for being lax, as is seen in this passage:

It may be, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say: ‘The ascetics, the sons of the Sakyan, are preoccupied by and devoted to pleasure, indulge in pleasure. If so, they should be asked: ‘What kind of devotion to pleasure (*sukhallikānuyoga*; ‘indulgence in pleasure’)? For this devotion in pleasure can take many different forms.’ {1061}

There are, Cunda, four kinds of devotion to pleasure which are low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and not conducive to welfare, not leading to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to realization, to awakening, to Nibbāna. What are they? Firstly, a foolish person takes pleasure and delight in killing living beings ... takes pleasure and delight in taking that which is not given ... takes pleasure and delight in telling lies ... gives himself up to the indulgence in and enjoyment of the pleasures of the five senses....

There are, Cunda, four kinds of devotion to pleasure which are entirely conducive to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to realization, to awakening, to Nibbāna. What are

<sup>84</sup>See: M. I. 246-9.

they? Here, a monk, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, enters upon and abides in the first jhāna ... the second jhāna ... the third jhāna ... the fourth jhāna.

*D. III. 130-32.*

## **B. PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS HAPPINESS**

There are three chief principles in Buddhism pertaining to a proper attitude towards happiness, as confirmed by this teaching of the Buddha:

Monks, how is exertion fruitful, how is striving fruitful? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline:

1. Does not create suffering for himself when he is not beset by suffering.
2. Does not forsake genuine happiness.
3. Does not become infatuated with that happiness (i.e. even with genuine happiness).<sup>85</sup>

*M. II. 222-3.*

The Buddha did not end the teaching here. He went on to describe another vital stage of practice, which can be classified as a fourth principle, that is, to strive in order to completely eradicate the cause of suffering. This fourth factor is the decisive criterion for reaching the final goal of Buddhism, because in order to realize the highest truth one must first completely remove the causes for suffering.

From the perspective of gradual Dhamma practice, this fourth principle can be expressed in another way: to strive in order to realize higher forms of happiness, until one reaches the supreme happiness, which is utterly free from suffering. One can thus outline the practice in regard to happiness – the set of criteria for Buddhists in their relationship to happiness – as fourfold:

<sup>85</sup>The Buddha gave this teaching in order to show the distinction between Buddhism and the Nigaṇṭhā doctrine, which taught extreme asceticism (*attakilamathānuyoga*).



1. To not create suffering for oneself in times without suffering.
2. To not abandon genuine happiness.
3. To not indulge even in this genuine happiness.
4. To strive to put an end to the causes of suffering (to strive to realize supreme happiness). {1062}

Although these principles of practice in relation to happiness exist, the subtlety and depth of understanding vis-à-vis happiness differs between people, which is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration. For example, the practice of someone who sees the danger in sense pleasure, who is disillusioned by it and seeks more refined forms of happiness, may involve stages that are arduous, and this practice is viewed by those people who are still attached to sense pleasure as a form of self-inflicted suffering.

In such circumstances, for those practitioners who are prepared, who are disenchanted with sense pleasure and for whom sense pleasure has become a form of hardship, or even for those people who are not yet fully prepared, but who see the danger in sense pleasure and who see the value of and aspire to more refined, independent forms of happiness, these arduous forms of practice become a means for training themselves. If these people had acted voluntarily and they did not fall into the extreme of self-mortification, the Buddha consented to this practice as a form of spiritual training.

Moreover, some aspects of the lives of those who have experienced more refined forms of happiness are viewed by those people attached to sense pleasure as miserable or painful. The reverse is also true: those people who have experienced more refined forms of happiness see aspects of the lives of those caught up in sense pleasure as suffering. In any case, those people who have experienced higher forms of happiness know this happiness for themselves. Therefore, the question of whether Buddhism ultimately prizes pleasure or prizes pain – whether it is a hedonistic or an extreme asceticist or masochistic teaching – can be cast aside, for it is neither of these.

The question that remains here pertains to the evaluation or significance of different kinds of happiness, that is, one faces a choice between sense pleasure (which depends on external things) and more refined kinds of happiness (which are internal, self-generated, and independent). In the scriptures, refined happiness is determined as more important.

In sum, one should access refined forms of happiness, or at the very least one should experience both sense pleasure and refined happiness. That is, one should at least match the realization of stream-enterers and once-returners, who still enjoy sense pleasure, yet have reached an unfettered, internal happiness as well.

A general principle for advancing from sense pleasure to more refined happiness – from the pleasure of consuming to an independent happiness – is spiritual preparedness and discipline. A corresponding principle is that all people should experience righteous forms of happiness that are appropriate to their standing in life or that result from their individual perseverance and self-discipline.

Those people who are in want of both kinds of advantageous happiness, that is, they are deprived of sense pleasure and they have not made the effort to reach higher forms of happiness, are considered misdirected and incompetent. In this sense, those bhikkhus who have renounced sense pleasure yet do not make the effort to reach more refined forms of happiness, or whose practice is fruitless, are dissolute. They miss a valuable opportunity and are considered more unfortunate and pitiable than laypeople who indulge in sense pleasure. The Buddha said:

It is in such a way, monks, that a clansman has gone forth. Yet he is covetous, inflamed by lust for sensual pleasures, with a mind full of ill-will, with evil intentions, muddle-minded, lacking clear comprehension, unconcentrated, scatterbrained, unrestrained in his sense faculties. Just as a stick of wood from a funeral pyre, burning at both ends and smeared with excrement in the middle, cannot be used as timber either in the village or in the forest, in just such a way do I speak about this person: he has missed out on

the enjoyments of a householder, yet he does not fulfil the goal of a life of renunciation. {1063}

*S. III. 93; It. 89-90.*

### C. SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN RELATION TO HAPPINESS

Using sense pleasure as a guideline, one can summarize the Buddhist attitude towards happiness in the following way:

### D. ENJOYMENT OF SENSE PLEASURE

**A. Stage of excellence:** to enjoy sense pleasures while at the same time being familiar with more refined kinds of happiness. This refined happiness acts as a safeguard and guarantee, keeping the enjoyment of sense pleasures within wholesome and virtuous limits, preventing the creation of problems for oneself and others, and generating benefits to all. Here, one discerns the dangers and drawbacks of sense pleasure, one knows moderation, and one avoids heedlessness. For example, in terms of sexual relations, married people are content with their spouse (*sadāra-santosa*) and live together righteously, by being faithful to one another and encouraging each other to grow in virtue and reach higher forms of happiness, as is seen in the case of the awakened disciples Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā.<sup>86</sup>

**B. Wholesome stage:** although one enjoys sense pleasure in a morally upright way, one is still cut off from more refined forms of happiness. This enjoyment resembles the stage of excellence above: one sees the dangers in sense pleasure and acknowledges that sense pleasure is inevitably accompanied by a certain degree of suffering. One tries to minimize the harm created by sense pleasure, one is moderate and abstains from indulgence, and one tries to be of benefit to both oneself and others. But because one lacks the way out and the surety of more refined happiness, one is still at risk of being enticed by things and falling knee-deep into sense indulgence. One is not yet safe.

<sup>86</sup>A. II. 61-2.

**C. Inferior stage:** to be caught up in sense pleasure; to be obsessed with the pursuit of sense pleasure and personal gratification. For example, in regard to eating or sexual relations, one is impelled to feel arousal, excitement, and agitation that exceeds what can be called the requirements of nature vis-à-vis eating and reproduction. One may devise methods and means for stimulating this excitement and agitation, by using one's natural urges simply as a fuel to light the fire. One then increases the passion, making it frequent or continual, even to the extent of perversion.

In such circumstances, eating food which does not necessarily nourish the body, or having sex removed from the act of reproduction, will be accentuated until the person entirely forgets the original purpose of these actions. These activities will be pursued solely to satisfy craving; it will be an indulgence in sense pleasure for its own sake. One's life will be entirely dedicated to consuming things.

On a social level, when people go beyond the simple relief of natural urges and inclinations to the deliberate creation of excitement and agitation, to the extent that this becomes rampant, that society exists as if in a constant state of warfare, which one can call the battlefield of sense desire.

In times of literal war, people are incited to feel hatred and resentment over and above the natural feelings people have of anger and indignation. Eventually, people are prepared to slaughter and destroy each other, and there is even an expressed admiration and satisfaction in such destruction.  
{1064}

This escalation of people's feelings by sense desire is similar. Incitement and stimulation generates lust and a fixation on consuming things, exceeding the natural desire inherent in people.

This intensified desire is a partner to and the origin of the battle of hatred. People who normally live at ease and act in positive ways become provoked by sense desire, giving rise to stress and agitation; they can no longer bear to live at ease. They are then incited to feel anger and discontentment, until the only satisfaction they can find is through destruction.

When this battle of sense desire is protracted, and there are added factors like stimulating and provocative advertisements, people will have a proclivity to not see others as human companions, or even as human. Instead they will see others as prey, as objects to consume or as objects of enjoyment. They will expect to derive pleasure from other people, and if others do not provide this expected pleasure they will view them as rivals or impediments, or as offensive, useless, loathsome, and irritating.

When people are engrossed in the pursuit of sense pleasure, it will be difficult for them to generate a wholesome enthusiasm for their work. They will lack a love for their work, and lack determination and one-pointedness of mind. Wholesome enthusiasm will be replaced by craving. People will simply wait for an opportunity to indulge in sense pleasure, and perform activities in order to gain some personal advantage. The performing of work in order to achieve true success and excellence will vanish. People will work simply to complete the task, or to create a semblance of completion. Moreover, they will seek sense pleasure by taking shortcuts, which do not require any effort and lead to immoral behaviour and crime.

When people begin to see each other as prey and as competitors, and are preoccupied with the pursuit of sense pleasure and zealously guard the objects they have seized, mutual mistrust, envy, and abuse will spread. In this state of affairs, it will be difficult for people to experience refined forms of happiness, even the simple pleasures of appreciating friendship and mutual kindness or the delight and peace stemming from opening oneself up to the beauty of nature. People will be unfamiliar with the refreshing sense of ease that accompanies inner dignity and virtue.

When people lack this refreshing sense of ease, their mental health will drop to a critical level. This is because sense pleasure on its own, devoid of such refined and wholesome mental qualities like love, compassion, and generosity, inflames the mind and is not conducive to mental health. If people associate with one another spurred on by lust, each party will be seeking to get something from the other. Although they may experience pleasure, it is likely to be detrimental to their mental health.

Furthermore, relating to other people in order to obtain a personal advantage, working not for the sake of the work but in order to get a reward,<sup>87</sup> and struggling to compete with others leads to disappointment, mistrust, vexation, and enmity, all of which blight the heart and damage mental health. Although a society may be materially prosperous, if it has fallen into such a state of indulgence its citizens will not experience true happiness. Rather, they will be subject to severe forms of suffering, including feelings of desolation, fragility, and meaninglessness. {1065}

In a society deprived of individuals who are familiar with deeper forms of peace and happiness, there is no source of such happiness even for those people who are in extreme need of it. In a society inclined towards sensual indulgence there will be many people who have either been disappointed by their experiences connected to sense pleasure or they have been impacted negatively in some other way. These people will respond by feeling disillusioned by sense pleasure, or they will go to an opposite extreme and feel hatred towards sense pleasure. They will add to the ranks of those people, for example the old and invalid, who no longer have the capacity to enjoy sense pleasures to the full.

These individuals are either unable to fully enjoy sense pleasure or else they have an aversion to sense pleasure. If they have no access to an internal happiness, they will experience serious mental difficulties. If they still have adequate physical strength they may seek an escape by using intoxicants or addictive substances, creating additional problems for society. When the flood of sense craving overflows the banks and people do not reform themselves in time, the corrupted society will waste away and devour itself, and the civilization will collapse.

## **E. ABANDONMENT OF SENSE PLEASURE**

**A. Stage of excellence:** to experience a genuine internal, independent, and refined kind of happiness, which is complete in itself. Here, a person has gone beyond a desire for sense pleasure. He or she will automatically

<sup>87</sup>To work for the sake of the work here is not the same as ‘working for work’s sake’, but rather to aim for the benefit and welfare of all human beings and to strive for the merit and excellence which is the true purpose of that specific activity.

and naturally refrain from inclining or circling back towards a pursuit of sense pleasure. Such a person is utterly free from the problems arising from sense desire.

**B. Wholesome stage:** the abandonment of sense pleasure of those who aspire to and practise in order to reach more refined forms of happiness. This abandonment is suitable for those who are disenchanted with sense pleasure and are prepared to train in order to reach higher forms of happiness, or even for those who may not have reached the stage of disenchantment but who see the danger in sensuality, recognize the value of and wish to experience more independent kinds of happiness, and voluntarily take up a spiritual practice for this sake. This willingness for and self-awareness in practice helps to prevent the ill effects resulting from repression or overly forceful effort.

Whenever one no longer wishes to train, or when the faith for training is truly depleted, one should acknowledge defeat and stop, for example if one has been ordained as a bhikkhu one voluntarily gives up the monastic training.

Although repeatedly being ordained and disrobing is not recommended, if someone does this with sincerity it can still help to foster spiritual preparedness, and can be considered a valid part of training, as is seen in the example of Ven. Cittahatthisāriputta, who was ordained and disrobed seven times before he finally reached the fruit of arahantship.<sup>88</sup>

**C. Inferior stage:** to abandon sense pleasure out of reactivity and resistance, and to subsequently fall into an opposite extreme. Here one undertakes severe and punishing ascetic practices, piling up suffering for oneself, by targeting one's body or life in one's loathing for sense pleasure. This self-torment or exaggerated reaction, which lacks the understanding and self-awareness described in the previous stage (B), creates additional forms of mental problems. {1066}

<sup>88</sup>A. III. 392-99; although he had attained the higher abidings of concentrative attainment (*vihāra-samāpatti*) he still disrobed. This matter is referred to at: AA. III. 402; DhA. I. 305; JA. I. 310. [Trans.: the author uses the spelling Cittahatthasāriputta.] On the custom of temporary ordination in Thailand see Appendix 4.

Bear in mind that Buddhism considers the non-harming of oneself to be a vital principle, and equally a form of Dhamma practice as refraining from harming others.<sup>89</sup> Those people who have been overly forceful in practice or who have reacted to sense pleasure by extreme forms of behaviour should switch to the training described in the previous stage (B).

Buddhism teaches to discern and acknowledge things as they truly are, and to train oneself in order to progressively develop in the Dhamma. Although Dhamma practitioners have different degrees of maturity and are at different stages of development, they live together harmoniously and support one another, promoting genuine wellbeing and encouraging each person's spiritual growth. They do not bully or disparage each other. Together they build an environment of peace, friendliness, dignity, prosperity, and happiness. {1067}

#### F. PERFECT HAPPINESS

Here we arrive at the highest happiness, which in Buddhism is succinctly described as: *nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*: Nibbāna is the supreme happiness.

When one has made initial contact with supreme happiness, or even when simply referring to it, one should be familiar with its main attributes, so that one can check whether one's own happiness is going in the right direction and how it can be improved – how its advantages may be increased and its disadvantages lessened.

There are three main attributes to this supreme or perfect happiness:

1. It is constant: it need not be searched for; it is an inherent quality of the heart.
2. It is free: it is not dependent on anything else; for example, it is not reliant on sense objects.

<sup>89</sup>E.g.: D. III. 232-2; M. III. 23; A. II. 179. Note, however, that 'not harming oneself' here is not the same as well-warranted self-surrender or renunciation, which is another form of Dhamma practice.



3. It is pure: it is complete; there remains no latent or lingering suffering.

Supreme happiness is constant because it has become an inherent feature of one's life. For this reason one need not search for it. {1133} The Buddha, for example, was always happy wherever he went – when he journeyed into forests and mountains, when he was with other people, and when he was alone – because happiness was an indwelling quality in his heart.

Supreme happiness is independent and free. This differs altogether from sense pleasure, which is completely dependent on external, material things. Sense pleasure requires the pursuit and appropriation of things. One must look after and guard these things zealously. One loses one's own independence, and one vies with others, leading to conflict and oppression. By developing independent happiness, one is inwardly free and one need not compete with anyone else.

Supreme happiness is pure and complete. No disturbances or irritations remain in the mind. Many people claim that they are happy, but deep down there still remains suffering or the causes for suffering. For example, they may still have latent anxiety, fear, distrust, melancholy, boredom, or loneliness. Their purported happiness is not spacious, clear, and full.

When all the causes for suffering have been removed from the mind, happiness is replete. There remains no latent suffering that could disturb the mind. If one wishes to experience other forms of happiness, one can do this fully. One is inherently happy and one is prepared to experience all forms of happiness to the utmost satisfaction. Take arahants for example, who are endowed with this inherent and complete happiness at all times. Besides abiding in this complete happiness, they are also able to experience other forms of happiness according to their wishes, and they experience these forms of happiness to the fullest measure.

When arahants have free time and are not engaged in other activities, they may enter the four jhānas and enjoy the bliss of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*). They use the jhānas to ‘abide at ease in the present’ (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). And they derive the utmost joy from these states of jhāna, because no latent irritations or annoyances remain in the mind. This stands in contrast to those unawakened human beings who may be able to access jhāna, but who still have the root or seeds of suffering lingering in their minds. Their joy is not truly spacious and free.

In the Māgaṇḍiya Sutta, mentioned earlier, the Buddha states that if one has not yet realized this profound happiness, there is no guarantee that one will not fall back and seek out sense pleasure once more. But if one does have this realization, there is no way that one will consider seeking gratification by way of sense pleasure.

This is similar to adults who observe children playing and pretending to be shopkeepers. They won’t feel that behaving in this way themselves will provide happiness. This is not because they cannot engage in this activity, but because they have experienced higher forms of happiness. Within the natural development of happiness, the mind will automatically respond in this way. {1134}

To sum up, arahants are endowed with an inner happiness that is present at all time, and they are able to enjoy other forms of happiness fully, according to their desire. If it so happens that they do not take pleasure in other forms of happiness, this is because they have passed beyond the associated desire and have access to a higher happiness.

### G. ACTING FOR THE HAPPINESS OF ALL

Because their happiness is complete and spacious, arahants are able to immediately derive delight from wholesome things. For example, when they come into contact with nature, say by ascending a mountain or entering a forest, their delight is spontaneous and instant, free from any inner obstruction or impediment.

This is in contrast to people who still harbour the seeds of suffering. When they arrive at a delightful place, myriad thoughts and emotions disturb their minds, like worry, anxiety, unease, and thoughts of rivalry,

commerce, politics, etc. This prevents them from being happy, and even if they are happy, their happiness is limited.

Arahants, on the other hand, find happiness wherever they go; even unfavourable environments become a source of delight. This happiness does not extend only to themselves; other people who live in their company experience ease and comfort in places that previously caused disquiet and turmoil. Note the verse in the Dhammapada:

Whether in village or in forest, on hill or in dale, wherever arahants dwell – delightful, indeed, is that spot.

*Gāme vā yadi vāraṇṇe ninne vā yadi vā thale yattha arahanto viharanti taṃ bhūmirāmaṇeyyakam.*

*Dh. verse 98.*

Wherever arahants dwell, they themselves are joyous and people surrounding them are delighted. Arahants are able to view offensive and disagreeable things as pleasant and agreeable, because they have mastery over their perceptions (they have developed the sense faculties – *bhāvitindriya*). This demonstrates the human potential for happiness corresponding to spiritual development.

If one practises the Dhamma correctly, happiness gradually increases in this way. And when happiness is complete, all other spiritual qualities are complete. This follows a natural process, like a hen incubating an egg. If the conditions are present, the chick will hatch with certainty; there is no room for doubt.

As mentioned earlier, it is valid to describe Buddhism as a system of developing happiness or as a process of eliminating suffering. Or one may use any other description that is in line with Dhamma and accords with nature. They all refer to the same thing.

Before we finish, there is one more subject to touch upon. Complete and perfect happiness has attributes that are expressed outwardly. {1135} Arahants have completed their spiritual training and brought happiness to perfection. Indeed, all of their spiritual qualities are fulfilled, converging at wisdom – the supreme knowledge of awakening – which leads to

deliverance. They relate to things in a correct and balanced way. Arahants are given the epithet *kata karaṇīya*: those who have done what had to be done. Nothing remains to be done in order to bring about a state of completion, or in order to make themselves happy. Nothing is left unfinished in their spiritual training and development. Their spiritual development is complete. They are adepts (*asekha*); they are fully developed (*bhāvita*).

What does one do when there remains no personal business to attend to – nothing to be done in order to be happy or to develop oneself spiritually? One is still alive, one is consummate in virtuous conduct, mental proficiency, and wisdom, and one is brimful of extraordinary experience. The answer is one uses all of one's remaining energy to foster the wellbeing of the manyfolk. It is a Buddhist principle that someone who realizes Nibbāna acts for the welfare of the world.

As mentioned above, wisdom leads to the liberation of the mind. Liberated individuals are fully prepared to respond to those people who are still afflicted by suffering. They generate genuine compassion and devote themselves to alleviating the suffering of others. This is the essential task of arahants.

It is normal for people to vent their suffering outwards. If they use their speech carefully to express their suffering, it can ease the tension and there is a good possibility that this will help to solve their difficulties. But if they are heedless with speech, the expression of suffering may escalate into physical gestures of violence, causing much trouble and turmoil for others.

Happiness, too, can be radiated outwards. And those individuals who are replete in happiness and whose minds are liberated wish to facilitate the mental emancipation of others. Arahants are similar to people who have freed themselves from shackles and chains. When all personal distress and affliction has been quelled, they feel compassion for others who are still bound and they want to offer assistance. They then spend the majority of their time trying to help others be free. {1136}

When the Buddha was sending the first group of sixty arahants out to proclaim the Buddhist teachings, he said that both he and they were similar in being liberated from all snares and bonds, both human and

divine. He went on to say: ‘Bhikkhus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world’ (*caratha bhikkhave cārikaṃ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukkhāya lokānukampāya*). This the motto of all arahants. Having completed all personal affairs and duties, they dedicate their lives for the good of the world, just as the Buddha did.

From the very beginning, spiritual practice is twofold: it involves both self-discipline and assisting others. Occasionally, as in the case of bodhisattas, an increased emphasis is given to the latter, of helping others. These two aspects of practice are intimately connected, for helping others is one way to promote self-development.

All aspects of spiritual practice, whether one focuses on personal training or one focuses on helping others, are a part of one’s spiritual development. As long as one has not finished what has to be done, both aspects of practice are part of this personal development. When one has brought spiritual development to completion and accomplished all of one’s spiritual responsibilities, one’s entire life is devoted to others. As mentioned above, those who realize Nibbāna act for the welfare of the world. Here, the complete and perfect happiness inherent in an individual radiates outward and becomes the happiness of all.

The core Buddhist teaching on happiness as the highest goal of spiritual practice, and the other core teaching on happiness as the highest aim of fulfilling one’s responsibility towards others as a Buddhist, are united. The teaching, ‘Nibbāna is the supreme happiness’, is integrated with the teaching, ‘For the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world.’ The highest reality of ‘supreme happiness’ (*parama-sukha*) yields the ‘happiness of the manyfolk’ (*bahujana-sukha*). In sum, Buddhism is a system of developing happiness; it is a religion of happiness.

### 11.12 APPENDIX 1: PAIRED SETS OF HAPPINESS

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These paired sets of happiness are presented in the Aṅguttara Nikāya:<sup>90</sup>

1. Happiness of householders (*gihi-sukha*; happiness of laypeople) and happiness of renunciants (*pabbajita-sukha* = *pabbajjā-sukha*, happiness of the renunciant life).
2. Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*) and happiness of renunciation (*nekkhamma-sukha*; happiness resulting from a freedom from sensuality and an absence of greed).
3. Happiness adulterated by suffering (*upadhi-sukha*; happiness in the three planes of existence – *tebhūmaka* = mundane happiness – *lokiya-sukha*) and happiness unadulterated by suffering (*nirupadhi-sukha* = transcendent happiness – *lokuttara-sukha*).
4. Happiness leading to mental taints (*sāsa-sukha*) and happiness not leading to mental taints (*anāsava-sukha*; happiness free from mental taints).
5. Material happiness (*sāmisa-sukha*; happiness dependent on enticements and on consumable objects; carnal pleasure) and non-material happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*; happiness independent of things to consume).
6. Happiness of the noble ones (*ariya-sukha*) and happiness of ordinary, unawakened people (*anariya-sukha*).
7. Physical pleasure (*kāyika-sukha*) and mental pleasure (*cetasika-sukha*).
8. Happiness combined with bliss (*sappītika-sukha*; happiness in the first and second jhāna) and happiness not combined with bliss (*nippītika-sukha*; happiness in the third and fourth jhāna).

<sup>90</sup>A. I. 80-82. The explanations here accord with AA. II. 152.

9. Delightful happiness (*sāta-sukha*; the commentaries state that this refers to the happiness in the first three jhānas) and happiness resulting from equanimity (*upekkhā-sukha*; happiness when the mind is in a complete state of balance, is neutral and objective, ready to discern the truth, and discriminates correctly, just as a wise person would observe events from a distance; the commentaries state that this refers to the happiness in the fourth jhāna).<sup>91</sup>
10. Happiness resulting from concentration (*samādhi-sukha*; either access or attainment concentration) and happiness without concentration (*asamādhi-sukha*).
11. Happiness arising for one who contemplates the first two jhānas comprised of bliss (*sappītikārammaṇa-sukha*) and happiness arising for one who contemplates the third and fourth jhānas divested of bliss (*nippītikārammaṇa-sukha*).
12. Happiness arising for one who contemplates the first three jhānas comprised of pleasure (*sātārammaṇa-sukha*) and happiness arising for one who contemplates the fourth jhāna comprised of equanimity (*upekkhārammaṇa-sukha*).
13. Happiness with materiality as its foundation (*rūpārammaṇa-sukha*; happiness with the fine-material jhānas as its foundation) and happiness with immateriality as its foundation (*arūpārammaṇa-sukha*; happiness with the formless jhānas as its foundation).

After each of these pairs there is the statement that the latter kind of happiness is superior or more excellent than the former.

<sup>91</sup>Note that ‘equanimity’ (*upekkhā*) in these paired sets of happiness is not the same as ‘neutral sensation’ (*upekkhā-vedanā*).

### 11.13 APPENDIX 2: THREEFOLD HAPPINESS (ALTERNATIVE MODEL)

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The Saṃyutta Nikāya contains another classification of happiness that is very similar to the one discussed at the beginning of this chapter (*kāma-sukha*, *jhāna-sukha*, and *nirodhasamāpatti-sukha*). This is likewise a threefold division:<sup>92</sup>

1. Happiness dependent on material things (*sāmisā-sukha*); this is equivalent to sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*).
2. Non-material happiness (*nirāmisā-sukha*); this refers to the happiness of the first three jhānas.
3. Happiness exceeding and transcending non-material happiness (*nirāmisatara-sukha*); this refers to the happiness and joy experienced by one whose mind is free from mental taints (*khīṇāsava*), who reflects on the mind liberated from greed, hatred and delusion.

The commentaries claim that, although the third kind of happiness is technically mundane (*lokiya*) – it can be described as the happiness resulting from an arahant’s knowledge of reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*) – it is superior to the second kind of happiness, which may be either mundane or transcendent (*lokuttara*; it is transcendent when it refers to the jhāna of an awakened person).<sup>93</sup> {1068}

These two classifications of happiness are almost the same because they have a similarity in scope:

- *Sāmisā-sukha* is equivalent to *kāma-sukha*.
- *Nirāmisā-sukha* is part of the domain of *jhāna-sukha*.
- *Nirāmisatara-sukha* goes beyond or transcends *jhāna-sukha*.

<sup>92</sup>S. IV. 236.

<sup>93</sup>SA. III. 84.



The important difference between these two classifications is that the first group (*kāma-sukha*, *jhāna-sukha*, and *nirodhasamāpatti-sukha*) encompasses all forms of happiness, both that which is a sensation (*vedanā*) and that which is not. The factors of the second group (*sāmisa-sukha*, *nirāmisa-sukha*, and *nirāmisatara-sukha*), however, are all included in happiness that is a sensation.

Therefore, the highest form of non-material happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*), which is part of the third *jhāna*, does not cover all forms of *jhāna-sukha*. In reference to the fourth *jhāna* the distinctive term *nirāmisa-upekkhā* is used; at S. IV. 237 this term is also used in reference to the formless *jhānas* (*arūpa-jhāna*), because technically they are part of the fourth *jhāna*.

A clear distinction can be made between *nirodhasamāpatti-sukha* and *nirāmisatara-sukha*. Although *nirodhasamāpatti-sukha* goes beyond *jhāna*, it still pertains to a meditative attainment (*samāpatti*), and it is only accessible by those arahants and non-returners proficient in the eight *jhānas*. *Nirāmisatara-sukha* here refers to the happiness resulting from the knowledge of reviewing; it refers only to arahants, who can either be those liberated both ways (*ubhatobhāga-vimutta*) or those liberated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*; i.e. they have not reached the eight concentrative attainments). In any case, by focusing on the literal meaning of the term, *nirodhasamāpatti-sukha* should in some respects also be classified as a happiness exceeding non-material happiness.

11.14 APPENDIX 3:  
THREEFOLD HAPPINESS: SENSE PLEASURE, DIVINE HAPPINESS,  
AND THE HAPPINESS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF CRAVING

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Sense pleasure has already been described at length. Divine happiness is defined in the commentaries as the happiness of *jhāna* (specifically the happiness of mundane concentrative absorption – *lokiyajhāna-sukha*).<sup>94</sup> The commentaries equate divine happiness with *jhānic* happiness, because they determine *jhāna* to be a ‘divine abiding’ (*dibba-vihāra*), in accord with a teaching in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.<sup>95</sup> The commentary to the *Dīgha Nikāya* states that divine happiness refers to the eight concentrative attainments.<sup>96</sup> The ordinary celestial pleasures of divine beings is already included in the factor of sense pleasure. Happiness of the destruction of craving (*taṇhakkhaya-sukha*) refers to the happiness of *Nibbāna* (*nibbāna-sukha*) – as the term *taṇhakkhaya* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*.

The commentary of the *Udāna*, however, interprets *taṇhakkhaya-sukha* to be the happiness of fruition attainment (*phalasamāpatti-sukha*), which is accessible to all awakened beings from stream-enterers upwards, through establishing *Nibbāna* as one’s object of attention. Here, I use the term *taṇhakkhaya-sukha* in a broad sense, encompassing the happiness of fruition attainment, the happiness of the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*, a state resembling *Nibbāna*), and the happiness of liberation (*vimutti-sukha*) which is frequently referred to in the scriptures (*vimutti-sukha* refers to the highest fruition attainment – *phala-samāpatti* – which is the domain of arahants).<sup>97</sup>

This classification is similar to the tenfold classification of happiness above.

<sup>94</sup>UdA. 107.

<sup>95</sup>D. III. 220.

<sup>96</sup>DA. 1006.

<sup>97</sup>See: VinA. V. 953; UdA. 32, [46]; VinT. [4/421].

The most detailed classification of happiness in the commentaries is found in the commentary to the Aṅguttara Nikāya, which divides happiness into seven levels: human happiness (*manussa-sukha*), divine happiness (*divya-sukha*), jhānic happiness, the happiness of insight (*vipassanā-sukha*), the happiness of the Path (*magga-sukha*), fruition happiness (*phala-sukha*), and the happiness of Nibbāna.<sup>98</sup> These seven kinds of happiness can be condensed into four:

- Sense pleasure (*kāma-sukha*), including human happiness and divine happiness (the latter referring specifically to the pleasure experienced by celestial beings or the happiness of heaven).
- Happiness of jhāna (*jhāna-sukha*): the happiness of mundane concentrative attainments (*lokiyajhāna-sukha*; *lokiyasamāpatti-sukha*). In some places this is referred to as divine happiness (*divya-sukha*), in the sense of being a divine abiding (*dibba-vihāra*).
- Happiness of insight meditation (*vipassanā-sukha*). This appears clearly as one of the ten imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*).<sup>99</sup>
- Transcendent happiness (*lokuttara-sukha*): Path happiness (*magga-sukha*), fruition happiness (*phala-sukha*), and the happiness of Nibbāna.<sup>100</sup> The term *phala-sukha* includes *phalasamāpatti-sukha*, which itself incorporates *vimutti-sukha* as well.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> AA. I. 53 = AA. III. 2.

<sup>99</sup> See: Cūḷaniddesa Aṭṭhakathā 106; Vism. 636-7; VinT.: Tatiyapārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>100</sup> SnA. I. 331.

<sup>101</sup> According to UdA. 34, PsA. 268, and Vism. 700, *phalasamāpatti-sukha* is a form of transcendent happiness.

#### 11.15 APPENDIX 4: TEMPORARY ORDINATION

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In Thailand there is a custom referred to as ‘ordination for study’ (*buat rian*; บวชเรียน). Besides providing an opportunity to those who are prepared to train themselves in order to experience more refined forms of happiness, this kind of ordination is a way of providing an education to the wider population, by offering a training to young people in the areas of academic knowledge, ethics, and cultural traditions. It is a rite of passage – a means for preparing people to enter society as adults.

Most of these individuals are ordained while still young (in the case of novice monks, they are still children) and do so because of the wishes of their guardians. After they have been ordained and received an adequate level of training, they can voluntarily decide by themselves whether to continue as monks or to return to the householder’s life with the full acceptance by the wider society.

During the time of being ordained these individuals are aware that they have entered a system of training. If they are not really dedicated to this way of life they can train for a short period of time and then stop. This way they can accept the conditions for what they are. Some of these individuals who are not prepared for a longterm commitment to the renunciant life may devote themselves earnestly to the training for a fixed period of time.

Training with this kind of acceptance can lead to good results. It prevents the harm of feeling that one is subject to compulsion or confinement, which would lead to a struggle against the form. If there are disadvantages to this kind of training, they are minimized.

If one wishes to preserve this kind of ‘ordination for study’ then one must give people the freedom and liberty to disrobe when they wish. This is fair treatment to those individuals and it will benefit the wider society.





# PART II.

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## MIDDLE WAY

*Majjhimā-paṭipadā*

*Mode of Practice Based on Natural Laws*

Monks, without veering towards either of these extremes,  
The Tathāgata has awakened to the Middle Way...  
This Noble Eightfold Path, namely:  
Right View...

*Ete te bhikkhave ubho ante anupagamma  
Majjhimā paṭipadā tathāgatena abhisambuddhā  
ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo  
Seyyathidaṃ sammādiṭṭhi...*

(S. V. 421)





# SECTION VI.

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## A WORTHY LIFE

Chapter 12

*Introduction to the Middle Way*

Chapter 13

*Virtuous Friendship*

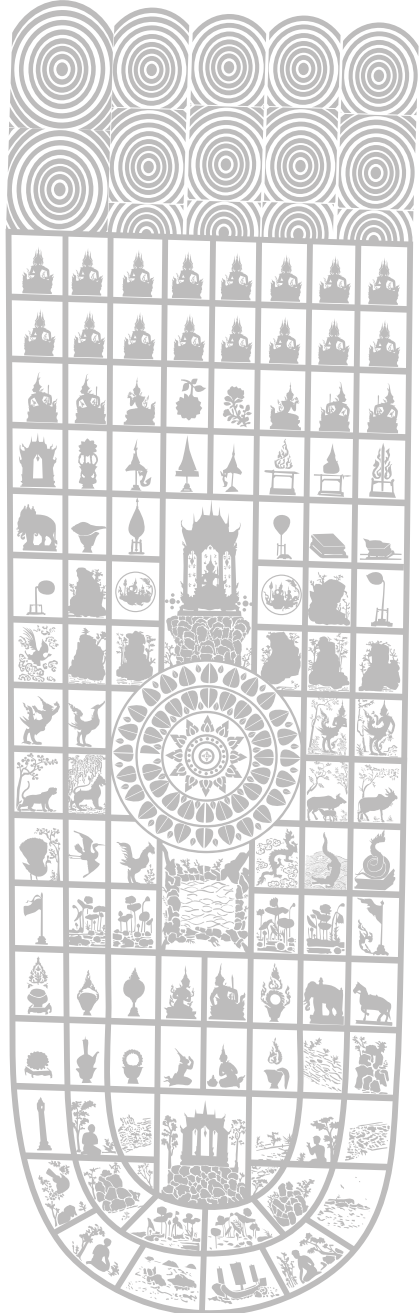
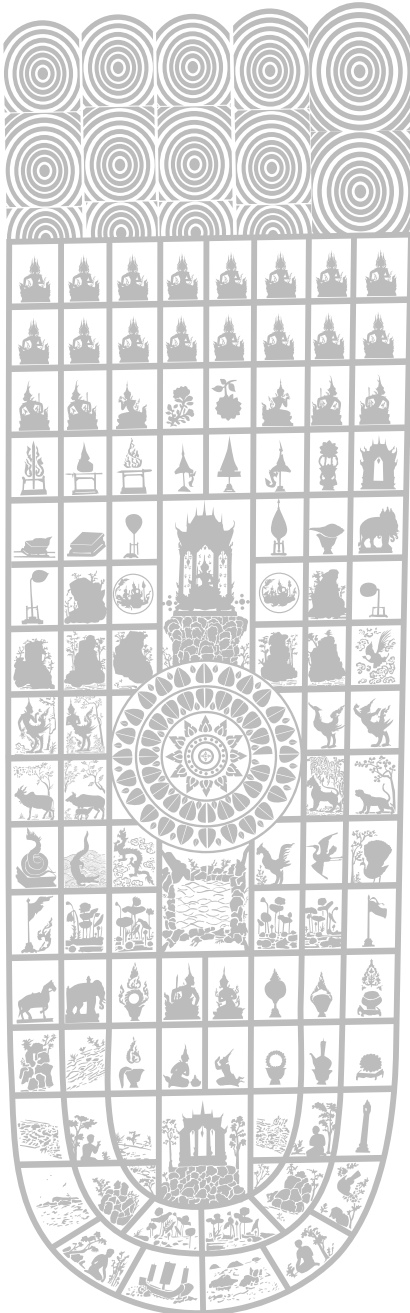
Chapter 14

*Faith and Confidence*

Chapter 15

*Wise Reflection*

The Buddha's Footprint  
of Phra Buddha Saiyas  
(the Reclining Buddha Image)  
at Wat Pho or  
Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram  
Rajwaramahaviharn  
2 Sanamchai Road, Grand Palace,  
Phra Nakhon, Bangkok,  
Thailand



# CHAPTER 12

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDDLE WAY

### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), also known as the Path (*magga*, i.e. the fourth Noble Truth), embodies a set of principles for Buddhist practice: it is a complete code of Buddhist conduct. It comprises the practical teachings, based on an understanding of Buddhist theoretical teachings, which guide people to the goal of Buddhism according to natural processes. It is a way of actualizing the teachings in one's own life, a method of applying natural laws and benefitting from them to the highest degree. To gain an initial understanding of the Middle Way, let us consider this teaching by the Buddha from the first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta:

#### A. THE PATH AS THE MIDDLE WAY

Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The indulgence in sensual happiness in sense pleasures, which is inferior, vulgar, low, ignoble, and hollow; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. The Tathāgata has awakened to the Middle Way, which does not get caught up in either of these extremes, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

And what is that Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*)...? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

V. I. 10; S. V. 421.

This teaching provides a complete summary of the meaning, essence, and purpose of the Middle Way. Note that it is a ‘middle’ way, or ‘middle’ path, because it does not get caught up in either of the two extremes (note, however, that this should not be understood to mean that the path lies between these two extremes):

1. *Kāma-sukhallikānuyoga*: indulgence in sensual pleasures; the extreme of sensual indulgence; extreme hedonism.
2. *Atta-kilamathānuyoga*: the extreme of self-mortification; extreme asceticism.

Occasionally, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike give the expression the ‘middle way’ a very broad meaning, to denote an action or thought that lies between two opposing actions or thoughts, or between actions and thoughts performed and held by two separate people or parties.

This kind of midpoint or middle way does not have any solid basis; one must wait until two opposing parties arise in order to determine the halfway point, which hinges on the degree of belief or practice of these two factions. The midway shifts according to the changing stances of the two sides. Sometimes this kind of middle way appears to be the same as the Middle Way in Buddhism (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), but in fact it is counterfeit. {526}

The true Middle Way has definite criteria. The validity of the Middle Way rests with it having a clearly defined objective or goal. With the goal clearly defined, the path leading to this goal, or conduct that is apt, correct, and fruitful, is the Middle Way.

This is similar to shooting an arrow or a gun – it is necessary to have a clear target. Accurate or correct shooting is any action expedient to

having the arrow or bullet reach the target. The ‘middle way’ in this context is shooting precisely and directly at the target.

All deviating shots, veering off to any number of directions, are flawed and inaccurate. In contrast to these errant shots, one sees that there is only one target, which is directly in the middle and clearly defined, and the path leading to the target likewise is a middle path.

The correct path has its own true goal, which is not determined by trajectories of the errant shots. The Middle Way has the definite goal of liberation – the end of suffering.

The Path (*magga*) – the system of thought, action, and conduct that is consistent with and effective in regard to this goal – is thus the ‘Middle Way’ (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*).

Because the Middle Way has a clearly defined goal, or because the Middle Way is dependent on having such a goal, a Dhamma practitioner must know this goal in order to walk on the Path – one must know in which direction one is going. For this reason the Middle Way is a path of wisdom and begins with right view: it begins with an understanding of one’s problems and of one’s destination. It is a path of understanding, reason, and acceptance, and requires courage to face the truth.

When people possess this knowledge and courage, they are able to manage their lives on their own, to live a correct and virtuous life independently, without relying on external sacred, supernatural, or divine powers. And when people have developed confidence based on their own wisdom, they need not get caught up in and worried about things they believe to exist outside of the normal human sphere. This confidence is one attribute of the Middle Way.

When one understands one’s problems and the way to the goal, a traveller on the Path gains the additional understanding that the Middle Way gives value to one’s life. There is more to life than succumbing to worldly currents, being enslaved by material enticements, or wishing solely for delicious sensual pleasures, by allowing one’s happiness, virtue, and value to be utterly dependent on material things and the fluctuations

of external factors. Instead, one cultivates freedom and self-assurance, and one recognizes one's own inherent value.

Besides not inclining towards the extreme of materialism, to the point of enslavement and dependency on material things, the Middle Way also does not incline towards spiritual extremes. It does not teach that all things are exclusively dependent on effort and mental attainments, to the point that one abandons material things and neglects one's body, resulting in a form of self-mortification. {527}

Conduct in accord with the Middle Way is characterized by non-oppression, both towards others and oneself, and by an understanding of phenomena, both material and mental. One then practises with accurate knowledge, in tune with causes and conditions, and conducive to bearing fruit in accord with the goal. One does not practise simply to experience pleasurable sense impressions or out of some naive belief that things must be done in a particular way.<sup>1</sup>

If someone alludes to a middle way or to walking a middle path, one should ask whether he or she understands the problems at hand and the goal to which this path leads.

The principles of the Middle Way can be applied to all human work and activity. Generally speaking, all human systems, traditions, academic fields of study, institutions, and everyday activities, like formal education, aim to solve problems, reduce suffering, and help people realize higher forms of virtue. A proper relationship to these systems, traditions, etc. requires an understanding of their objective, which is to relate to them with wisdom and right view, in accord with the Middle Way.

It is commonly apparent, however, that people often practise incorrectly and do not understand the true objectives of these systems, procedures, and activities.

Incorrect practice deviates in one of two ways: some people use these systems and activities as an instrument or opportunity for self-gratification, for instance in politics they use this system as a way to

<sup>1</sup>For more on the two extremes see Appendix 2.

seek material gain, fame, and power. They perform their function and increase their formal knowledge in order to enrich themselves and to achieve influential positions, to maximize their own comfort and pleasure. They do not act in order to achieve the true objective of that work or field of knowledge. Rather than having right view, they are subject to wrong view (*micchā-dīṭṭhi*).

Another group of people are resolutely dedicated to work or study. They raise money, muster inner strength, and sacrifice time with great devotion, but they do not understand the true purpose of the activity – they do not know, for example, what problems should be solved by performing it. They end up wasting their time, money, and energy, causing themselves trouble and fatigue in vain. This is another way of lacking right view. {528}

The first group of people set their own objectives in order to gratify craving. They do not act in accord with the true objective of the activity or work. The second group of people simply act without understanding the real purpose of their actions. These two groups fall into two extremes. They do not walk the Middle Way and they generate more problems for themselves.

Only when they are able to follow the Middle Way, acting with knowledge conforming to the true objective of that particular activity, are they able to successfully solve problems and eliminate suffering.

In sum, if one does not begin with right view, one does not access the Middle Way; if one does not follow the Middle Way, one is not able to reach the end of suffering. (See Note [12.1](#))

## NOTE 12.1: THE MIDDLE WAY

Occasionally, people may use the expression ‘middle way’ to denote effort that is neither overly rigid nor overly slack, or work or training that is performed neither with laziness nor by forceful straining. Although in these contexts the expression ‘middle way’ may share some attributes with the Middle Way, it is not absolutely correct. Even those people who follow the Middle Way may apply an overly forceful amount of effort, or not enough effort, and thus not realize the fruit of practice. In these circumstances, the Buddha used the expression *virīya-samātā* to refer to correct effort (this term means correct, balanced, or consistent effort; *samātā* = *samabhāva* = evenness, balance, suitability, moderation, consistency); see: Vin. I. 181; A. III. 374-5.

Sometimes, when people are sure of walking the correct path, fully confident and prepared, they are encouraged to muster all of their strength and energy, even if they must surrender their life in the process. For example, the Buddha himself was fearlessly determined on the night of his awakening (A. I. 50). One should not confuse this subject with the Middle Way.

## B. THE PATH AS A PRACTICE AND WAY OF LIFE FOR BOTH MONKS AND LAYPEOPLE

Monks, I do not praise the wrong path, whether for a layperson or for one gone forth. Whether it is a layperson or one gone forth who is practising wrongly, because of undertaking the wrong way of practice he does not attain the right path which is wholesome. And what is the wrong path? It is: wrong view ... wrong concentration.

I praise the right path, both for a layperson and for one gone forth. Whether it is a layperson or one gone forth who is practising correctly, because of undertaking the right way of practice he attains the right path which is wholesome. And what is the right path? It is: right view ... right concentration.<sup>2</sup>

S. V. 18-19.

Monks, just as the river Ganges flows, slopes and inclines towards the ocean, so too a monk who develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path aspires, slopes and inclines towards Nibbāna.



S. V. 41.

Master Gotama, just as the river Ganges flows, slopes, inclines towards, and merges with the ocean, so too Master Gotama's assembly with its homeless ones and its householders aspires, slopes, inclines towards, and merges with Nibbāna.

M. I. 493-4.

These passages on right and wrong practice reveal how the Buddha intended the Middle Way to be applicable to all people, both renunciants and laity; it is a teaching to be realized and brought to completion by everyone – monks and householders alike. {529}

### C. THE PATH AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE CONNECTED TO SOCIETY

Ānanda, having good friends, having good companions, and a delight in associating with virtuous people is equivalent to the entire holy life. When a monk has a good friend<sup>3</sup> ... it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

S. V. 2-3.

Monks, just as the dawn is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, having a virtuous friend is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path for a monk.

S. V. 29-30.

These passages show the importance of the relationship between people and their social environment, which is a vital factor influencing and supporting Buddhist practice. They show that in Buddhism one's way of life and spiritual practice is intimately connected to society.

<sup>2</sup>'The right path which is wholesome' (*ñāya-dhamma*) can also be translated as 'whole-someness leading to deliverance'. *Ñāya* or *ñāya-dhamma* refers to the transcendent path, the Truth, or Nibbāna.

<sup>3</sup>The term *kalyāṇamitta* does not simply refer to common friendships, but refers to anyone who is a teacher, friend, or guide, including books and forms of media, which offer advice, bestow knowledge, introduce ways of thinking, and reveal paths of spiritual practice.

Monks, just as the dawn is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, the fulfilment of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path for a monk. It is to be expected of a monk who has brought wise reflection to completion that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

S. V. 31.

This passage introduces the notion that, although social factors are vital, one should not overlook the importance of spiritual factors inherent in an individual. Both internal and external factors can be the impetus for spiritual practice and conducting one's life correctly. In fact, these two factors are mutually supportive.

This passage emphasizes that correct spiritual practice, or a virtuous life, results from the integration of these two factors. And progress on the Path towards the highest goal of life is most successful when these two factors serve and aid one another.

Note, however, that the teachings often give more emphasis to the social factor of having virtuous companionship than to the internal factor of wise reflection. There are passages, as the one above, which equate the value of having good friends as equivalent to the entire practice of the Buddhist teachings, referred to here as the 'holy life' (*brahmacariya*). This is because most people must rely on social factors in order to initiate right practice and a virtuous life, or to begin on the noble path.

Moreover, wholesome social factors act as both the trigger for enabling wise reflection and for the support for augmenting and advancing wise reflection. {530}

There are very few exceptions to this rule, namely, those extraordinary persons who can progress safely on the Path relying solely on their own inherent spiritual endowment. They are able to commence with wise reflection without outside influence and to constantly summon wise reflection without relying on social factors.<sup>4</sup> These passages are thus

<sup>4</sup>The commentaries state that only a person with exceptional wisdom, like an omniscient Buddha or a Silent Buddha, is able to develop comprehensive insight

intended for the majority of people, who possess an average degree of spiritual faculties.

This subject of social factors in relation to internal factors is very important and will be addressed at more length in subsequent chapters.

#### D. THE PATH AS A WAY TO END KAMMA

This Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of kamma, that is, right view ... right concentration.

A. III. 414-5; S. IV. 133.

The Middle Way here is the way leading to the cessation of kamma. It is very important, however, not to interpret this to mean the following: that it simply refers to the passing away of the body, to dying;<sup>5</sup> or that it refers to ending kamma by not producing kamma or not doing anything at all, which is the doctrine of the Jains, as described in the chapter on kamma; or that it refers to abandoning activity and living in a state of passivity.

The ending of kamma requires activity and earnest endeavour, but it is action in accord with the Middle Way, in accord with a proper method of action, as opposed to errant behaviour.

And the expression 'cessation of kamma' does not mean inactivity and complacency, but rather an end to the actions of unawakened persons and the start to actions of noble beings.

Ordinary people act with craving and grasping; they attach to personal ideas of what is good and bad and to things providing some form of personal advantage. The actions of such people are technically referred to as 'kamma', which is classified as either good or bad.

The end of kamma refers to ceasing to act with an attachment to personal views of right and wrong and with a hunger for personal gain. When

through his own wise reflection, without relying on social factors (see: MA. II. 346).

<sup>5</sup>Trans.: the expression *sin wayn sin gam* ('the end of retribution, the end of kamma') in Thai means to die.

personal attachments to right and wrong are absent, the subsequent actions are not referred to as ‘kamma’, because kamma requires taking sides, requires for things to be either good or evil.

The actions of awakened beings, on the other hand, are in harmony with the pure reason and objective of that particular activity; they are not tied up with any craving or grasping.

Awakened persons do no wrong, because no more causes or conditions exist which would compel them to misbehave; no greed, hatred, or delusion remains in their minds which would drive them to seek personal gain. They only perform good actions, acting solely with wisdom and compassion. The term ‘good’ here, however, is used according to the understanding of general people. Awakened beings do not attach to the ideas of personal goodness, or to goodness as some mark of personal identity.

Generally speaking, when ordinary people perform good deeds, they do not act purely in accord with the true objective of such deeds, but tend to expect some kind of personal reward as a result. On a subtle level this may be a wish for personal prestige, or even a sense of internal wellbeing that ‘I have done good. {531}

Awakened persons, however, perform good acts purely in accord with the purpose, objective, and necessity of such an action. Their actions are thus technically not referred to as ‘kamma’.

The Path is a way of practice for bringing an end to volitionally produced actions (*kamma*); when kamma ceases only pure actions (referred to as ‘doing’ – *kiriya*), following the guidance of wisdom, remain.

This is the distinction between the mundane and the transcendent courses of action. The Buddha and the arahants teach and act for the welfare of all people without their actions constituting kamma. In the vernacular, their actions are referred to simply as ‘acts of goodness’.

**E. THE PATH AS A PRACTICAL TOOL**

Monks, suppose a man in the course of a long journey saw a great expanse of water, whose near shore was frightening and dangerous and whose far shore was safe and free from danger, but there was no ferryboat or bridge crossing to the other shore. Then he thought: 'There is this great expanse of water, whose near shore is frightening and dangerous.... Suppose I collect grass, pieces of wood, branches, and leaves and bind them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore.'

And then the man collected grass ... and leaves and bound them together into a raft ... and got safely across to the far shore. Then, when he had got across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it ... I got safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to hoist it on my head or load it on my shoulders, and then go wherever I want.' Now, monks, what do you think? By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with that raft?

[The monks replied, 'No, venerable sir', and the Buddha continued:]

By doing what would that man be doing what should be done with that raft? Here, monks, when that man got across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: 'This raft has been very helpful to me.... Suppose I were to haul it onto the dry land or tie it up at the water's edge, and then go wherever I want.' Now, monks, it is by so doing that that man would be doing what should be done with that raft.

The Dhamma is similar to a raft, which I have revealed to you for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping. When you thoroughly understand the Dhamma, which is similar to a raft as I have illustrated, you should abandon even good states, not to mention bad states.

Monks, purified and bright as this view is, if you adhere to it, are enthralled by it, cherish it, and treat it as a possession, would you then understand the Dhamma that has been taught as similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping?<sup>6</sup>

M. I. 260-61.

These two passages caution against grasping at virtuous qualities (including grasping at the truth or at what is right), by which a person fails to benefit from their true value and objective. Moreover, they emphasize viewing all virtuous qualities and all Dhamma teachings as means or methods leading to a specific goal; they are neither arbitrary nor are they ends in themselves. {532}

When practising a particular Dhamma teaching, it is important to realize its objective, along with its relationship to other teachings. The term ‘objective’ here does not only refer to the final goal, but also to the vital function of that particular teaching or spiritual quality: to know, for example, how cultivating a specific quality supports or generates other qualities, what its limits are, and once its function is complete, to know what other qualities take over responsibility.

This is similar to being on a journey, in which one must use different vehicles at various stages to pass over land, water, and air. It is insufficient to simply have a general idea of one’s destination. One needs to know how far each vehicle can travel, and having reached a location one knows which is the next vehicle to use.<sup>7</sup>

Spiritual practice lacking insight into these objectives, requirements, and interrelationships is limited and obstructed. Even worse it leads people off the right track, it misses the target, and it is stagnant, futile and fruitless. Aimless spiritual practice causes misunderstandings and harmful consequences. It undermines such important spiritual qualities as contentment and equanimity.

<sup>6</sup>‘View’ (*diṭṭhi*) here refers to beliefs, theories, and an understanding of the truth.

<sup>7</sup>The Rathavināta Sutta (M. I. 145-51) gives special emphasis to this subject, describing both the general and specific objectives of various spiritual qualities, according to the seven stages of purity (*visuddhi*).

## F. THE PATH AS THE HOLY LIFE

Bhikkhus, you should wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world, and for the wellbeing, support and happiness of gods and human beings.... You should proclaim the Dhamma ... you should make known the holy life.

*Vin. I. 20-21.*

‘The holy life, the holy life. What now, friend, is the holy life, and who is a follower of the holy life, and what is the final goal of the holy life?’

‘This Noble Eightfold Path is the holy life; that is, right view ... right concentration. One who possesses this Noble Eightfold Path is called a liver of the holy life. The end of lust, the end of hatred, the end of delusion; this is the final goal of the holy life.’

*S. V. 7-8, 16-17, 26-7.*

What is the fruit of the holy life? The fruit of stream-entry, the fruit of once-returning, the fruit of non-returning, the fruit of arahantship; this is the fruit of the holy life.

*S. V. 26.*

So this holy life, monks, does not have gain, honour, and renown as its blessing, or the perfection of virtue as its blessing, or the attainment of concentration as its blessing, or knowledge and vision as its blessing. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind that is the goal of this holy life, its heartwood, and its end.<sup>8</sup> {533}

*M. I. 197; 204-205.*

The term *brahmacariya* is generally understood in a very narrow sense, as living a renunciant life and the abstention from sexual intercourse, which is only one meaning of this term. (See Note 12.2)

<sup>8</sup>‘Unshakeable deliverance of mind’ (*akuppā-cetovimutti*) is perfect, immutable liberation of mind.

## NOTE 12.2: DEFINITIONS OF BRAHMACARIYA

The commentaries give twelve definitions for the term *brahmacariya*. The common definitions include: the entire Buddhist religion; practice according to the Eightfold Path; the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*); generosity (*dāna*); contentment with one's own wife; celibacy; and exposition of the Dhamma (*dhamma-desanā*): MA. II. 204. DA. I. 177 provides ten definitions; ItA. I. 109 provides five definitions; KhA. 152 and SnA. I. 299 provide four definitions. The Cūḷaniddesa defines *brahmacariya* as the abstention from sexual intercourse ('unwholesome practice' – *asaddhamma*) and adds: *Apica nippariyāyena brahmacariyaṃ vuccati ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* – 'moreover, generally speaking, the Eightfold Path is called the holy life' (Nd. II. 10, 48).

The Mahāniddesa defines *cara* as: *vihara* ('abide', 'exist'); *iriya* ('movement'); *vatta* ('go', 'revolve'); *pāla* ('protect'); *yapa* ('proceed'); *yāpa* ('nourish', 'sustain life'). See, e.g.: Nd. I. 51, 159, 314.

Here are the substantiated meanings of these words (*rūpa-siddhi*): *cariya* (nt.) and *cariyā* (f.) stem from *cara* (root – *dhātu*) + *nya* (affix – *paccaya*) + *i* (added syllable – *āgama*). *Cariya* here is the same word used in the Thai compounds *cariya-sikkhā* (จริยศึกษา – moral education) and *cariya-dhamma* (จริยธรรม – virtuous conduct).

In fact, the Buddha used this term to refer to the entire system of living life according to Buddhist principles or to Buddhism itself. This is evident from the passages in which the Buddha sends forth his disciples in order to 'proclaim the holy life', and also in the passage in which he states that the holy life will truly flourish when members of the four assemblies – the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, laymen, and laywomen – both renunciants (*brahmacārī*) and householders (*kāmaḥhogī* – 'those who enjoy sense pleasures'; those who have families) – understand and practise the Dhamma well.<sup>9</sup>

*Brahmacariya* is comprised of the terms *brahma* and *cariya*. *Brahma* means 'excellent', 'superior', 'supreme', 'pure'.<sup>10</sup> *Cariya* is derived from the root *cara*, which in a concrete sense means 'to travel', 'to proceed', 'to wander', and in an abstract sense it means 'behaviour', 'to lead one's life', 'to conduct one's life', 'to exist'. Here, we are interested in the figurative

<sup>9</sup>M. I. 490-94; D. III. 123-6; cf.: D. II. 104-5 = S. V. 260-62 = A. IV. 310 = Ud. 63.

<sup>10</sup>For different definitions of the term *brahma*, see: MA. I. 34; BvA. 18; VbhA. 399.



or abstract sense. (Note that occasionally *brahmacariya* is written as *brahmacariyā*.) (See Note 12.2 for further analysis.)

As a compound word *brahmacariya* thus means: excellent conduct; excellent behaviour; pure, divine conduct (conduct resembling that of the Brahma gods); leading one's life in an excellent way; living in an excellent way; or an excellent life.<sup>11</sup>

The term *cariya-dhamma* (จริยธรรม) is a newly established word in the Thai language. Although in Pali the word *cariya* occurs on its own, there is no contradiction to add the word *dhamma*. *Cariya-dhamma* here means 'upright conduct', 'virtuous conduct', or 'basis of conduct'. It refers to principles of behaviour or principles of conducting one's life. Here, I will not discuss the wider academic notions of the term *cariya-dhamma*, but focus simply on its Buddhist connotations. {534}

Adopting this new term, one can define *brahmacariya* as excellent virtuous conduct – excellent *cariya-dhamma*. This excellent conduct, or 'supreme' (*brahma*) conduct, refers specifically to the system of conduct revealed and proclaimed by the Buddha.

According to the Buddha's words quoted above, the holy life – excellent conduct or Buddhist conduct – is equivalent to the Path (*magga*) or to the Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*). Likewise, one who practises the holy life (*brahmacārī*) – one whose conduct conforms to Buddhist principles – lives according to the Path or practises in line with the Middle Way.

The Buddhist teachings state that the Path – the Middle Way – is a system of conduct, a system of practical application, a guideline for living a virtuous life, or a way for people to lead their lives correctly, which leads to the goal of freedom from suffering.

The following points provide a summary of *brahmacariya*: the holy life, excellent conduct, or conduct conforming to the middle way of practice:

<sup>11</sup>*Brahmacariyanti seṭṭhacariyaṃ*, e.g.: DA. III. 708.

### 1. *Virtuous conduct*

Virtuous conduct is connected to truth inherent in nature; it is based on natural laws. It is a matter of applying knowledge about natural, causal processes in order to benefit human beings, by establishing a system of practice or a code of conduct, which is effective and in harmony with these laws.

This harmony with nature can be viewed from two perspectives. First is to focus on the source, that is, to see that virtuous conduct is determined by natural truths. Second is to focus on the goal, to recognize the purpose and objective for such conduct. One practises the holy life in order to benefit oneself and all of humanity, to lead a virtuous life, to foster goodness in society, to lead to the welfare and happiness of all people.

In relation to society, for example, by wishing for people to live together peacefully, one advocates and establishes principles of behaviour, say on how to interact with others or how to act in relation to one's natural environment. These principles are established according to the truth of human nature, which has certain requirements and attributes dependent on other people and on the environment.

In terms of individuals, by wishing for people to be peaceful, bright, happy, and mentally healthy, one teaches them how to control and direct their thoughts and how to purify their minds. These methods of generating wellbeing are established according to the universal nature of the human mind, which is subject to causal, immaterial laws inherent in nature. Wishing for people to experience the refined happiness of *jhāna* and the highest levels of insight, one teaches them to train the mind, to reflect, to relate to things properly, and to develop various stages of wisdom. These methods of higher spiritual practice are established according to the laws governing the functioning of the mind and the laws of conditioned phenomena. {535}

The term *cariya-dhamma*, which is a synonym for *brahmacariya*, encompasses all of these kinds of spiritual practice, which can be divided into many different levels or stages. *Cariya-dhamma* can be defined as applying

an understanding of reality to establish wholesome ways of living, so that people can realize the highest forms of wellbeing.

## 2. *Brahmacariya*

*Brahmacariya* – excellent conduct, the Path, or the Middle Way – is equivalent to the entire practical teachings of Buddhism. This term has a much broader definition than the Thai term *sīla-dhamma* (ศีลธรรม – ‘morality’, ‘ethical behaviour’).<sup>12</sup> In regard to its general characteristics, subject matter, and objective, *sīla-dhamma* has a narrower meaning. Generally speaking, *sīla-dhamma* refers to external behaviour by way of body and speech, to non-harming, to abstaining from bad actions, and to mutual assistance in society.

In terms of its content or subject matter, this latter term tends to be limited to moral conduct (*sīla*): to restraint of body and speech, and to expressions of the divine abidings, for instance lovingkindness and compassion. Although it is connected to the mind, it does not include the development of concentration or the cultivation of wisdom in order to realize the truth of conditioned phenomena.

As to its objective, it emphasizes social wellbeing, peaceful coexistence, worldly progress – say in terms of material gain, reputation, and prestige – and being reborn in a happy realm. In short, it is linked to human and divine prosperity (*sampatti*), to ‘mundane welfare’ (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*), and to the beginning stages of ‘spiritual welfare’ (*samparāyikattha*).

Here, we see that *sīla-dhamma* is equivalent to *sīla* – the term *dhamma* is added simply for the sake of euphony.

## 3. *Cariya-dhamma*

In Thailand, the term *cariya-dhamma* still causes confusion for people. Some people understand this term as equivalent to *sīla-dhamma* – to general morality, while others bestow on it an academic or philosophical connotation. I will not go into these various definitions here.

<sup>12</sup>For the definition of *sīla-dhamma*, see Appendix 2 in chapter 17.

Suffice it to say that similar to the term *sīla-dhamma*, which is equivalent to *sīla*, *cariya-dhamma* is equivalent to *cariya* (‘conduct’, ‘behaviour’) – the suffix *dhamma* does not alter its meaning.

The term *cariya-dhamma* encompasses the entirety of Dhamma practice, beginning with basic moral conduct. The following factors are included in the principle of *cariya-dhamma*: moral conduct, developing good family relationships, social harmony, observing precepts in a monastery as a layperson, keeping the duties of a renunciant (*samaṇa-dhamma*) in the forest, gladdening the mind, fostering mental health, mental training, meditation, insight practice, etc.

As stated above, the term *brahmacariya*, which contains the term *cariya*, refers to the Path or to the Middle Way, but it emphasizes behaviour or the way in which one leads one’s life. In essence, the term *brahmacariya* refers to a system of conducting one’s life with virtue, or to the entire system of Dhamma practice in Buddhism, and it thus incorporates the term *sīla-dhamma* as used in the Thai language. It also includes the training of the mind, the instilling of virtue, and the development of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*), which is an aspect of higher wisdom. {536}

In sum, *brahmacariya* refers to a means of cultivating virtue by way of body, speech and mind, or from the perspective of the threefold training, it is the complete training in moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

The goal of this excellent conduct is to realize every stage of Buddhist spiritual practice, until one has reached the highest goal of the holy life (*brahmacariya-pariyosāna*): the end of greed, hatred, and delusion, the realization of true knowledge (*vijjā*), liberation (*vimutti*), purity (*visuddhi*), and peace (*santi*). In sum, one realizes Nibbāna.

For brevity’s sake, *brahmacariya* is translated here as the ‘holy life’ or as ‘living an excellent life’. Excellent conduct is not something that can be formulated simply by the whims of influential people or by the consensus of a group or community, and it is not something that should be followed blindly. Establishing true excellent conduct, and having such conduct bear fruit, is dependent on knowledge of reality.

### G. THE PATH AS A WAY OF ACHIEVING LIFE OBJECTIVES

Your Majesty, I told the bhikkhu Ānanda: ‘Ānanda ... having good friends, having good companions, and a delight in associating with virtuous people is equivalent to the entire holy life. When a monk has a good friend it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path....’ Therefore, great king, you should train yourself thus: ‘I will be one who has good friends, who has good companions, and who delights in associating with virtuous people....’

When, great king, you have good friends, you should dwell by applying this vital principle: heedfulness in respect to wholesome states. When you are heedful and dwelling diligently, your retinue of harem women ... your nobles and royal entourage ... your soldiers ... and even the townspeople and villagers will think thus: ‘The king is heedful and dwells diligently. Come now, let us also be heedful and dwell diligently.’

When, great king, you are heedful and dwelling diligently, you yourself will be guarded and protected, your retinue of harem women will be guarded and protected, your treasury and storehouse will be guarded and protected.

One who desires great, burgeoning riches should take great care;

The wise praise diligence performing meritorious deeds.

The wise are heedful

and thus secure both kinds of good (*attha*):

The good visible in this very life

And the good of the future.

A wise person, by attaining the good,

Is called a sage.

*Appamāda Sutta: S. I. 87-9; cf.: A. III. 364.*

The term *attha* (‘good’) can also be translated as ‘substance’, ‘meaning’, ‘objective’, ‘benefit’, ‘target’, or ‘goal’. In this context it means the true purpose or goal of life, referring to the goal of the holy life or the goal of Buddhism. {537}

Most people know that the highest goal of Buddhism is Nibbāna, for which there exists the epithet *paramattha*, meaning ‘supreme good’ or ‘supreme goal’. It is normal that when teaching Dhamma there is great emphasis on practising in order to reach the highest goal.

Buddhism, however, does not overlook the secondary benefits or goals which people may realize according to their individual level of spiritual maturity, and these benefits are often clearly defined, as is evident in the passage above.

As far as I can ascertain, the older texts divide spiritual good (*attha*) into two categories, as seen in the passage above:

1. *Diṭṭhadhammikattha*: initial benefits; present good; good in this lifetime.
2. *Samparāyikattha*: profound benefits; future good; higher good.

In this case, the supreme good (*paramattha*) is included in the second factor of higher good (*samparāyikattha*): it is the apex of this second form of spiritual benefit.<sup>13</sup> The authors of later texts, however, wished to give special emphasis to the supreme good and thus distinguished it as a separate factor, resulting in three levels of spiritual benefit or spiritual goals:<sup>14</sup>

1. *Diṭṭhadhammikattha*: present good; good in this lifetime; visible benefits. This refers to basic or immediate goals, to obvious, everyday benefits. It pertains to external or ordinary, mundane aims and aspirations, like material gain, wealth, prestige, pleasure, praise, social status, friendship, and a happy married life. It also includes the righteous search for these things, a correct relationship to them, the use of these things in a way that brings happiness to oneself and others, communal harmony, and the fulfilment of one’s social responsibilities which leads to communal wellbeing.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 2: ‘Diṭṭhadhammika and Samparāyika’ in chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> E.g.: Nd. II. 57, 66, 72; cf.: SnA. I. 74; NdA. II. 296; VismṬ.: Cha-anussatiniddesaṇṇanā, Buddhānussatikathāvaṇṇanā.

2. *Samparāyikattha*: future good; inconspicuous benefits; profound benefits, which are not immediately visible. It pertains to a person's spiritual life or to the true value of human life; it refers to higher goals, which act as a surety when one passes away from this world, or are a guarantee for obtaining superior blessings – superior gains – greater than one normally realizes in the world. These benefits include: spiritual development and the increase of virtuous qualities; an interest in moral conduct, meritorious deeds, the cultivation of goodness, and actions based on faith and relinquishment; a confidence in the power of virtue; tranquillity and mental ease; the experience of refined happiness; and the exceptional attributes of jhāna. (Originally, the supreme benefit of awakening was also included in this term.)

A person who realizes these benefits is released from an attachment to material things. One does not overvalue these things to the point of grasping onto them, succumbing to them, or allowing them to be a cause for doing evil. Instead, one gives value to virtue, acts with a love of truth, cherishes a good quality of life, and delights in spiritual development. Reaching this stage produces results that can be used in conjunction with mundane benefits (*ditṭhadhammikatta*), and which support oneself and others. For example, instead of using money for seeking sensual pleasures, one uses it to assist others and to enhance the quality of one's life. {538}

3. *Paramattha*: supreme benefit; the true, essential good. This refers to the highest goal, the final destination: realization of the truth; a thorough knowledge of the nature of conditioned phenomena; non-enslavement by the world; a free, joyous, and spacious mind; an absence of oppression by personal attachments and fears; an absence of defilements, which burn and corrupt the mind; a freedom from suffering; a realization of internal happiness, which is completely pure and accompanied by perfect peace, illumination, and joy. In other words, this refers to liberation (*vimutti*): to Nibbāna.

The Buddha acknowledged the importance of all the aforementioned benefits or goals, recognizing that they are connected to an individual's level of lifestyle, profession, surroundings, and proficiency, readiness, and maturity of spiritual faculties.

From the passage cited above, however, it is evident that according to Buddhism all people should reach the second stage of benefits or goals. It is good to have attained present, immediate benefits, but this is insufficient – one should not rest here. One should progress and realize at least some aspects of profound, spiritual benefits. A person who has obtained the first two levels of benefits, or has reached the first two goals, is praised as a *paṇḍita* – a person who lives wisely, whose life is not meaningless and void.

The Buddha gave comprehensive practical teachings on how to reach all of these benefits. On some occasions he gave a teaching on how to obtain four kinds of immediate, visible benefits:

1. *Uṭṭhāna-sampadā*: perseverance; to know how to apply wisdom to manage one's affairs.
2. *Ārakkha-sampadā*: to know how to protect one's wealth and possessions, so that they are safe and do not come to harm.
3. *Kalyāṇamittatā*: to associate with virtuous people, who support one's spiritual practice and development.
4. *Samajīvitā*: to lead a balanced livelihood; to be happy without needing to live lavishly; to keep one's income greater than one's expenditures; to maintain savings; to economize.

Similarly, he gave a teaching on how to obtain four kinds of profound, spiritual benefits:

1. *Saddhā-sampadā*: to possess faith based on reason and in line with the Buddhist teachings; to be deeply inspired by the Triple Gem; to believe in the law of kamma; to be anchored in something virtuous.



2. *Sīla-sampadā*: to be endowed with moral conduct; to live virtuously and to make a living honestly; to maintain a moral discipline that is suitable for one's way of life.
3. *Cāga-sampadā*: the accomplishment of relinquishment; to be generous and charitable; to be ready to help those in need.
4. *Paññā-sampadā*: to live wisely; to know how to reflect on things; to apply discriminative knowledge; to fully understand the world; to be able to detach the mind from unwholesome states according to the circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

In regard to the supreme benefit or goal (*paramattha*), because it is so difficult to understand and to realize, and also because it is the unique factor distinguishing Buddhism from all previous religious doctrines, it is natural that the Buddha gave it great emphasis. There are teachings by the Buddha on the supreme goal spread throughout the Tipiṭaka, and similarly in this text *Buddhadhamma* this theme has been touched upon frequently. {539}

As for the first two levels of benefits, they have been adequately taught by Buddhist scholars and teachers throughout the ages. The first level – of mundane, immediate benefits – has been taught to lay Buddhists as is suitable to their particular time period and location. Buddhists have readily adopted any teaching in this context that is effective and does not lead to a deviation from the Middle Way. Lay Buddhists themselves are able to elaborate on and adapt these practices as is appropriate to their circumstances.

In the above sutta passage the Buddha emphasizes the quality of heedfulness (*appamāda*) as a factor which helps to realize all of the aforementioned benefits. *Appamāda* can be defined as: an absence of indifference, passivity, or neglect; attentiveness, diligence, and ambition; being well-prepared and vigilant; hastening to do that which should be done, adjust that which should be adjusted, and do that which is good. A heedful person knows that diligence is a fundamental spiritual quality, which leads to both immediate and future benefits.

<sup>15</sup>A. IV. 281-4.

There is the added stipulation here that heedfulness must be firmly established on an association with virtuous people, on having good friends, and on involving such people in one's activities. Moreover, the Buddha explains heedfulness here to mean 'diligence in regard to wholesome states' – to engaging in virtuous activities and 'performing meritorious deeds' (*puñña-kiriya*).

The term *puñña-kiriya* provides an interesting link to a related subject. When the Buddha on certain occasions spoke about secondary benefits or goals, he reduced his emphasis in relation to the supreme goal. When the focus of the teaching was lowered to one of the secondary goals, the level of practice that he recommended was also lowered or relaxed.

This is the case not only in specific, isolated circumstances; it is true also when he presented general, wide-ranging systems of practice.

We see this in a teaching the Buddha gave in reference to these three stages of benefits. Here, instead of the practice being formulated according to the gradual teaching of the threefold training – of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* – as is usual in those teachings focusing primarily on the supreme goal, the system of practice is restructured as the general teaching referred to as 'meritorious action' (*puñña-kiriya*) or the 'bases of meritorious action' (*puñnakiriya-vatthu*).

In this teaching, there are likewise three factors, but with different names.<sup>16</sup> They are as follows:

1. *Dāna*: giving, relinquishment, generosity. The reasons for giving are various: to help others who are poor, destitute, or in need; to show goodwill in order to create trust, establish friendship, and develop communal harmony; and to honour virtue, by praising, encouraging and supporting good people. The things given are also various: personal possessions, material objects, and requisites for sustaining life; technical knowledge, advice, guidance on how to live one's life, or the gift of Dhamma; the opportunity to participate in wholesome activities; and the gift of forgiveness (*abhaya-dāna*).

<sup>16</sup>See: D. III. 218; A. IV. 241-2; It. 15, 51-2; DA. III. 999; ItA. I. 78; ItA. II. 23.

2. *Sīla*: virtuous conduct and earning one's living honestly; moral discipline and good manners. {540} The main emphasis here is on not harming others and living together peacefully, by maintaining the five precepts: not killing or injuring other beings; not violating other people's property or possessions; not violating those who are cherished by others – not offending others by dishonouring them or destroying their families; not harming or undermining others by wrong or offensive speech; and not causing trouble for oneself by taking addictive drugs which impair mindfulness and clear comprehension – spiritual qualities that act as restraints, preventing harm and preserving virtue.

In addition to the five precepts one may undertake a training in abstaining from certain luxuries and pleasing sense objects, in living simply and being less dependent on material things, by keeping the eight or ten precepts at suitable times. Alternatively, one may undertake various forms of public service and assistance (*veyyāvacca-kamma*).

3. *Bhāvanā*: cultivation of the mind and of wisdom; to undergo mental training in order to develop virtuous qualities, to strengthen and stabilize the mind, and to generate wisdom which truly discerns conditioned phenomena; to have a correct worldview or perspective on life.

The cultivation referred to here is of both concentration and wisdom, which in the threefold training is distinguished as *samādhi-bhāvanā* (or *citta-bhāvanā*) and *paññā-bhāvanā*. Here, the distinction between these two is not emphasized and they are thus combined as a single factor. This factor encompasses a wide range, including right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) – the effort to abandon mental defilements and to nurture wholesome qualities – which is part of the *samādhi* group in the Eightfold Path, and both right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) – especially the cultivation of lovingkindness, the source of both personal and social wellbeing – which are part of the wisdom group in the Eightfold Path.

The practices recommended in the scriptures for developing this combination of concentration and wisdom include: seeking wisdom and clearing the mind by listening to the Dhamma (*dhamma-savana*; this includes reading Dhamma books); reciting or teaching the Dhamma; discussing the Dhamma; revising and correcting one's beliefs, views, and understanding; developing loving-kindness; and general methods of restricting and subduing mental defilements.

It is evident that when the Buddha altered the focus of his teachings to more basic aspects of life or to secondary spiritual achievements, he adjusted the way one should live one's life, or the system of Dhamma practice, accordingly.

In this simplified system of practice he emphasizes physical and verbal actions, human interactions, and social relationships, which are easy to observe. The two factors of generosity (*dāna*) and virtuous conduct (*sīla*) focus on mental development and refinement through the use of basic, external actions as the means of practice. One applies these two factors in order to eliminate coarse defilements.

Practice on the levels of concentration (or the 'higher mind' – *adhicitta*) and of wisdom (or 'higher wisdom' – *adhipaññā*), on the other hand, deals directly with internal, spiritual matters and is both subtle and difficult. This system of 'meritorious action' (*puñña-kiriya*) does not emphasize this level of practice and thus combines these two factors; moreover, it points out less refined aspects of concentration and wisdom which can be practised and developed in everyday life.

Later generations of Buddhist teachers have tended to use this teaching on meritorious action as appropriate for laypeople. The system of the threefold training is the standard system and encompasses the entire Buddhist practice. The bhikkhu sangha, which symbolizes a community applying the complete model of practice, should act as the leader in undertaking the system of the threefold training.

Besides dividing benefits or goals (*attha*) vertically as described above, the Buddha also classified benefits horizontally, in order of a person's

responsibilities, or in order of social interactions. Here too it is a threefold division: {541}

Monks, suppose there is a lake whose water is unmuddied, clear, and pristine. A person with good eyesight standing on the bank could see snails, clams, stones, pebbles, and shoals of fish, swimming or stationary, in that lake. Why is that? Because the water is not cloudy. Just so, a monk whose mind is unclouded understands his own benefit (*attattha*), the benefit of others (*parattha*), and the benefit of both (*ubhayattha*). It is possible for him to realize excellent states surpassing those of ordinary people, that is, knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*), which is capable of leading to awakening. Why is that? Because his mind is unclouded.

A. I. 9.

When a person is impassioned with lust,<sup>17</sup> overwhelmed and possessed by lust ... when a person harbours hatred, is overwhelmed and possessed by hatred ... when a person is bewildered through delusion, overwhelmed and possessed by delusion, then he plans for his own harm, for the harm of others, and for the harm of both; and he experiences in his mind suffering and grief. When lust ... hatred ... delusion has been abandoned, he neither plans for his own harm, nor for the harm of others, nor for the harm of both.

When a person is impassioned with lust ... harbours hatred ... is bewildered through delusion, he will behave badly by body, speech and mind. When lust ... hatred ... delusion has been abandoned, he does not behave badly by body, speech or mind.

When a person is impassioned with lust ... harbours hatred ... is bewildered through delusion, he does not understand as it really is his own welfare, others' welfare, or the welfare of both. When lust ... hatred ... delusion has been abandoned, he understands as it really is his own welfare, others' welfare, and the welfare of both.

Lust, hatred and delusion cause a person to be blind, visionless, and foolish; they restrict wisdom, cause affliction, and are not

conducive for Nibbāna. Seeing the harm in lust ... in hatred ... in delusion, I teach the abandoning of lust ... hatred ... delusion....

Indeed, this Noble Eightfold Path, that is, right view ... right concentration, is the path, is the way of practice, to abandon lust, hatred and delusion.<sup>18</sup>

A. I. 216.

Monks, considering personal wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering others' wellbeing, you should accomplish it with care. Considering the wellbeing of both, you should accomplish it with care. {542}

S. II. 29.

Here are definitions for these three kinds of benefits (*attha*):<sup>19</sup>

1. *Attattha*: personal benefit; the realization of personal goals, that is, the three goals (*attha*) mentioned earlier, which have to do with oneself, which are accomplishments specific to an individual. This factor emphasizes self-reliance at every stage of spiritual practice, so as not to be a burden on others or a hindrance to the community. Instead, one is fully prepared to help others and to engage in activities effectively. The mainstay for realizing this benefit is wisdom. There are many teachings for achieving this benefit, for example the 'ten virtues which make for protection' (*nāthakaraṇadhamma*; 'virtues which make for self-reliance'). Broadly speaking, this factor refers to bringing the practice of the threefold training to completion in regard to personal responsibilities.

<sup>17</sup>Lust (*rāga*) here is the same as greed (*lobha*).

<sup>18</sup>Another sutta, which is similar but shorter, is: A. I. 157-8. At S. V. 124 and A. III. 64, 234-5, the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are described as the source of failing to recognize these three forms of welfare.

<sup>19</sup>The source of this information is the same as that on the first triad of benefits: *diṭṭhadhammikattha*, *samparāyikattha*, and *paramattha*; see the sutta references above. See also the explanations of the Buddha's virtues (*buddha-guṇa*) at Vismṭ.: Cha-anussatiniddesaṇṇanā, Buddhānussatikathāvaṇṇanā (in two passages) and Vinṭ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā, pointing out the relationship between *attattha* and *paññā*, and between *parattha* and *karuṇā*.

2. *Parattha*: the benefit of others; fostering self-reliance in others; helping others to realize wellbeing or to achieve spiritual goals, that is, the three goals (*attha*) mentioned earlier, which have to do with other people, which are accomplishments of those apart from oneself. The mainstay for realizing this benefit is compassion. The teachings promoting this benefit include the Four Principles of Service (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) and the teachings on the responsibilities of a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*).
3. *Ubhayattha*: the benefit of both parties or the shared benefit; the three goals (*attha*) mentioned earlier, which are realized by both oneself and others, or by oneself and one's community, for example advantages accrued by way of shared belongings or by way of communal activity. In particular, this benefit refers to a social environment and way of life that is conducive for all members of a community to practise in order to realize personal benefits and to act for others' benefit. The mainstays for realizing this benefit are moral discipline (*vinaya*) and communal harmony (*sāmaggī*). The teachings relevant to this subject include the Six Virtues Conducive to Communal Life (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*), the Seven Conditions of Welfare (*aparīhāṇīya-dhamma*), along with general teachings on necessary conduct supportive to society.

These two triads of benefits or goals (*attha*) can thus be combined as a single group:

1. *Attattha*: personal benefit can be divided into three levels:
  - A. *Diṭṭhadhammikattha*: immediate benefit; basic or visible goals.
  - B. *Samparāyikattha*: future benefit; higher or profound goals.
  - C. *Paramattha*: supreme benefit; highest goal.
2. *Parattha*: the benefit of others can be divided into the same three levels:
  - A. *Diṭṭhadhammikattha*: immediate benefit; basic or visible goals.
  - B. *Samparāyikattha*: future benefit; higher or profound goals.
  - C. *Paramattha*: supreme benefit; highest goal.

3. *Ubhayattha*: the benefit of both oneself and others, or collective goals; every sort of benefit or objective (according to the three levels above: immediate, future, and supreme) that is supportive for developing and realizing personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. {543}

This section pertaining to the various benefits of life is naturally linked to the previous section on living the holy life. We can thus recapitulate the meaning of the holy life (*brahmacariya*), or Buddhist conduct (*cariya*), thus: a system of spiritual practice based on an understanding of natural truths, which is conducive to fulfilling worthy aspirations of human life, and which fosters both a way of life and a social environment supportive of realization.

In short, it is a way of life based on truth, leading to worthy goals and nurturing a healthy environment for realizing these goals.

#### H. THE PATH AS THE THREEFOLD TRAINING OR AS THE PRACTICE FOR GENERATING NOBLE BEINGS

Monks, there are these three trainings. What three? The training in higher virtue, the training in higher mind, and the training in higher wisdom.

And what is the training in higher virtue? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline is virtuous, restrained by the restraint of the Pāṭimokkha, perfect in conduct and resort, seeing danger in the slightest faults. He undertakes and trains in the various training rules. This is called the training in higher virtue.

And what is the training in higher mind? Here, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by initial and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. With the subsiding of initial and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal clarity and unification of mind, is without initial and sustained thought, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading



away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, experiencing happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jhāna of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.’ With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and sadness, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the training in higher mind.

And what is the training in higher wisdom? Here, a monk understands as it really is: ‘This is suffering. This is the origin of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ This is called the training in higher wisdom.

*A. I. 235-6.*

Friend Visākha, the three divisions of training principles are not included in the Noble Eightfold Path, but the Noble Eightfold Path is included in the three divisions of training principles. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood – these qualities are included in the division of virtue (*sīla-khandha*). Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration – these qualities are included in the division of concentration (*samādhi-khandha*). Right view and right intention – these qualities are included in the aggregate of wisdom (*paññā-khandha*). {544}

*M. I. 300-301.*

## 12.2 THE NOBLE PATH AND THE THREEFOLD TRAINING

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### A. FROM THE EIGHTFOLD PATH TO THE THREEFOLD TRAINING

The threefold training is considered a complete system of practice, which encompasses the entirety of the Eightfold Path and distils the essence of the Path for the purpose of practical application. It is thus used as the standard teaching for describing Dhamma practice.

It is fair to conclude that the Eightfold Path contains the full essence of Dhamma practice, and the threefold training expresses the entirety of Dhamma practice in a practical way. Moreover, the threefold training draws upon the essential principles contained in the Path and elaborates upon them, providing comprehensive details of practice.

The Path (*magga*), or the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*), can alternatively be translated as the ‘Eightfold Path of Noble Beings’, ‘Eightfold Path Leading One to Become a Noble Being’, ‘Eightfold Path Discovered by the Noble One (the Buddha)’, or the ‘Supreme Path Comprised of Eight Factors’. The eight factors are as follows:

1. Right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*; right understanding).
2. Right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*).
3. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*).
4. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*).
5. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).
6. Right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*).
7. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*).
8. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

The term ‘eightfold path’ leads some people to misunderstand that there are eight separate paths which must be travelled in succession: once one has completed one path one then begins another until all eight are complete. They think that one must practise these eight factors separately and in chronological order. But this is not the case.

The term ‘eightfold path’ clearly refers to a single path with eight factors. This is similar to a perfectly built road, which possesses many different elements and components, for example: layers of earth, stones, gravel, sand, concrete, and tarmac to build up the road’s surface; the road’s borders; the lanes; banks where the road curves; light signals; road signs indicating direction, distance and location; road maps; and street lamps.

Just as a road is composed of these different parts and someone driving on it relies on all of them together, so too, the Path is comprised of eight factors and a Dhamma practitioner must apply all of them in an integrated fashion. {545}

For ease of understanding the Buddha classified the eight Path factors into three groups or ‘aggregates’ (*khandha*; *dhamma-khandha*). These are called the morality group (*sīla-khandha*), the concentration group (*samādhi-khandha*), and the wisdom group (*paññā-khandha*), or simply: virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). (See Note 12.3)

Here, right speech, right action, and right livelihood are included in the morality group, just as one may distinguish the compressed earth, gravel, sand, etc., which make up the road’s surface, as one group. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are included in the concentration group, as one may classify the road’s border, embankments, lanes, and curves – those things regulating the road’s course and direction – as another group. Finally, right view and right thought make up the wisdom group, just as one may include traffic lights, signs, and street lamps into a third group. This is illustrated as follows:

1. Right view	}	3. Wisdom
2. Right thought		
3. Right speech	}	1. Virtuous Conduct
4. Right action		
5. Right livelihood		
6. Right effort	}	2. Concentration
7. Right mindfulness		
8. Right concentration		

## NOTE 12.3: THREE GROUPS

See the passage cited above: M. I. 300-301; cf.: A. I. 124-5, 295; A. III. 15-6; A. V. 326-7; see also the classification of five groups or aggregates (including those things beyond moral conduct, concentration and wisdom, making for two more factors: the liberation aggregate – *vimutti-khandha* – and the knowledge and vision of liberation aggregate – *vimuttiñāṇadassana-khandha*) at: D. III. 279; A. III. 134-5, 271; AA. V. 4; NdA. I. 90.

This classification of the three groups (the ‘three *dhamma-khandha*’) – *sīla-khandha*, *samādhi-khandha*, and *paññā-khandha* – is a way of grouping similar qualities together.

In regard to practical application, these Path factors are classified in a similar way, and as a group they are given the name the ‘threefold training’ (*tisso sikkhā*). Individually, they are referred to as the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*).

Both of these two groups can be referred to simply as *sīla-samādhi-paññā*. (Roughly speaking, *adhisīla* equals *sīla*, *adhicitta* equals *samādhi*, and *adhipaññā* equals *paññā*.)<sup>20</sup> These trainings can be illustrated as follows: {546}

1. Training in higher virtue ( <i>adhisīla-sikkhā</i> )	2. Training in higher mind ( <i>adhicitta-sikkhā</i> )	3. Training in higher wisdom ( <i>adhipaññā-sikkhā</i> )
Right speech	Right effort	Right view
Right action	Right mindfulness	Right thought
Right livelihood	Right concentration	

<sup>20</sup>Note that referring to the threefold training as *sīla-samādhi-paññā* is informal; in the Pali Canon the terms *sīla-sikkhā*, *samādhi-sikkhā*, and *paññā-sikkhā* do not exist. In some canonical texts the three aggregates and the three trainings are arranged in sequence, but their original names (*adhisīla-sikkhā*, etc.) are strictly preserved (e.g.: VbhA. 122; PsA. 196).

## NOTE 12.4: GENERATING AND DEVELOPING

A very similar Pali word to *sikkhā* is *bhāvanā*, which is translated as: ‘generating’, ‘developing’, ‘cultivation’, ‘growth’, or ‘practice’.

Occasionally, one finds a similar threefold division of *bhāvanā*: development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), development of mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), and development of wisdom (*paññā-bhāvanā*) – see D. III. 219–20. The commentaries, however, say that this passage refers to physical, mental and wisdom development completed by arahants (DA. III. 1003). Normally, the completed development of arahants is divided into four factors, with the development of virtue (*sīla-bhāvanā*) constituting the second one, and in this context the term *bhāvita* is most often used: *bhāvita-kāya*, *bhāvita-sīla*, *bhāvita-citta*, and *bhāvita-paññā*.

Whereas the classification of the three aggregates simply groups together similar qualities, the threefold training aims to show the sequence of how these qualities are applied in practice.

The word *sikkhā* can be translated as ‘training’, ‘study’, ‘discipline’, ‘paying careful attention to’, ‘practice’, or ‘cultivation’. (See Note 12.4) This term refers to the essential aspects of training and cultivating one’s physical conduct, speech, state of mind, and wisdom, leading gradually to the realization of the highest goal, to liberation: Nibbāna.

Brief definitions for the three trainings are as follows:<sup>21</sup>

1. Training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*):<sup>22</sup> training and study on the level of conduct and in line with a moral code, in order to be upright in body, speech, and livelihood.
2. Training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*):<sup>23</sup> training the mind, cultivating spiritual qualities, generating happiness, developing the state of one’s mind, and gaining proficiency at concentration.

<sup>21</sup>For a doctrinal explanation of the threefold training, see Appendix 1.

<sup>22</sup>Trans.: the author uses the English translation ‘training in higher morality’.

<sup>23</sup>Trans.: the author uses the English translations ‘training in higher mentality’ and ‘training in higher mental discipline’.

3. Training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*): training in higher levels of wisdom, giving rise to thorough understanding, which leads to complete purification of the mind and liberation from suffering.

In order to give a complete definition of these three trainings one must combine an explanation of their purpose. The threefold training refers to the training of conduct, the mind, and wisdom, which leads to an end of suffering and to true happiness and deliverance. The essence of each training in the context of this path of liberation is as follows:

- The essence of training in higher morality is to live in an upright way in society, supporting, protecting, and promoting a peaceful and virtuous coexistence. Moral conduct is a foundation for developing the quality of one's mind and cultivating wisdom.
- The essence of training in higher mind is to develop and enhance the quality and potential of the mind, which supports living a virtuous life and is conducive for applying wisdom in the most optimal way.
- The essence of training in higher wisdom is to discern and understand things according to the truth, to penetrate the nature of conditioned phenomena, so that one lives and acts with wisdom. One knows how to relate to the world correctly and shares blessings with others, endowed with a bright, independent, and joyous mind, free from suffering.

The essence of the threefold training is not confined to an individual, but also has a bearing on or appeals to people's responsibilities in the context of their communities and society: to establishing social systems, building institutions, arranging activities, and applying various methods in order for the essence of these trainings to be integrated in society, or for people to be grounded in the threefold training. (Here, a moral code acts as a basis for these social systems, which then links to the training in higher morality.) {547}

Broadly speaking, when the term *sīla* encompasses a moral code or discipline, the meaning of *sīla* includes creating an environment, both physical and social, which helps to prevent evil, unskilful actions and promotes virtuous actions. This is especially true in relation to setting up social systems and social enterprises, by establishing communities, organizations, or institutions, and by enacting a moral code and prescribing rules and regulations, for regulating the behaviour of people and promoting communal wellbeing. The technical word for such a moral code is *vinaya*.

Strictly speaking, setting down a moral code (*vinaya*) is a preparation or an instrument for establishing people in virtuous conduct (*sīla*); technically, *vinaya* has not yet reached the stage of *sīla*. But as mentioned above, in relation to spiritual training, moral discipline is connected to and is a foundation for moral conduct. So, when speaking comprehensively, *vinaya* is included in the term *sīla*.

A moral code should be prescribed appropriate to the objectives of a particular community or society. For example, the monastic discipline (Vinaya) that the Buddha laid down for both the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni communities contains both precepts dealing with monks' and nuns' individual behaviour, and those dealing with communal issues: administration, looking into and considering legal issues, imposing penalties, appointing sangha officials, procedures for sangha meetings, proper decorum for both receiving visitors and for being a guest oneself, and the use of communal possessions.<sup>24</sup>

In the context of the wider society the Buddha suggested broad principles to be used by leaders and rulers, who should determine the details of behaviour in relation to their state or nation. An example is the teaching on the 'imperial observances' (*cakkavatti-vatta*), which presents principles for a king or emperor to rule in a righteous fashion favourable to all members of the population, to prevent lawlessness, immorality and

<sup>24</sup>The term *vinaya* tends to be interpreted by Buddhist scholars in a very narrow sense, as referring merely to rules and regulations dealing with individual behaviour.

evil in the country, and to distribute wealth so that none of the citizens are left destitute.<sup>25</sup>

In contemporary parlance a disciplinary code (*vinaya*) fostering virtuous conduct (*sīla*) in society as a whole encompasses many aspects, including: the government, legislature, and judiciary; the economy, cultural traditions, social institutions; and other important aspects, like the policy around adult entertainment centres, places of ill-repute, addictive substances, crime, and professional standards.

Essentially, ‘higher mind’ (*adhicitta*) or concentration refers to methods of developing tranquillity (*samatha*) and to various methods of (tranquillity) meditation, which many teachers and meditation centres have designed and established in the evolution of Buddhism, as is evident in the meditation systems described in the commentaries,<sup>26</sup> which have been adapted over the ages. But in a general, comprehensive sense, higher mind or concentration encompasses all the methods and means to induce calm in people’s minds, to make people be steadfast in virtue, and to rouse enthusiasm and generate perseverance in developing goodness. {548}

From a broad perspective, similar to including *vinaya* in the term *sīla*, the training in higher mind includes a system of establishing virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), of providing for the seven favourable conditions (*sappāya*, see Note 12.5), and of enhancing the quality of the mind so that people progress in meditation and in mind development. This includes such things as: establishing places that are relaxing and refreshing; creating a cheerful, bright atmosphere in people’s living spaces, offices, and worksites; educating people to think in positive ways; instilling in people’s minds the qualities of lovingkindness and compassion, the desire to do good, and a wish for spiritual refinement; organizing activities that help generate virtue; encouraging people to adopt a spiritual ideal; and teaching people to strengthen the mind and increase its capability.

<sup>25</sup>See the teaching on the imperial observances at D. III. 61, and on the ‘royal acts of service’ (*rājasāṅgaha-vatthu*) according to the Kūṭadanta Sutta (D. I. 135); see also SA. I. 144, ItA. I. 93. A prominent example of laying down a moral code for society based on Buddhist principles is the system of rulership prescribed by Emperor Asoka (BE. 218-260 or 270-312; CE. 325-283 or 273-231).

<sup>26</sup>E.g.: Vism. 84-228.



## NOTE 12.5: FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

The *sappāya* (conditions that make for a sense of ease; suitable, supportive, and favourable factors; conditions favourable to meditation; conditions which strengthen and support concentration) appear in separate passages in the Tipiṭaka. The commentaries compile these factors into seven:

1. dwelling (*āvāsa/senāsana*);
2. resort; place for finding food (*gocara*);
3. speech; listening to teachings (*bhassa/dhammassavana*);
4. persons (*puggala*);
5. food (*bhojana/āhāra*);
6. climate, environment (*utu*); and
7. posture (*iriyāpatha*).

If these factors are unsuitable and unfavourable they are referred to as *asappāya*.

*See: Vism. 127; VinA. II. 429; MA. IV. 161.*

In a strict, literal sense, ‘higher wisdom’ (*adhipaññā*) refers to the development of insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), for which the systems of practice have evolved in a similar way to methods of practising concentration. But from a wider perspective, which takes into account the essence and objective of wisdom, this level of practice refers to all activities of developing one’s thinking and knowing, encompassing the entire spectrum of what is called ‘study’ or ‘training’. Such study relies on virtuous friends, especially one’s teachers, to transmit ‘learning’ (*suta*; knowledge) and proficiency in the arts and sciences, beginning with vocational knowledge (which is a matter of virtuous conduct – *sīla*).

Vocational or academic knowledge in itself, however, does not qualify as *adhipaññā*. Teachers should establish faith in their students and encourage them to think for themselves; at the very least the students should develop right view in line with Dhamma. Over and above this, teachers can help students to see things according to the truth and to relate to the world correctly, to live wisely, to develop an effective practice that

subdues defilements and dispels suffering, to benefit others, and to be happy.

Generally speaking, providing a training on this level is the function of schools or institutes of learning. Such places should support a training on all three levels: virtuous conduct, concentration, and wisdom; they should not focus exclusively on wisdom. This is because the training in higher wisdom is the highest stage of training, the completion of which relies on the first two stages as a foundation. Moreover, these three levels of training are mutually supportive. Only when these three stages of development are well-integrated is spiritual practice true and complete.

In everyday circumstances, the gradual and interrelated practice according to the threefold training is easy to illustrate. For example: when people live together peacefully they do not need to experience mistrust or fear; when one does not perform bad deeds the heart is at ease; when the heart is at ease one is able to reflect on and understand things effectively. When one does not perform bad deeds one is self-confident and the mind is settled; when the mind is settled one is able to contemplate things earnestly and directly. When one performs good deeds, say by helping someone else, the mind is joyful and clear; when the mind is clear one's thinking too is clear and agile. When there are no issues of enmity and revenge between people, the mind is not overcast or in conflict; when the mind is not clouded or bad-tempered one contemplates things clearly, without bias and distortion. From such well-prepared foundations a person is able to develop more refined levels of spiritual practice. {549}

## **B. HOUSEHOLDERS CULTIVATE THE PATH BY DEVELOPING MERITORIOUS ACTIONS**

As mentioned earlier, when teaching the Dhamma in a suitable way for laypeople or householders, rather than apply the system of the Path in the form of the threefold training – *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – the Buddha reformatted the practice, as if establishing a simpler form of training. Here, he set down a new sequence of basic principles referred to as 'meritorious action' (*puñña-kiriya*) or the 'bases of meritorious action' (*puñnakiriya-vatthu*). In this teaching, there are likewise three factors,

but with different names: generosity (*dāna*), virtuous conduct (*sīla*), and mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*).

It is useful to understand that, similar to the threefold training, the teachings on meritorious action are also a form of study and training. Indeed, the essence of meritorious action is spiritual training.

Monks, there are these three grounds for meritorious action: ... the ground for meritorious action consisting of generosity, the ground for meritorious action consisting of virtue, and the ground for meritorious action consisting of cultivation.

[One who desires the good] should train in acts of merit, which have far-reaching effects and end in bliss.

Let him practise generosity, righteous behaviour (*samacariyā*),<sup>27</sup> and a heart of lovingkindness.

A wise person who cultivates these three qualities leading to happiness,

Attains a world of joy, free from misery.<sup>28</sup>

*It. 51-52.*

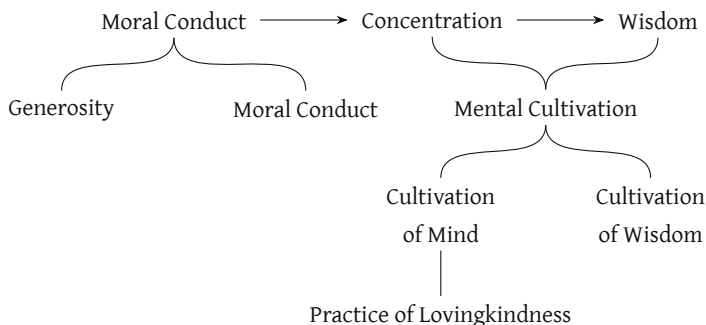
In this passage, after the Buddha mentions the three bases of meritorious action, he concludes by describing what one should do in regard to them, that is, ‘one should train in acts of merit.’ Here, the Pali states: *puññameva so sikkheyya*. Combining these two terms results in the compound *puñña sikkhā*: ‘training in merit’.

Training here refers to generating, developing, and becoming proficient in spiritual qualities, i.e. to advance on the Path in a way consistent with the teaching on the threefold training. Applying the threefold training as a standard, one can compare these teachings as shown on Figure 12.1.

<sup>27</sup> Behaviour according to or consistent with Dhamma.

<sup>28</sup> On the ten bases of meritorious action, see: DA. III. 999; Comp.: *Vīthimuttaparichedo, Kammacatukkaṃ*.

Figure 12.1: Applying the Threefold Training



As mentioned above, the teaching on meritorious actions for householders emphasizes a person's external environment and elementary forms of spiritual practice. This is in contrast to the teachings aimed at the monastic sangha which emphasize a person's inner life and higher levels of practice.

In the threefold training the beginning stages of practice are incorporated in the term *sīla*. The teaching on meritorious actions, however, stresses the way a person deals with material belongings and engages with society, and therefore the beginning stages are divided into two factors, with the management of material things – by way of generosity – reinforcing the second factor of virtuous conduct. For monks and nuns, the teaching begins with virtuous conduct; for householders it begins with generosity and virtue.

In other words, because monks and nuns do not have much to do with material things, generosity (*dāna*; 'giving') plays a minor role. For this reason in the threefold training generosity is appended to or concealed within the factor of virtuous conduct. (On the allocation of material things in the monastic sangha look at the Vinaya.)

In regard to profound, internal factors the threefold training contains the two stages of concentration and wisdom. The monastic life is devoted to spiritual development, to the cultivation of higher mind (*adhicitta*) and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā*). The threefold training thus clearly separates spiritual training into these two factors. In contrast, the teaching on meritorious actions contains the single term 'cultivation' (*bhāvanā*), and

according to the passage above the focus here is on the practice of loving-kindness. {550}

The life of householders is directly involved with material possessions, and the search for and management of these possessions takes place in relation to society. If people do not manage their possessions well, they lose them, and both individuals and society is troubled. For this reason it is necessary to highlight the two factors of generosity and virtuous conduct, as two distinct meritorious actions. Although internal, spiritual practice is important, it needs to be managed in a way appropriate to people's capabilities and available time and energy. Here, the two factors of mind training and wisdom development are combined in the single factor of 'cultivation' (*bhāvanā*). And because the distinctive feature of the householder life is an interaction with the wider society, cultivation here focuses primarily on the practice of lovingkindness.

To conform to the teaching above, rather than use the common expression 'make merit', it would be more accurate to say that Buddhists are encouraged to 'train in merit'. *Puñña* refers to a person's superior qualities and abilities – physical, verbal, mental, and spiritual. We are encouraged to increase and refine our merits through the training in body, speech, mind, and wisdom. This is a form of self-development; our lives will then gradually become more refined and prosperous.

The three bases of meritorious action are as follows:

1. *Dāna*: giving; generosity; liberality.
2. *Sīla*: upright behaviour; a healthy, supportive interaction with other people, free from exploitation.
3. *Bhāvanā*: the cultivation of the mind and of wisdom.

In the ancient times venerable elders taught and transmitted this teaching on meritorious action to newer generations. By the time the commentaries were written an additional seven factors had been added. These additional factors are indeed elaborations on the original three:

1. *Dāna*: an additional two factors are added: *pattidāna*: offering the chance to others to share one's merit by doing good deeds together; and *pattānumodanā*: rejoicing in the merit of others, by delighting in and supporting their good actions.
2. *Sīla*: two factors are added: *apacāyana*: to be obliging, courteous, humble, and respectful; to honour one's elders and virtuous people; to have good manners as conforms to one's culture and tradition; and *veyyāvacca*: to help, serve, and support others; to endeavour in beneficial activities.
3. *Bhāvanā*: two factors are added: *dhmma-savana*: to listen to Dhamma teachings, which also includes reading useful texts; and *dhmma-desanā*: to teach the Dhamma to others.
- Special factor: *diṭṭhuju-kamma*: to make one's views upright. This factor must accompany all the other factors so that one's actions are performed with correct understanding and right intention. This is equivalent to inspecting each activity and it guarantees true progress and good results.

The addition of these extra factors comprises the ten bases of meritorious action:

1. *Dāna-maya*: merit by way of giving.
2. *Sīla-maya*: merit by way of upholding moral principles and acting virtuously.
3. *Bhāvanā-maya*: merit by way of cultivation.
4. *Apacāyana-maya*: merit by way of respectful behaviour.
5. *Veyyāvacca-maya*: merit by way of serving others.
6. *Pattidāna-maya*: merit by way of sharing one's goodness with others.
7. *Pattānumodanā-maya*: merit by way of rejoicing in the goodness of others.
8. *Dhamma-savana-maya*: merit by way of listening to the Dhamma.
9. *Dhamma-desanā-maya*: merit by way of teaching the Dhamma.
10. *Diṭṭhuju-kamma*: merit by way of making one's views upright. {551}

### C. THE EIGHTFOLD PATH AND A SYSTEM OF TRAINING

The question arises why the factors in the Path and the same factors in the threefold training are presented in a different order. The Eightfold Path begins with right view and right thought, and concludes with right concentration. Why does the teaching on the threefold training begin with right speech, which belongs to the group pertaining to virtuous conduct, and end with right view and right thought, which belong to the group on wisdom?

Before answering this question, let us review the link between cessation (*nirodha*) and the Path. The Path arises as a consequence of people applying natural laws to benefit their lives. The Path is a way of practice established in order to produce results in harmony with a natural process.

The Path is the starting point of applying one's understanding of nature and creating a method of practice. It is the bridge between nature and practical methods used by people to suit specific circumstances. The Path is the key principle of spiritual practice.

As a complementary teaching, the threefold training takes the essence of the Path and creates a systematic course of practice, by adapting and organizing the eight Path factors. The details and emphasis of this teaching varies according to the objective of specific situations or levels of practice, which results in a different sequence of factors from that outlined in the Eightfold Path.

As the Path is the key principle of spiritual practice, it focuses on the essential ingredients of practice. On its own the Eightfold Path simply lists these essential factors. This is similar to presenting a list of tools which are required to accomplish a task or to examining a road and analyzing its components – at this stage one does not yet state how these various things are going to be used.

In the Eightfold Path, the eight factors, functioning within an individual Dhamma practitioner, are ordered according to their relationship to one another. Here, right view is listed as the first factor and the starting point, because if one lacks this single factor none of the other factors can arise.

This is similar to making a journey – one must know which path to take. At the very least, one needs to know where to begin, for without this knowledge the journey cannot take place. Spiritual practice is the same. To begin with, one requires an understanding, or at least a proper confidence, of the path of practice to be undertaken. From this point one is then able to reflect and act accordingly. Practice relies on a foundation of understanding, which is similar to a person's starting capital. When right view clears the way or breaks the ground, the subsequent Path factors arise as a consequence.

One's views, beliefs, understanding and attitudes shape the way one thinks and reflects. When one thinks correctly and in a forward-looking way, one develops a clearer understanding. Thoughts shape one's speech; when one reflects well and clearly, one speaks clearly. Likewise, the nature and extent of one's reflections shape the nature and extent of one's actions. When one is able to reflect on things well and to discuss or share these thoughts with others, this directs and influences one's actions. In turn, the sphere or range of one's thoughts, speech, and actions shape how one earns a livelihood. {552}

Speech, actions, and ways of earning a living all require effort. In order for one's effort to be successful one must apply regular and persistent mindfulness. With the guidance of mindfulness the mind becomes one-pointed and stable.

If one begins with correct, wholesome understanding, beliefs, and views, i.e. one is endowed with right view, one's thoughts, speech, actions, etc. will unfold accordingly; they too will be *sammā*: correct, complete, and true. As one gradually develops these eight factors one's spiritual practice deepens. (See Note [12.6](#))

The threefold training focuses on practical application, organizing the Path factors into various stages of spiritual practice in order for these factors to bear fruit in a systematic way. In a similar fashion, after listing the set of tools at hand and knowing each one's function, one then determines the order in which these tools are to be used; one specifies how each tool is to be used at different stages of work.



## NOTE 12.6: THE PATH FACTORS AS FRIENDS WORKING TOGETHER

See the commentarial analysis on the relationship of the Path factors at: VbhA. 114-17. See also the analogies at VbhA. 91 and Vism. 514-15, explaining the reason for classifying the Path factors into different groups.

One simile is of three friends who help each other to collect *champaka* flowers, which are out of reach of a single person standing up.

*Right effort* is like one of them who bends over and allows a second friend, i.e. *right concentration*, to climb on his back, extending his reach. *Right mindfulness* is like a third friend who stands nearby and offers his shoulders to support the second person and to keep him from staggering.

The second friend, who stands alone on the back of the first, still sways back and forth, so he cannot collect the flowers; when he supports himself at the shoulder of the third friend, he remains stable and straight, enabling him to complete the task as desired.

A simile for *right thought* is that it is like fingers, which turn a coin over in the hand, enabling the 'treasurer', i.e. *right view*, to determine whether the coin is counterfeit or genuine.

Alternatively, *right thought* is like a person who rolls a log over, enabling a lumberjack, i.e. *right view*, to chop the log as wished.

The threefold training shifts the focus from the mutual relationship of the Path factors within an individual to a person's relationship to his or her environment or society. It shifts the emphasis from a person's internal spiritual life to the external circumstances.

For example, instead of emphasizing how right view leads to right thought, and subsequently to right speech and right action, here the teachings focus outwards, to what exactly are the details of right speech and right action, and to how one should speak and act with members of one's community. It determines the nature of one's outward behaviour, which has an effect and influence on one's thoughts and reflections. For example, it sets down a set of guidelines and regulations for training, for living one's life, and for practice, in order that people develop self-restraint and are able to discern by themselves what is suitable behaviour and conduct. Although the threefold training begins by focusing on people's relationship to their society and environment, it circles back to

the individual's internal spiritual life. And it is this point that highlights the true meaning of *sikkhā*, as 'training', 'study', 'development'.

In this sense, right speech, right action and right livelihood are matters of moral conduct (*sīla*). The training, development and growth of right speech, right action and right livelihood (as conducive to solving problems and making an end of suffering) is referred to as training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*).

Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration comprise the group of mental collectedness (*samādhi*). The training and development of these three factors (as conducive to the end of suffering) is referred to as training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*).

Right view and right thought make up the group of wisdom. The development of these two factors (as conducive to the end of suffering) is referred to as training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*).

The threefold training changes the focus from the mutual relationship of the factors described in the Eightfold Path to the gradual training of an individual. Moreover, it begins with common or basic spiritual qualities and moves to more refined ones, from those aspects of spiritual practice that are easy to see to profound qualities that are difficult to define and manage. It begins with the training of body and speech, and then focuses on the training of the mind and of wisdom. {553}

In other words, the threefold training shifts from the interrelated functioning of the Path factors at every moment in an individual to longer intervals of time in the process of training, which is divided into different stages, according to the prominent role of specific factors at each particular stage. This training begins with basic moral conduct, which emphasizes external behaviour of body and speech. It then moves on to the refined level of concentration – to the development of the mind – in order to support and develop wisdom, so that wisdom can be used most effectively.

The threefold training is thus a complete system of practice, presented as a way to train people in the context of their everyday lives, by recognizing that people live in a social environment. It is organized into stages,

which comprise longer intervals of time and are ordered according to those spiritual factors which require special attention at each particular stage.

It is important to note here that, regardless of which stage a practitioner is training in – whether it be moral conduct, concentration or wisdom – each and every Path factor – from right view to right concentration – is operating and functional during all times of the process. To state that one is training at the level of moral conduct, concentration, or wisdom is simply a way to announce that at this time one is giving special emphasis and importance to developing specific factors or a group of factors, or that at this time specific factors have been summoned to play a salient role.

From one perspective it appears that there are two systems of practice: an external training and an internal training.<sup>29</sup> These two systems are connected, and the validity of both is acknowledged in the Buddhist teachings.

The relationship between the levels of practice outlined in the threefold training and the function of the factors in the Eightfold Path can be described by using the following analogy:

A man is driving a car on a long journey. He begins in a distant, flat landscape, passes through a labyrinthine mountain range, and ends in the middle of a large, congested city.

The journey can be divided into three stages: first is a long stretch in the countryside, where the road is flat; the middle stage is in the mountains, winding around the hillsides and passing precipitous, dangerous ravines; the final stage is in the city, which contains numerous roads and alleys, crowded buildings, and bustling people, a place where someone not highly skilled would have great difficulty finding his destination.

<sup>29</sup>This matter will become more clear by considering the teachings on a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) and on wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*); see chapters 13 and 15.

This man has never driven a car before, and begins his apprenticeship by undertaking this journey. He hopes that by the time he reaches his goal he will have become an expert driver.

During the first leg of the journey the man must become skilled at using his hands and feet and become familiar with the mechanics and instruments of the car. Moreover, he must be careful to avoid parts of the road that are too soft or contain potholes. The main focus of his work is simply to apply a normal sense of caution, to ensure that the car makes progress. If the road is flat and he has become skilled at the basic mechanics of driving, the car should function with ease.

During the second leg the man must use a lot of strength and caution, guiding the car around the sharp bends and along the steep ravines, slowing down or speeding up depending on whether he is driving up or down hills, and keeping the car steady. The main task at this stage is strength, control, constant vigilance and awareness, and concentration. {554}

One may ask whether he no longer needs to pay attention to the car's engine and equipment, or to avoid potholes and places where the road is soft. The answer is that he must still pay careful attention to these things; indeed, he must be even more careful than before. But at this stage it is not necessary to mention these things, because if he is not yet skilled in regard to the car's mechanics or if the road is completely broken up and uneven, he will be out of control and may have to abandon the trip entirely.

Those things he should now give special attention to are the road's shoulders, lanes, curves, inclines and slopes. The success of this second stage of the journey may also depend on other factors. For example, when he reaches these mountains he may become fearful and fainthearted, and stop or turn around; he may venture forwards but drive off a cliff (similar to someone who goes insane while practising meditation or whose practice deviates from the true path); or he may become enchanted by the scenery and park his car (like someone who is captivated by the attainments of *jhāna*).

In the third leg of the journey there is a dazzling number of streets, alleys, and crossroads, billboards, posters and road signs, traffic signals, buildings, vehicles and pedestrians. The driver must have a keen eye, understand the different signs and traffic signals, be able to read the information about different landmarks, know where to turn, and be able to make decisions quickly and accurately. The main task at this stage is to not get lost.

The first stage in the open countryside, requiring caution in regard to ordinary forward movement, is similar to virtuous conduct (*sīla*). The second stage in the mountains, emphasizing strength, control, awareness, and stability, is similar to concentration (*samādhi*). The third stage in the city, requiring quick wit and not getting lost, is similar to wisdom (*paññā*).

It is evident that, although each stage emphasizes different mental qualities, the road itself contains similar attributes throughout.

This analogy provides a broad overview. In real-life practice these different factors are continually being developed, as subsidiary, repeating stages in a larger process. This is similar to a long motorway which contains a series of alternating flat, steep, and intricate sections.

This is confirmation of the link between the threefold training, which emphasizes external practice, and the Eightfold Path, which highlights the function of internal spiritual factors. When one trains in moral conduct, the mind becomes concentrated; when the mind is concentrated one reflects with wisdom. Wisdom is equivalent to right view, the first factor of the Path. Right view results in right thought, which in turn leads to right speech, right action, and right livelihood, in accord with the interrelationship of the Path factors. Right view thus generates and fosters moral conduct, which then leads to the ensuing Path factors. Moreover, right view enhances the quality of spiritual training and both strengthens and refines all the other Path factors.<sup>30</sup>

From a preliminary perspective this cycle of the threefold training is similar to three distinct ways of practice functioning in parallel at all times. An example of this is a description in the Visuddhimagga of the

<sup>30</sup>See the section 'Right View in the Context of Spiritual Study' in chapter 16.

meditation on breathing (*ānāpānasati*), which in a nutshell is as follows: to be vigilant and to check that one's behaviour is the most suitable and effective for this activity is the training in higher morality (*adhisīla-sikkhā*); to make the mind steadfast and stable (i.e. to remain with the activity or object of attention) is the training in higher concentration (*adhicitta-sikkhā*); to apply wisdom or the knowledge arising during this activity is the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*).<sup>31</sup> {555}

The threefold training is a teaching frequently presented by the Buddha (*bahula-dhammīkathā*). The following passage describes the sequential nature of this training:

This is morality, this is concentration, this is wisdom. Concentration which has been ripened by morality brings great fruit and blessings. Wisdom which has been ripened by concentration brings great fruit and blessings. The mind which has been ripened by wisdom becomes completely free from the taints, that is, from the taint of sensuality, from the taint of becoming, and from the taint of ignorance.

D. II. 123.

The interrelationship between *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* is visible in everyday life. When one conducts oneself purely, is confident of one's moral purity, does not fear punishment or being harmed by one's adversaries, is not anxious about criticism or being ostracized, and is not agitated out of a sense of self-loathing over one's bad deeds, the mind is peaceful and one remains focused on one's thoughts, speech, and actions. The more peaceful and concentrated is one's mind, the clearer is one's thinking process and the quicker and more agile is one's understanding.

This is similar to water which has not been stirred or shaken; the surface is calm, the sediment settles on the bottom, and the water is clear, enabling a person to see things clearly. At higher levels of Dhamma practice, which give rise to higher knowledge and eliminate mental defilement, it is even more important for the mind to be tranquil and clear and to possess one-pointed concentration, which is able to suspend cognition

<sup>31</sup>See: Vism. 274.

by way of the sense doors and sustain attention solely at the chosen object of awareness, in order to completely eliminate mental ‘sediment’.

The Buddha occasionally presented the threefold training as a simple format for spiritual practice, and these teachings are often referred to by later generations of Buddhists. For example, the threefold training is an important component of the key teaching known as the Ovāda Pāṭimokkha, of which one verse contains three clauses:<sup>32</sup>

1. *Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ*: to refrain from all evil.
2. *Kusalassūpasampadā*: to cultivate what is wholesome.
3. *Sacittapariyodapanaṃ*: to purify the mind.

It is important to emphasize the importance of right view or of the wisdom factors: all Buddhist systems of practice, whether they correspond with the Eightfold Path or with the threefold training, begin and end with wisdom. {556}

Although the threefold training begins with moral conduct, this conduct relies as a starting capital on an understanding of those things which one is about to practise, that is, it relies on right view. But because this basic form of understanding involves simply knowing in which direction to proceed and where to begin, it is not included as a separate stage in the broad teaching of the threefold training.

<sup>32</sup>D. II. 49-50; Dh. verses 183-5. For the classification of this teaching as matching the threefold training, see: DA. II. 479 and DhA. III. 237. The Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā states that the first clause refers to moral restraint (*sīla-saṃvara*), the second clause to tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), i.e. to concentration and wisdom, and the third clause to the fruit of arahantship (*arahatta-phala*). The Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, however, interprets the third clause to mean that simply cleaning the mind by removing the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) is equivalent to purifying one’s mind. By referring to these two sources, one can define the first clause as *sīla* (it is valid to expand this definition), the second clause as *samādhi* and *paññā*, and the third clause also as *samādhi* and *paññā* (here, one may also include *vimutti* – liberation). In any case, the Visuddhimagga presents a simple classification, as clause 1 = *sīla*, clause 2 = *samādhi*, and clause 3 = *paññā*, respectively; see: Vism. 4-5.

When a practitioner possesses a fundamental understanding or a correct set of beliefs, he or she begins the training in moral conduct: in physical actions, speech, and livelihood. When upright moral conduct is accomplished, a person trains at more refined levels, by developing the mind (*samādhī*) and finally by developing wisdom to the point of liberation from ignorance.

Wisdom is in fact cultivated continuously, throughout the process of spiritual training. At the beginning the understanding referred to as right view may simply be a belief in accord with reasoned analysis. In later stages of practice one's original understanding or beliefs will gradually develop and become more clear by means of proper reflection, contemplation, and investigation, and by witnessing the fruits of one's practice and the increased strength of the spiritual faculties, until wisdom reaches the stage of understanding all things according to the truth, of liberation, and of realizing Nibbāna. Reasoned understanding or rational belief becomes a true and complete knowing inherent in the mind:

This middle way of practice gives rise to understanding (*ñāṇa-karaṇī*), gives rise to vision (*cakkhu-karaṇī*), and leads to peace, to awakening, to Nibbāna.

*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Vin. I. 10; S. V. 421.*

The Path culminates in wisdom, which plays a key role in the realization of the goal. For this reason there are passages in the scriptures in which two more factors are added to the end of the Eightfold Path: right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*; corresponding to *ñāṇa-karaṇī* and *cakkhu-karaṇī*), and right liberation (*sammā-vimutti*; corresponding to 'peace, awakening, Nibbāna').<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>The addition of these two factors to the Eightfold Path, thus comprising ten factors, is referred to as the ten forms of righteousness (*sammatta*) or the ten qualities of an adept (*asekha-dhamma*); see: D. III. 271, 292. The commentaries state that *sammā-ñāṇa* is equivalent to knowledge of fruition (*phala-ñāṇa*) and knowledge of reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*); see: MA. I. 189; AA. II. 382. *Sammā-ñāṇa* is the final stage of right view (see: MA. IV. 135; AA. V. 70).



Right view is thus similar to a bridge, leading from ignorance (*avijjā*) to true knowledge (*vijjā*). When one possesses true knowledge (*vijjā*), ‘right knowledge’ (*sammā-ñāṇa*) arises and one achieves right liberation.

Note that the three factors of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), and right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) play a special role because they are constantly present in combination with the other Path factors.

Their important participatory role can be explained by using the analogy of making a journey. Right view is like a lamp or a compass, which allows one to see the path ahead and to be confident that one is travelling in the right direction leading to the goal. Right effort is like applying energy to advance, or to using strength to propel oneself forward. Right mindfulness is like an instrument which controls, guides and guards one’s movements, so that one remains on the path, travels at the proper pace, and avoids danger.

All levels of practice, whether it be of moral conduct, concentration, or wisdom, thus rely on these three Path factors.<sup>34</sup> {557}

#### D. BEGINNING AND END OF THE PATH

*Sammā-diṭṭhi* is translated as right view or correct view. On a mundane level this refers to seeing things in accord with the teachings on truth (*Dhamma*). On a transcendent level this refers to seeing things directly in accord with truth: according to reality or to the law of conditionality.<sup>35</sup> Seeing things, or even believing in things, in accord with *Dhamma* teachings, for example believing that by doing good one will receive good and by doing evil one will receive evil, is enough to begin *Dhamma* practice. By having such views and beliefs one is ready for practice and one begins the first stage of training, in virtuous conduct.

A person who possesses only this level of right view, however, tends to give great emphasis to the practice of morality and often does not

<sup>34</sup>For an description of how these three Path factors arise together with the other Path factors, see the *Mahācattārisaka Sutta* (M. III. 71-78).

<sup>35</sup>For a more detailed discussion on right view, see chapter 16.

advance to the stages of concentration and wisdom. In the scriptures mundane right view is often presented in the teachings on righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*) and the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kamma-patha*), which are ways of practising the Eightfold Path on an ordinary, everyday level.

The teaching on the Four Noble Truths presents a somewhat broader definition of *sammā-diṭṭhi*. Although it does not refer specifically to right view, it corresponds with the practice of the Eightfold Path in its entirety. A basic understanding of the Four Noble Truths – of the nature of human problems, of the causes to these problems, of the goal, and of the way of practice – is a foundation for commencing Dhamma practice. This is similar to the knowledge mentioned earlier: to know where one is going, to know which path will lead one to this end, and to know where this path begins.

The most comprehensive definition of right view is knowledge of the truth: to see things as they truly are and to see how things exist according to causes and conditions. This definition encompasses all the previous definitions, including to see the nature of human problems, to see the conditions giving rise to these problems, and to see the nature of the Path. This definition highlights the clear development of right view or understanding along the entire stretch of the Path. The more one practises the more one knows, until one completes the practice and knows all that is essential to know.

Right view is thus the starting point or the leading factor for practice along the Middle Way; it is the principal Path factor, playing a role at all stages of spiritual practice.

In the development of the Path, however, right view is not only a prerequisite or support for other Path factors; right view itself is supported by the other factors. The further one progresses on the Path the more right view is nourished, strengthened, and purified. Finally, right view becomes the key agent leading to the goal of the Path, and thus it is possible to say that right view is both the beginning and the end of the Path.

The fact that right view gradually unfolds and deepens during the course of the Path reveals that the quality of right view varies during different stages of practice. The quality of right view at the start of the Path differs from that of right view at the culmination of the Path. {558}

Right view at different stages of the Path may have specific attributes which are distinct from general definitions of right view. Right view at the beginning of the Path is incomplete and may not correspond to the full definition of *sammā-diṭṭhi*. Similarly, right view at the end of the Path has unique attributes so that it should be referred to by another word. In these circumstances it is useful to distinguish different Pali terms.

Because right view is an aspect of wisdom, an appropriate general or collective term to be used here is *paññā*, which refers to wisdom that has been gradually cultivated by practising on the Path. At each important stage of practice this wisdom has unique attributes and is referred to by special terms, as will be discussed below.

According to the Middle Way, it is possible to present an outline of wisdom development as follows:

For the average person, whose learning depends on the advice and teachings of others, spiritual training will begin with some form of belief, which in Buddhism is referred to as ‘faith’ (*saddhā*).

This faith may be a belief in the basic rationality of a particular teaching, a general belief in logical analysis, or a confidence in the reasoned presentation by a teacher. From this point on students receive teachings, listen, study and train. This results in increased understanding and a reasoned discernment within the students themselves which is broadly referred to as *sammā-diṭṭhi*.

When this understanding gradually grows and becomes more clear through engagement or through experience, so that it becomes a realization, wisdom has been developed to the stage of ‘right knowledge’ (*sammā-ñāṇa*). This stage transcends all forms of belief (*saddhā*) and reasoned opinion (*diṭṭhi*). This is the final stage, which reaches the goal – liberation – which is referred to as ‘right deliverance’ (*sammā-vimutti*).

Wisdom development can be illustrated thus:

Faith (*saddhā*) →  
 right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) →  
 right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) →  
 right deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).

Following this process, at the beginning wisdom exists in a latent form or as an accessory to faith. Wisdom then gradually develops on its own until it becomes right knowledge, at which stage it is pure and outstanding. Here, faith no longer exists because it has been completely replaced by wisdom. Only at this stage is awakening or liberation possible. This process will be described in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Note that the faith participating in this process is a faith conducive to wisdom or leading to wisdom. The faith or belief must be accompanied by wisdom or be based upon reasoned discernment (*ākāravatī-saddhā* or *saddhā-ñāṇa-sampayutta*). It does not refer to faith in which one blindly entrusts oneself to something without needing to apply reasoned contemplation (*amūlikā-saddhā* or *saddhā-ñāṇa-vipayutta*).

In any case it is not adequate to view wisdom development or the development of right view as beginning solely by way of faith.

Technically speaking, there are exceptional persons who are able to cultivate wisdom without relying on faith in others. They rely entirely on wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) – the ability to see things as they truly are and according to causes and conditions – until they develop wisdom to the stage of penetrative insight into truth.<sup>36</sup> {559}

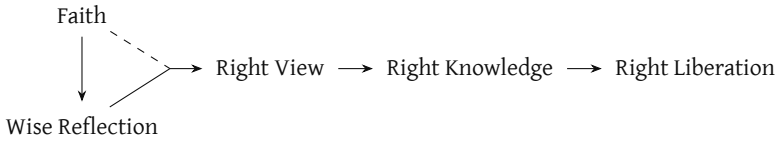
Likewise, the wisdom development of ordinary people, who begin with faith, relies on their ability to apply wise reflection. Transcendent wisdom in particular, which fathoms the truth and completely dispels mental impurity, is unable to arise without wise reflection.<sup>37</sup> Correct,

<sup>36</sup>The commentaries state that Buddhas and Silent Buddhas are awakened solely by wise reflection, which acts as the condition for right view – see: MA. II. 346.

<sup>37</sup>The commentaries at UdA. 107 state that learning from others (*paratoghosa*; i.e. the way of faith) is the condition for mundane right view, while wise reflection is the condition for transcendent right view.

desirable faith is linked to or activates wise reflection. Therefore, the complete process should be illustrated as shown on Figure 12.2.

Figure 12.2: Wisdom Development



In sum, there are two factors giving rise to right view. First is faith (*saddhā*), which refers to trust in or a reliance on the wisdom of others. It arises as a response to the teachings of other people and it marks the beginning of spiritual practice by way of external conditions. Second is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which refers to an ability to think for oneself or to think correctly. It marks the beginning of spiritual practice by way of internal conditions.

The term *saddhā* does not refer directly to the source of a person's understanding, but is rather an internal spiritual quality connecting a person to external factors. The real external source of understanding is other people, who influence one's beliefs, or the teachings of others, which in Buddhism is referred to as the 'instruction by others' (*paratoghosa*).

Besides helping to generate faith and acting as an indirect method for establishing right view, the instruction by others can be a direct impetus for applying wise reflection. For this reason the scriptures present two sources or factors for right view: the external factor of the words of others (*paratoghosa*) and the internal factor of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).

Buddhism gives great emphasis to right view, because people, including Buddhists themselves, generally do not give this Path factor sufficient attention. Even when they do recognize its importance people often just give it lip service, without going any further. For this reason it is necessary to remind people to first acknowledge the importance of right view, and even more importantly, to find ways to generate it.

Therefore, before discussing the various Path factors in subsequent chapters, I wish to begin by describing at more length the conditions for right view.

### 12.3 APPENDIX 1: TRADITIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE THREEFOLD TRAINING

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A literal and orthodox translation of the threefold training is as follows:

1. *Adhisīla-sikkhā*: training as higher virtue; forms of practice for training in supreme virtuous conduct.
2. *Adhicitta-sikkhā*: training as higher mind; forms of training the mind in order to generate supreme concentration.
3. *Adhipaññā-sikkhā*: training as higher wisdom; forms of training in wisdom in order to reach supreme levels of realization.

In the Pali Canon definitions for the threefold training are presented solely in reference to the bhikkhus. Here, *adhisīla-sikkhā* refers to restraint in accord with the monastic code of discipline (*pāṭimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*), *adhicitta-sikkhā* refers to the four jhānas, and *adhipaññā-sikkhā* refers either to knowledge of the Four Noble Truths or to realization of liberation of mind (*cetovimutti*) and liberation by wisdom (*paññāvimutti*).<sup>38</sup> The Niddesa expands this definition slightly.<sup>39</sup> {562}

The Paṭisambhidāmagga broadens this definition, defining *adhisīla* as restraint (*saṃvara*), *adhicitta* as non-distraction, and *adhipaññā* as right view or right understanding.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> A. I. 235-6.

<sup>39</sup> Nd. I. 148; Nd. II. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ps. I. 47-8.

The Samantapāsādikā claims that the threefold training does not simply refer to the five or ten precepts, the eight concentrative attainments, or an understanding conforming to the law of karma, of reaping what one sows, because these levels of morality, concentration and wisdom are taught irrespective of whether a Buddha comes into the world or not. Rather, the threefold training refers exclusively to the virtue, concentration and wisdom accompanying the appearance of a Buddha, i.e. *adhisīla* equals restraint in accord with the monastic code of discipline, *adhicitta* equals the mind possessed of the eight concentrative attainments, which act as a basis for insight, and *adhipaññā* equals insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) which is able to discern the three characteristics.<sup>41</sup>

In the highest sense, the commentaries say that the threefold training refers to transcendent virtue, concentration, and wisdom, but this definition can only be applied in limited contexts.

Occasionally they relax the definition, stating that *adhisīla* refers to the moral conduct – either the five or ten precepts – undertaken by someone who aims for Nibbāna, and *adhicitta* refers to the eight concentrative attainments.<sup>42</sup> In regard to the passages in which the Buddha speaks about ‘higher virtue’ for laypeople,<sup>43</sup> the commentaries say that this refers to the five or ten precepts.<sup>44</sup>

Sometimes the prefix *adhi-* simply means ‘better’ or ‘higher’ when comparing two things, for example the ten precepts are *adhisīla* in comparison to the five precepts, and the fine-material mind (*rūpāvacara-citta*) is *adhicitta* in comparison to the sense-sphere mind (*kāmāvacara-citta*).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup>VinA. I. 244.

<sup>42</sup>E.g.: DA. III. 1002.

<sup>43</sup>E.g.: A. III. 263-4; A. IV. 25-6; spoken by another at A. I. 279.

<sup>44</sup>AA. II. 378; AA. III. 332; AA. IV. 24.

<sup>45</sup>AA. II. 346.

In essence the threefold training refers to virtuous conduct, concentration, and wisdom which are practised correctly according to the Buddhist teachings and are conducive to advancing in spiritual practice.<sup>46</sup>

The commentaries often describe the threefold training in the context of various stages of abandoning mental defilement:

1. *Sīla* is equivalent to *vītikkaṃma-pahāna*: moral conduct is a means of abandoning coarse defilements, which are the cause for transgressions by way of body and speech (*vītikkaṃma-kilesa*).
2. *Samādhi* is equivalent to *pariyuṭṭhāna-pahāna*: concentration is a means of abandoning intermediate defilements, which besiege the mind (*pariyuṭṭhāna-kilesa*); some commentators state that this refers to the five hindrances.
3. *Paññā* is equivalent to *anusaya-pahāna*: wisdom is a means of abandoning refined defilements, which lie hidden in one's innate character (*santāna*), waiting to manifest when conditions activate them (*anusaya-kilesa*); this refers to the seven latent tendencies (*anusaya*).

Further definitions for the threefold training include: *sīla* = abandonment by substitution of opposites (*tadaṅga-pahāna*), *samādhi* = abandonment by suppression (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*), and *paññā* = abandonment by cutting off (*samuccheda-pahāna*); and: *sīla* is a way of abandoning immoral conduct, *samādhi* is a way of abandoning craving (*taṇhā*), and *paññā* is a way of abandoning fixed views (*diṭṭhi*).<sup>47</sup>

The Path factors are arranged into the three trainings in a similar way that they are arranged into the three 'bodies of doctrine' (*dhamma-khandha*).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>For more information on this subject, see, e.g.: VinA. V. 993; UdA. 253; AA. II. 362; AA. III. 357.

<sup>47</sup>See: VinA. I. 22 = DA. I. 19 = DhsA. 21; Vism. 5-6; VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgitikathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Nidānādikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>48</sup>VbhA. 122; PsA. I. 196.



## 12.4 APPENDIX 2: TWO EXTREMES

A passage from the Aṅguttara Nikāya defines *kāma-sukhallikānuyoga* as *āgāḷha-paṭipadā* (rough path; coarse path), referring to those people who believe that there is no harm in sensuality and who immerse themselves in sense pleasures. It defines *atta-kilamathānuyoga* as *nijjhāma-paṭipadā* (scorching path; parched path), referring to the practices of the naked ascetics (Acelakas; this should be considered merely as one example). It defines the Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*) as any of the groups of spiritual qualities contained in the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*: the four foundations of mindfulness; the four right efforts; the four roads to success; the five faculties; the five powers; the seven factors of enlightenment; and the Eightfold Path).<sup>49</sup>

The Udāna contains this passage:

Those who set chief value to study, to moral conduct, to religious rituals, to earning a living, to keeping the holy life, and to pleasing (the devas) – this is one extreme. And those who hold the belief that there is no harm in sensuality – this is the other extreme. These two extremes increase ignorance and craving, which in turn increase fixed views. Those who do not understand these two extremes – one group gets bogged down, the other overreaches. Those who understand these two extremes do not get caught up in them, and they are not conceited due to this non-attachment. For these there is no round (of rebirth) to be declared.

Ud. 71.

(The commentaries define ‘earning a living’ as ‘living as an ascetic’, and they equate *atta-kilamathānuyoga* with an adherence to precepts and religious practices (*sīlabbata-parāṃāsa*).)<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> A. I. 295-6.

<sup>50</sup> See: UdA. 351.



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# CHAPTER 13

## VIRTUOUS FRIENDSHIP

### *Forerunners of the Middle Way*

*Initial Stage of Practice 1:*

*Skilful Words of Others and Virtuous Friendship*

#### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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As mentioned in the previous chapter, right view is a crucial component of the Path. It is the beginning point of practice and the first stage of Buddhist spiritual training. Right view needs to be gradually developed, purified, and freed from bias, until it is transformed into direct realization. The establishment of right view is thus of vital importance.

In the Tipiṭaka the cultivation of right view is described as follows:

Monks, there are two factors conducive to the arising of right view: the teachings of others (paratoghosa) and wise reflection (yoniso-manasikāra).<sup>1</sup>

A. I. 87.

Two factors conducive to the arising of right view:

<sup>1</sup>See also: M. I. 294. Likewise, there are two opposite factors giving rise to wrong view (*micchā-ditṭhi*): (incorrect) teachings of others and a lack of wise reflection: A. V. 187-8.

1. *Paratoghosa*: the ‘proclamations’ of others; external influence or inducement, e.g.: other people’s teachings, advice, explanations, and transmissions; advertisements, information, news, written material, and schooling. Here, it refers specifically to wholesome teachings, in particular to the transmission of Dhamma teachings, and to the knowledge and counsel received from virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*). This is an external, social factor. It can be described as the way of faith (*saddhā*).
2. *Yoniso-manasikāra*: wise reflection; analytical reflection; reasoned or systematic attention. To know how to reflect on things in an objective way, to apply reasoned thought, to inquire into the origin of things, to trace the entire trajectory of phenomena, and to analyze an object or problem in order to see it according to truth and according to its interrelated causes and conditions, without allowing personal craving or attachment to interfere. This is an internal, spiritual factor. It can be described as the way of wisdom (*paññā*). {564}

The following passage emphasizes the importance of these two factors in spiritual training:

For a monk who is still in training ... I do not see any other external factor that is so helpful as good friendship.

For a monk who is still in training ... I do not see any other internal factor that is so helpful as wise reflection.<sup>2</sup>

*It. 9-10.*

These two factors are mutually supportive. Ordinary people, whose wisdom is not yet proficient, rely on the teachings and guidance of others, and if these teachings are presented skilfully they can often progress quickly. Nonetheless, they must also train in an ability to think correctly for themselves if they are to reach the final goal.

<sup>2</sup>Cf.: S. V. 101-102.

Those people who are proficient in wisdom are able to use wise reflection, but they may need to rely on the teachings of others for guidance at the beginning stages of practice and as a support to accelerate their spiritual training.

The establishment of right view by way of the first factor (*paratoghosa*; the teachings of others) begins with and relies primarily on faith. When one applies this factor to a system of training one must determine how to best receive advice and encouragement, that is, one requires a teacher who has superior attributes and abilities, and who uses effective means of teaching.

For this reason the definition of *paratoghosa* in training highlights the principle of virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*).

The second factor – *yoniso-manasikāra* – is a principle of wisdom, and so in training one needs to determine how best to support such wise reflection.

When combining these two factors, virtuous friendship is considered an external factor and wise reflection an internal factor.

Finally, if one associates with bad friends and thus receives false teachings, and one applies unwise, incorrect reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*), the result is the opposite: one develops wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). {565}

### 13.2 WAY OF FAITH AND CONFIDENCE

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The proclamations of others (*paratoghosa*) giving rise to right view are those teachings which are virtuous and correct, reasonable and useful, and which explain the truth, especially those teachings stemming from a sense of love and well-wishing.

Virtuous teachings spring from a virtuous source: from a good, virtuous, and wise person, who is referred to as a ‘righteous man’ (*sappurisa*) or a ‘learned person’ (*paṇḍita*). (See Note 13.1) If such a righteous or learned person performs the duty of teachings others and engendering right view, he or she is referred to as a beautiful or virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*).

## NOTE 13.1: RIGHTEOUS AND LEARNED

When the term *sappurisa* is paired with the term *ariya*, the commentators offer various definitions: *ariya* refers to the Buddha, while *sappurisa* refers to Silent Buddhas and disciples of the Tathāgata, or to all disciples; alternatively, these two terms have the same meaning (e.g.: MA. I. 21, 24; SA. II. 252, 254; NdA. 76, 79; DhsA. 349, 353).

When *sappurisa* occurs on its own, it refers to the Buddha and all the aforementioned individuals (e.g.: DA. III. 1020, 1058; AA. III. 63).

The term *pañḍita* can be used in reference to the Buddha and all the aforementioned individuals (e.g.: KhA. 128; SnA. I. 300).

Generally speaking, the terms *ariya*, *sappurisa*, and *pañḍita* have overlapping meanings and are occasionally used interchangeably. But if one is to speak strictly according to the Buddha's words, the term *pañḍita* refers to someone who has reached the two 'benefits' (*attha*) described in earlier chapters (there are also some additional technical definitions for *pañḍita*), and the term *sappurisa* refers to a person with the specific attributes described below.

If one is in search of right view one does not need to wait until a righteous or virtuous person seeks one out. On the contrary, one should strive to find such a person – to consult with, listen to, request teachings from, associate with, and study with the wise. This is called association with the righteous or virtuous.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of who initiates the contact, once there is mutual influence and acknowledgement the person is said to have a virtuous friend and to participate in a virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*).

The definition of a virtuous friend is not restricted to the common meaning of a good friend, but it refers to a person who is well-equipped to teach, advise, explain, encourage, and guide, and to act as a role model in the correct path of spiritual training. The Visuddhimagga offers examples, including the Buddha, the arahant disciples, teachers, mentors,

<sup>3</sup>There are many Pali words for such association: *sappurisa-saṁseva*, *sappurisūpas-aṁseva*, *sappurisūpassaya*, *sappurisūpanissaya*, *sappurisa-sevanā*, or *pañḍita-sevanā*.

and wise, learned individuals, who are capable of teaching and providing consultation, even those people who are younger than oneself.<sup>4</sup>

In the formal development of wisdom, the presence of a virtuous friend is classified as part of the stage of faith (*saddhā*). In the wider system of spiritual training, good companionship encompasses a whole range of factors, including: the presence of teachers, mentors, and parents; the attributes and skills of one's teachers; the principles, methods, techniques, and means of teaching; books and other forms of media; role models, for example a 'great being' (*mahāpurisa*) or someone who is accomplished in the Dhamma; and those wholesome and beneficial social and environmental factors conducive to wisdom development. {566}

### 13.3 IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMPANIONSHIP

Monks, just as the dawn's light is the precursor to the rising of the sun, so too, for a monk good friendship is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path. When a monk has a good friend, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate this Noble Eightfold Path.

S. V. 29-30.

This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, that is, good friendship, good companionship ... for when a monk has a good friend ... it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

By relying on me as a good friend, beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

S. V. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup>See: Vism. 97-101; this text provides examples in the context of training in meditation.

Monks, just as the dawn's silver and golden light is the precursor to the rising of the sun, so too, for a monk good friendship is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the seven factors of enlightenment. When a monk has a good friend, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the seven factors of enlightenment.

*S. V. 78.*

No other thing do I see, O monks, which is so responsible for causing unarisen wholesome states to arise and arisen unwholesome states to wane as good companionship. In one who has good friends, wholesome states not yet arisen will arise and unwholesome states that have arisen will wane.

*A. I. 14.*

No other thing do I see, O monks, which is so conducive to great blessings...

*A. I. 16.*

which is so conducive to the stability, the non-decline, the non-disappearance of the true Dhamma as good companionship.

*A. I. 18.*

As to external factors, I do not see any other factor that is so conducive to great blessings as good companionship.

*A. I. 17; cf.: S. V. 102.*

For a monk who is in training, who has not yet reached the fruit of arahantship and who aspires toward the unsurpassed security from bondage, I do not see any other external factor that is so beneficial as good companionship. When a monk has a good friend, he will eliminate the unwholesome and cultivate the wholesome.

*It. 10.*

When a monk has a good friend ... it can be expected that:



1. He will be virtuous, restrained and careful in respect to the Pāṭimokkha, perfect in conduct and resort....
2. He will [have the opportunity to listen and to engage in talk] according to his wishes on various subjects that refine his character and purify the mind, that is to say, talk on fewness of wishes ... on the application of energy, on virtue, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and on the knowledge and vision of liberation. {567}
3. He will be persistent and energetic in abandoning the unwholesome and in perfecting the wholesome. He will be diligent, steadfast and strong, not neglecting the duty in regard to wholesome qualities.
4. He will be equipped with wisdom, possessed of noble wisdom, which discerns the rise and fall of phenomena, gains penetrative insight into defilements, and leads to the complete end of suffering.

*A. IV. 352-3, 357-8; Ud. 36-7.*

These teachings cited above emphasize the importance of good companionship for monks, because it was given by the Buddha to bhikkhus as the audience. There are, however, many general teachings and sayings by the Buddha, especially those given to householders, highlighting the importance of association with virtuous people, for example: good companionship is one factor conducive to realizing immediate, everyday benefits (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*);<sup>5</sup> associating with evil people is a path to ruin (*apāya-mukha*);<sup>6</sup> contact with and proper conduct towards friends is one aspect of the teaching on the six directions;<sup>7</sup> the criteria for choosing friends according to the attributes of true and false friends;<sup>8</sup> association

<sup>5</sup>A. IV. 281.

<sup>6</sup>D. III. 184; A. IV. 283-4.

<sup>7</sup>D. III. 190-91.

<sup>8</sup>D. III. 185-6. This is a significant and comprehensive teaching.

with honest people is one of the four vehicles (*cakka*) leading to prosperity,<sup>9</sup> one of the four virtues conducive to growth (*vuḍḍhi-dhamma*),<sup>10</sup> and one of the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*);<sup>11</sup> and good friendship is one of the ten virtues making for self-reliance (*nāthakaraṇa-dhamma*).<sup>12</sup> The Jātaka tales, which apply to people of all walks of life, especially to laypeople, contain numerous stories and sayings pertaining to association and fellowship with others.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, there are teachings on this subject scattered throughout the Suttanta Piṭaka, for example: {568}

Not to associate with fools,  
But to associate with the wise  
And to honour those who are worthy of honour:  
This is the supreme blessing.

*Kh. 3; Sn. 46-7.*

The sort of person you seek out –  
that is the sort of person you yourself become.

*It. 67-9; J. IV. 435; J. VI. 235.*

<sup>9</sup>Virtues leading one to prosperity are like wheels which lead a vehicle to its destination; these four qualities are also referred to as ‘virtues of great assistance’ (*bahukāra-dhamma*): D. III. 276; A. II. 32.

<sup>10</sup>Factors for wisdom development; principles for developing wisdom; A. II. 245-6. These virtues are greatly beneficial for all people: A. II. 246.

<sup>11</sup>Factors leading to stream-entry: S. V. 347.

<sup>12</sup>This teaching was given to bhikkhus, e.g.: D. III. 266-7, 290; A. V. 23-4.

<sup>13</sup>The most prominent of these include: the two red-breasted parakeets who are siblings (Sattigumba Jātaka: J. IV. 432; JA. IV. 430); the exceptionally flavoured mangos (Dadhivāhana Jātaka: J. II. 106; JA. II. 101); the horse and its trainer (Giridatta Jātaka [also called the Somadatta Jātaka]: J. II. 98; JA. II. 164); an elephant transforms its disposition (Mahilāmukha Jātaka: J. I. 188; JA. I. 185); the pigeon and the crow (Kapota Jātaka: J. I. 244; JA. I. 241; J. III. 225; JA. III. 224; Lola Jātaka: J. II. 363; JA. II. 361); the jackal and the lion cub (Manoja Jātaka: J. III. 323; JA. III. 321); the chicken and the hawk (Kukkuṭa Jātaka: J. IV. 56; JA. IV. 55). See also: Mittāmita Jātaka (J. II. 131; JA. II. 130; J. IV. 197; JA. IV. 196); Vyaggaha Jātaka (J. II. 357; JA. II. 355); Kuntinī Jātaka (J. III. 135; JA. III. 134); Mahāsuvarāja Jātaka (J. III. 491; JA. III. 490); Kusanāli Jātaka (J. I. 443; JA. I. 440); Kuruṅgamiga Jātaka (J. II. 153; JA. II. 152); Mahā-ukkusa Jātaka (J. IV. 291; JA. IV. 288). There are also many sayings in reference to association with people inserted in Jātaka stories which are not directly related to this subject.

Even if you do no evil but associate with one who does,  
You are suspected of evil and your bad reputation grows.

*It. 67-9.*

One who associates with bad companions is soon corrupted.

*A. I. 125-6.*

When one wraps rotting fish in kusa grass,  
The grass takes on a foul odour:  
So it is when one associates with fools.

When one wraps agarwood incense in the leaf of a tree,  
The leaf becomes fragrant:  
So it is when one associates with the wise.

*It. 67-9; J. IV. 436; J. VI. 236.*

The wise teach those things which should be promoted;  
They do not encourage stupidity.

*J. IV. 241.*

One should view a wise person,  
Who points out faults  
And speaks reprovably,  
Like one who reveals a treasure;  
Let one associate with such a wise person;  
By doing so one will improve, not decline.

Let him advise, instruct,  
And dissuade one from evil;  
Truly cherished is such a person by the good,  
While dismissed is he by the bad.

*Dh. verses 76-7.*

The wise live together happily,  
Like a group of family members.

*Dh. verse 207.*

Walking together seven steps,  
 One is considered a friend;  
 Walking together twelve steps  
 One is considered a comrade;  
 Living together for a month or fortnight,  
 One is considered a relative;  
 Longer than that it is as if the person is oneself.

*J. I. 365.*

It is fortunate to have many relatives and companions,  
 Like a large grove of trees in the middle of the forest;  
 A tree growing in isolation, no matter how large it grows,  
 Can be felled by the wind.

*J. I. 329.*

If you find a companion who is governed by wisdom,  
 You should travel with him contented and mindful....

If you do not find a companion governed by wisdom,  
 You should travel alone ... and refrain from evil.

*Dh. verses 328-30.*

Let one associate with a friend who is learned,  
 Great in goodness, intelligent and discerning,  
 And a champion of the Dhamma.  
 When one has recognized the aspired-to goal  
 And has eliminated doubt,  
 Travel alone like a rhinoceros's horn.

*Sn. 9-10.*

Timely listening to the Dhamma... timely discussion of Dhamma:  
 This is the supreme blessing. {569}

*Kh. 3; Sn. 47.*

Just as one who has mounted a flimsy raft  
 Would sink upon the mighty ocean,  
 So too a virtuous person sinks

By consorting with a lazy person.  
 Thus one should avoid such a person –  
 One remiss, devoid of energy.  
 Keep company with the wise,  
 Those who are calm, noble, resolute, and attentive,  
 Their energy constantly roused.

*S. II. 158-9; It. 70.*

From these quotes one is able to see that the teachings on association with others given by the Buddha to monks aim primarily at the highest goal or ultimate reality (*paramattha*), and clearly focus on establishing transcendent right view. The teachings given to general people or to laypeople, on the other hand, emphasize basic, everyday benefits (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*) combined with profound, spiritual benefits (*sam-parāyikattha*). These latter teachings focus on mutual help and assistance, and on generating mundane right view, that is, a belief in the law of kamma – to recognize one's responsibility in regard to good and bad actions. For the most part, they do not emphasize transcendent right view, of seeing phenomena as they truly exist. These higher, transcendent principles are implicit in the mundane teachings, however, and the Buddha would introduce them as befitting the circumstances. People are at different levels of spiritual maturity; the Buddha would prepare people by gradually laying a foundation for them.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Examples of such teachings for the general public include: having people come to terms with death by contemplating the truth of impermanence and instability, and discouraging people from indulging in material gain, prestige, pleasure, and praise.

### 13.4 ATTRIBUTES OF A VIRTUOUS FRIEND

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The specific attributes of a virtuous friend, distinguishing such a person as a ‘righteous person’ (*sappurisa*) or a ‘wise person’ (*pañña*), are as follows:

There are seven distinguishing qualities (*sappurisa-dhamma*) of a virtuous person:<sup>15</sup>

1. *Dhammaññutā*: one knows essential principles and causes; one knows the laws of nature; one knows essential teachings, guidelines, and responsibilities, which are the cause for successful and effective action in accord with one’s goals, for example: a monk is familiar with those teachings that he must study and practise, and a ruler knows the righteous principles of leadership and governance.
2. *Atthaññutā*: one knows objectives and effects; one knows the meaning and purpose of specific teachings, codes of practice, and duties; one knows the desired fruit of specific actions, for example: a monk knows the meaning and purpose of those things he studies and practises, and he recognizes the good which is the goal and essential meaning of life.
3. *Attaññutā*: one knows oneself; one knows one’s own attributes, disposition, station, strength, knowledge, skills, abilities, and virtues as they really are; this knowledge is conducive to appropriate and effective behaviour. For example, a monk knows his own level of faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity, wisdom, and insight.
4. *Mattaññutā*: one knows moderation; one knows what is adequate and sufficient, for example: one knows moderation in regard to

<sup>15</sup>D. III. 252, 283; A. IV. 113-14; another group of qualities for a righteous person containing eight factors occurs at: M. III. 23. ‘Righteous conduct’ (*dhamma-cariyā*) or the ten wholesome ways of conduct (*kusala-kamma*) are sometimes referred to as *sappurisa-dhamma* (A. V. 279); occasionally the ten qualities of an adept (*asekha-dhamma*), or the ten right states (*sammatta*), are referred to as *sappurisa-dhamma* (A. V. 245); sometimes a *sappurisa* is defined as a person endowed with the Eightfold Path (S. V. 19-20). The Buddhist teachings on a righteous person and an unrighteous person (*asappurisa*) are numerous; here only a selection have been presented to illustrate the essence of these teachings.

eating and to spending one's wealth; a monk knows moderation in regard to receiving the four requisites. {570}

5. *Kālaññūtā*: one knows time; one knows which times are suitable to perform specific activities; for instance, one knows when to study, when to work, and when to rest.
6. *Parisaññūtā*: one knows society; one knows the locality, the meeting places, the community; one knows the manners, moral codes, customs, and other suitable practices in regard to specific communities.
7. *Puggalaññūtā*: one knows persons; one knows the differences between people in regard to their dispositions, abilities, and virtues; this knowledge helps determine how one relates appropriately to each individual. For example, one knows whether one should associate with someone or not; one knows how to deal with, employ, praise, criticize, and teach others in an effective way.

A *paṇḍita* is a wise person, someone who conducts his or her life with wisdom. There are many ways in which the Buddha described such a person's attributes, for example:

Monks, by his deeds a fool is marked, by his deeds a wise man is marked. Both are revealed clearly by way of their actions.<sup>16</sup> By three things the fool can be known: by bad conduct of body, speech and mind. By three things the wise person can be known: by good conduct of body, speech and mind.

A. I. 102.

Monks, there are these three characteristics of a fool, signs of a fool, ways of behaving of a fool. What three? Here a fool is one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds.

A. I. 102-103; M. III. 163.

<sup>16</sup>*Apadāne sobhati paññā*; I have translated this phrase according to AA. II. 169.

Monks, by three things a wise person can be known: he poses an issue with due consideration, he solves an issue with due consideration, and whenever another person solves an issue with due consideration, with gentle and well-spoken words, reasonable and to the point, he expresses delight.

*A. I. 103-104.*

Monks, there are two kinds of fools: he who shoulders a burden that does not befall him, and he who shirks a burden that befalls him.

Monks, there are two kinds of wise persons: he who shoulders a burden that befalls him, and he who takes not up one that does not befall him.

*A. I. 84.*

A foolish monk desires undue praise, distinction from other monks, authority in the monasteries, and honour among families.

‘Let both laymen and monks think that only by myself was this deed accomplished; in every work, great or small, let them be subject to me.’ Such is the ambition of the fool; his envy and pride only accumulate.

*Dh. verses 73 and 74.*

The good are unattached to all conditions; the righteous do not speak with a desire for sense pleasures; whether affected by pleasure or pain, the wise show neither elation nor dejection. {571}

Neither for the sake of himself nor for the sake of another does a sage do any wrong; he desires not son, wealth, kingdom, or personal success by unjust means; he is virtuous, wise, and upright.<sup>17</sup>

*Dh. verses 83 and 84.*

<sup>17</sup>The commentaries interpret the phrase ‘unattached to all conditions’ as ‘abandoning delight and attachment (*chanda-rāga*) in all things’ (DhA. II. 156).



Whether he is shown honour or not, his concentration is unshakable; he abides vigilant and alert. Such a person meditates consistently and makes constant effort; he possesses insight with subtle understanding, delighting in the destruction of clinging. They call him a superior man.<sup>18</sup>

*S. II. 232.*

Irrigators channel water, fletchers straighten arrows, woodworkers craft wood, the wise train themselves.

*Dh. verse 80.*

Swans, cranes, and peacocks, elephants and spotted deer, all are frightened of the lion, regardless of their own bodies' size.

In the same way among human beings, a young person endowed with wisdom is considered great, not the fool with a well-built body.

*S. II. 279-80; J. II. 144.*

A man of little learning grows old like an ox; his muscles develop, but his wisdom does not.

*Dh. verse 152.*

One is not named an elder merely because one's hair is grey; ripe is he in age, yet old-in-vain is he called.

One possessed of truth, rectitude, harmlessness, self-mastery, and restraint is indeed a sage; purged of impurities, he is indeed called an elder.

*Dh. verses 260 and 261.*

Small streams flow noisily; great waters flow silently. The hollow resounds while the full is still. A fool is like a half-filled pot; the wise person is like a lake full of water.

*Sn. 138-9.*

<sup>18</sup>In the Thai Pali edition the phrase 'abides vigilant and alert' is replaced by 'dwells with measureless concentration'.

The fool who knows he is a fool is at least a little wise; the fool who thinks that he is wise is called a fool indeed.

*Dh. verse 63.*

Whichever meeting is void of good people is not called a council; whoever does not speak truth is not among the righteous. But having abandoned lust, hate and delusion, and speaking the truth, one is indeed a superior person.

*S. I. 184.*

A person who is wise and grateful, faithful and reliable, who associates with virtuous friends and is dedicated to helping those in difficulty – such a one is called a superior person. {572}

*J. V. 146.*

Monks, there are these four occasions. What four?

1. The occasion when an action is both unpleasant and after it is accomplished it is unprofitable.
2. The occasion when an action is unpleasant but after it is accomplished it is beneficial.
3. The occasion when an action is pleasant but after it is accomplished it is unprofitable.
4. The occasion when an action is both pleasant and after it is accomplished it is beneficial.

Of these occasions, in a case when an action is both unpleasant and unprofitable, one deems action inadvisable for two reasons, for it is both unpleasant and unprofitable.

In a case when an action is unpleasant but beneficial, one may know who is a fool and who is wise in the matter of personal strength, effort and perseverance. For the fool has no such consideration as this: ‘Though this is an occasion when action is unpleasant, yet when it is accomplished it is beneficial.’ Accordingly he does not act, and his inaction brings him loss. But the wise man considers:

‘Though this is an occasion when action is unpleasant, yet when it is accomplished it is beneficial.’ Accordingly he acts and the result is to his profit.

In a case when an action is pleasant but unprofitable, one may know who is a fool and who is wise in the matter of personal strength, effort and perseverance. For the fool does not consider thus: ‘Though this act is pleasant, yet it brings loss.’ Accordingly he acts and the result is loss. Whereas the wise man reflects: ‘Though this act is pleasant, yet its results bring loss.’ He therefore acts not and the result is to his profit.

In a case when an action is both pleasant and beneficial, one deems action advisable for two reasons, for it is both pleasant and beneficial.

*A. II. 118-19.*

The steadfast one, by attaining the desired good, is called a person of wisdom.<sup>19</sup>

*S. I. 87, 90; A. II. 46; A. III. 48-9; It. 16-17.*

Whoever grows in faith, virtuous conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom: such a person is righteous, possesses discriminative knowledge, and obtains the true benefits of this world for himself.

*A. III. 80.*

Monks, by relying on an honest person four blessings are to be expected. What four? One grows in noble virtue, one grows in noble concentration, one grows in noble wisdom, and one grows in noble liberation. {573}

*A. II. 239.*

<sup>19</sup>The desired good is twofold: good visible in this very life and the good of the future life.

Here, bhikkhu, he in this world who is wise, of great wisdom, thinks not to harm himself, thinks not to harm others, thinks not to harm both alike. Rather, he thinks of those things beneficial to himself, thinks of those things beneficial to others, thinks of those things beneficial to both alike; indeed, he thinks of those things beneficial to the whole world. In this manner is one called a wise person, of great wisdom.

A. II. 179.

When, O monks, a superior man is born into a family he exists for the good, welfare and happiness of many people. It is for the good, welfare and happiness of his parents, of his wife and children, of his dependants, workers and servants, of his friends and colleagues, of his ancestors, of the king, of the devas, of ascetics and brahmins. This is similar to how a great rain cloud brings all the crops to growth and exists for the good, welfare and happiness of many people.<sup>20</sup>

A. IV. 244-5.

In the case that someone associates with such a wise or virtuous person, or else this person initiates the sharing of knowledge and goodness with others, he or she is referred to as a ‘virtuous friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta*). A virtuous friend engenders right understanding and wholesome faith in others, by teaching, advising, and imparting knowledge. He or she acts with kindness and compassion, helping to cultivate right view and correct practice in others.

Besides the distinctive attributes of a wise person outlined in the quotations above, it is possible to describe a virtuous friend – someone who should be sought out and associated with – by considering the qualities mentioned in the definition of virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*).

Virtuous friendship is defined as ‘consorting, associating, and affiliating with, and a devotion and dedication to, someone who has faith

<sup>20</sup> A similar passage exists at A. III. 46-7.

(*saddhā*), morality (*sīla*), (great) learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*).<sup>21</sup>

In some passages only four of these qualities are mentioned, excluding learning, which is considered to be less important than the other four factors. Other passages suggest that when one lives in a specific locality one should associate closely, converse, and consult with those people who are endowed with faith, virtue, generosity, and wisdom; one should take these people as role models and emulate their spiritual qualities.<sup>22</sup>

A virtuous friend should also possess the seven basic virtues referred to as the ‘qualities of a virtuous friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta-dhamma*):<sup>23</sup>

1. *Piyo*: ‘endearing’; the ability to ‘access another’s heart’, create a sense of intimacy and confidentiality, and make it easy for students to ask questions.
2. *Garu*: ‘venerable’; acting appropriately in regard to one’s status as a teacher; creating a feeling of ease, reliability, and safety. {574}
3. *Bhāvanīyo*: ‘inspiring’; being highly intelligent, having true knowledge, and constantly training and improving oneself; praiseworthy and exemplary; being spoken about and thought of by one’s disciples with inspiration, confidence, and delight.
4. *Vattā*: ‘effective at speaking’; being a skilful speaker and good counsellor, able to explain things so that others understand, and aware of what and how to speak in specific circumstances; giving skilful advice and admonishment.
5. *Vacanakkhama*: ‘a patient listener’; ready to listen to the questions and suggestions of others, even those that are trifling; able to endure insults and criticisms, without getting fed up or losing one’s temper. (See Note 13.2)

<sup>21</sup>See: Dhs. 228.

<sup>22</sup>See, e.g.: A. IV. 281-2.

<sup>23</sup>A. IV. 32. The commentaries describe an additional eight ‘attributes of a virtuous friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta-lakkhaṇa*), namely: faith, morality, learning, generosity, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (UdA. 221; ItA. I. 65).

## NOTE 13.2: ENDURING CRITICISM

In the Pali Canon this term *vacanakkhamo* refers to someone who can endure the blame and criticism of others and is prepared to modify and improve himself.

Ven. Sāriputta is praised as the paragon of those people endowed with this virtue (e.g.: S. I. 64).

The commentaries explain how some people are able to admonish others, but as soon as they themselves receive admonishment they become angry; Sāriputta, however, was able to both admonish others and to humbly receive admonishment.

There is a story of a seven-year old novice pointing out to Sāriputta that the border of his inner robe was hanging low; Sāriputta listened politely and went to set his robe in order (SA. I. 123).

6. *Gambhīraṇca katham kattā*: ‘able to expound on profound subjects’; able to teach and explain complex and profound matters so that others understand.
7. *No caṭṭhāne niyojaye*: ‘not spurring on to a useless end’; not encouraging one to follow harmful or inappropriate ways.

Although the following passages by the Buddha do not explicitly claim to describe the attributes of a virtuous friend, the virtues mentioned can be considered as companion qualities of a virtuous friend:

Monks, a monk endowed with six qualities is capable of acting for the benefit and welfare of himself and others. What six? Here, a monk:

1. Is quick to comprehend all wholesome states.
2. Recollects the Dhamma teachings that he has heard.
3. Contemplates the essential meaning of those recollected teachings.
4. By clearly understanding the meaning (*attha*) and fundamental principles (*dhamma*), he practises correctly.<sup>24</sup>

5. Has pleasing and lovely speech, consisting of sophisticated, articulate, and lucid language, and enabling the listener to clearly understand the gist of the subject.
6. Is able to instruct, rouse, encourage, and gladden his companions in the holy life.

A. IV. 296, 328.

There are, O monks, three types of persons found in the world. What three? There is one who should not be associated with, consorted with, or approached; one who should be associated with, consorted with, and approached; one who should be honoured and revered, associated with, consorted with, and approached.

Of what nature is the person who should not be associated with, consorted with, or approached? In this case a certain person is inferior in the way of morality, concentration and wisdom. Such a person should not be associated with, consorted with, or approached, except out of consideration and compassion. {575}

Of what nature is the person who should be associated with, consorted with, and approached? In this case a certain person is like oneself in respect to morality, concentration and wisdom. Such a person should be associated with, consorted with, and approached. Why is that? With this idea: 'As we are equal in morality, concentration and wisdom, our discussions will be on morality, concentration and wisdom; our discussions will proceed in unison and will lead to our happiness.' For this reason one should associate with, consort with, and approach such a person.

Of what nature is the person who should be honoured and revered, associated with, consorted with, and approached? In this case a certain person is superior in the way of morality, concentration and wisdom. Such a person should be honoured and revered, associated

<sup>24</sup>*Dhammānudhamma-paṭipanno*: he practises secondary principles of Dhamma in accord with primary principles, that is, he practises aspects of Dhamma correctly according to their formal principles as well as their true objective.

with, consorted with, and approached. Why is that? With this idea: ‘In this way I shall complete the body of virtuous conduct ... the body of concentration ... the body of wisdom that is as yet incomplete, or by way of wisdom in this respect I shall sustain the body of virtuous conduct ... the body of concentration ... the body of wisdom that is complete.’ For this reason one should honour and revere, associate with, consort with, and approach such a person.

*A. I. 124-5.*

Although the Buddha repeatedly warned against associating with bad, immoral people, note that in the passage above he presents an exception, when one associates with such a person out of kindness and compassion and with a desire to help. In any case, those who wish to help such a person should first consider their own readiness beforehand.

Some of the teachings on the attributes of a virtuous friend emphasize everyday, immediate benefits (sometimes also connected to higher, spiritual benefits), for example the teaching on true and false friends in the *Singāḷaka Sutta*:

See here, householder’s son, there are these four types who can be seen as foes, as false friends: the swindler is one, the great talker is one, the flatterer is one, and the troublemaker is one.

1. The man who is a swindler can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons: he takes everything for himself, he wants a lot for very little, he helps his friends only when he is in danger, and he seeks his own ends.
2. The great talker can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons: he talks of things that have passed away, he talks of things that have not yet come to be, he offers assistance with useless things, and when his friends are in need he makes up excuses owing to some obstacle.
3. The flatterer can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons: he assents to bad actions, he [equally] assents to good actions,



he praises you to your face, and he disparages you behind your back.

4. The troublemaker can be seen to be a false friend for four reasons: he is a companion when you indulge in alcohol, when you roam the streets at unfitting times, when you frequent places of revelry and entertainment, and when you indulge in gambling.

See here, householder's son, there are these four types who can be seen to be true friends, good-hearted friends: a supportive friend is one, the friend in happy and unhappy times is one, the friend who points out what is good is one, and the friend who is considerate is one. {576}

1. The supportive friend can be seen to be a true friend in four ways: he looks after you when you are heedless, he looks after your possessions when you are heedless, he is a refuge when you are in danger, and when some business is to be done he lets you have more than you ask for.
2. The friend in happy and unhappy times can be seen to be a true friend in four ways: he tells you his secrets, he guards your secrets, he does not let you down in times of misfortune, he would even sacrifice his life for you.
3. The friend who points out what is good can be seen to be a true friend in four ways: he keeps you from wrongdoing, he supports you in doing good, he informs you of things you did not previously know, and he points out the path to heaven.
4. The considerate friend can be seen to be a true friend in four ways: he does not rejoice at your misfortune, he rejoices at your good fortune, he stops others who speak against you, and he commends others who speak in praise of you.

*D. III. 185-8 (excerpt)*

A similar passage is found in the *Āṅuttara Nikāya*:

Monks, a friend who possesses seven factors should be followed. What seven? He gives what is difficult to give; he does what is difficult to do; he patiently endures what is difficult to endure; he reveals his own secrets; he keeps his friends' secrets; he does not abandon one in misfortune; he does not despise his friends when they are destitute.

A. IV. 31.

The general principles of friendship are outlined in the teaching on the six directions:<sup>25</sup>

See here, householder's son, there are five ways in which a man should minister to his friends and companions as the northern [lefthand] direction:

1. By gifts and generosity (*dāna*).
2. By kindly, loving words (*piyavācā*).
3. By assistance and support (*atthacariyā*).
4. By offering constant friendship; by being a friend in good times and bad (*samānattatā*).
5. By speaking honestly and sincerely (*avisamvādanatā*).

Note that the first four of these factors comprise the teaching referred to as the four 'bases of social solidarity' (*saṅgaha-vatthu*). This teaching presents a principle of mutual assistance and of uniting people in harmony. These factors are a way of expressing goodwill between people. These two teachings, on the six directions and on the bases of solidarity, are virtually identical and they show how Buddhism encourages people to befriend one another or to respond to others as friends.

Of these four factors, the offering of constant friendship – the ability to adapt to others, to not be conceited, and to be a friend in good times

<sup>25</sup>D. III. 190. (Specific to this passage, the term *piya-vācā* is sometimes written as *piya-vajja* or *peyya-vajja*; the meaning is the same.)

and bad – is essential and goes to the heart of friendship. As described earlier, the Buddha distinguishes the friend in happy and unhappy times as one of the four ‘true’ friends.<sup>26</sup> {577}

The bhikkhus, or renunciants in general,<sup>27</sup> should act as virtuous friends for the laypeople. The responsibilities for a bhikkhu in relation to a householder, according to honouring the zenith in the teaching on the six directions, are identical to the attributes of a true friend. The attribute of a true friend: ‘one who points out what is good’ can be rephrased in this context as ‘bhikkhus are true friends as they point out what is good.’ The duties of the monastic sangha towards the laity, however, contain an additional two factors, amounting to six factors in total:<sup>28</sup>

1. To discourage them from doing evil.
2. To encourage them to do good.
3. To assist them with benevolence.<sup>29</sup>
4. To inform them of things they have not previously known or heard.
5. To explain and clarify those things they have heard.<sup>30</sup>
6. To point out the way to heaven (to teach a way of life leading to happiness).

The responsibilities of the monastic sangha in relation to the laity are set down as follows:

Monks – brahmins and householders are very helpful to you, as they support you with the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodgings and medicine for the sick. And you, too, should be very helpful to

<sup>26</sup>The teaching on the *saṅgaha-vatthu* is a very important one; for more on this teaching, see Appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup>Trans: the author here uses the scriptural expression ‘ascetics and brahmins’.

<sup>28</sup>D. III. 191.

<sup>29</sup>Added factor.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

brahmins and householders, by teaching them the Dhamma beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end; by expounding the holy life both in spirit and in letter, utterly complete and pure. In this way, monks, in mutual dependence the laypeople and those gone forth live the holy life for the purpose of escaping the flood, for making a complete end to suffering.

In mutual dependence householders and the homeless both practise to achieve the true Dhamma: the unsurpassed security from bondage.

*It. 111-12.*

The following passage affirms the Buddha's emphasis on assisting the laity (by using righteous means):

Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises support for families, the protection of families, compassion for families.

*S. IV. 324.*

Having said this, while performing the duty of a virtuous friend in a compassionate and honest manner for the laity, the monastic sangha must be careful to preserve the unique attributes of an independent lifestyle and the life of a renunciant. It is important to avoid fraternizing too much with the laypeople, which can cause harm for both parties. It can hinder individual spiritual progress and deprive the laypeople of a refuge. If the monks are overly engaged in the world, the laity will only have people who are as muddled and harried as they are to rely on; they will not have an anchor to help release them from confusion and turmoil.

This inappropriate relationship in which the monks become as caught up in worldly affairs as the laity, and in which they are unable to help lead the laypeople to inner freedom, is referred to as 'getting ensnared by (other) human beings': {578}

And what, monks, is getting ensnared by human beings? Here, a monk lives overly associating with laypeople; he rejoices with them and grieves with them, he is happy when they are happy and sad

when they are sad, and he involves himself in their affairs and duties (he acts as a busybody). This is called getting caught by human beings.<sup>31</sup>

S. IV. 180-81.

When engaged in the direct instruction of others, a virtuous friend should follow the teachings emphasizing purity, kindness, and sincerity:

First, there is the group of five factors known as the ‘qualities of a teacher’ (*dhammadesaka-dhamma*):<sup>32</sup>

1. To teach gradually and sequentially (*anupubbikathā*): to teach a subject matter in stages, beginning with easy aspects and ending with more profound aspects; to teach in a progressive, integrated, and reasoned way.
2. To explain causality (*pariyāya-dassāvī*): to clarify each aspect and point of a specific subject matter; to be versatile in one’s teaching, pointing out causal relationships.
3. To teach with kindness and well-wishing (*anudayatā*): to teach with a heart of lovingkindness, aiming for the welfare of one’s students.
4. To refrain from seeking material rewards (*anāmisantara*): to teach others without aiming for material gain, financial rewards, or personal advantages.
5. To not hurt oneself or others (*anupahacca*): to make the mind impartial; to teach according to the gist and formal principles of a specific subject matter; to focus on the theoretical and practical meaning of a matter; to not exalt oneself while showing contempt for others.

<sup>31</sup>This is sometimes referred to as ‘there arises intimacy in the household’ (S. III. 11; Nd. I. 198-9); other times it is referred to as ‘caught up in the household’ (Nd. I. 387); it is part of the worry connected to a sympathy for others (Vbh. 356-7).

<sup>32</sup>See: A. III. 184. These are not literal definitions from this sutta passage.

The following passage describes both pure and impure teachings:

Monks, a monk teaches the Dhamma to others with the thought: ‘Oh, may they listen to the Dhamma from me! Having listened, may they gain faith in me! Having gained faith, may they show their devotion to me!’ Such a monk’s teaching of the Dhamma is impure.

Monks, a monk teaches the Dhamma to others with the thought: ‘The Dhamma that is well expounded by the Blessed One is to be realized directly by oneself, timeless, inviting one to come and see, to be brought within and realized, to be experienced individually by the wise. Oh, may they listen to the Dhamma from me! Having listened, may they clearly understand the Dhamma! Having clearly understood, may they practise accordingly!’ Thus he teaches the Dhamma to others because of the intrinsic excellence of the Dhamma; he teaches the Dhamma to others out of compassion and sympathy, out of tender concern. Such a bhikkhu’s teaching of the Dhamma is pure. {579}

*S. II, 199.*

In a similar way, the teaching on the six directions in reference to the duties of teachers towards their students contains similar attributes. Here, the emphasis is not so much on purity, but rather on kindness and sincere commitment:<sup>33</sup>

1. To counsel and train students in virtue.
2. To provide students with a clear understanding of relevant subjects.
3. To provide students with a complete education in various branches of the arts and sciences.
4. To recommend and praise the students’ virtues and abilities to friends and colleagues.
5. To provide students with security in all directions (to instruct them on how to truly apply their knowledge and make a living).

<sup>33</sup>D. III, 189-90.

Finally, there are two qualities of a virtuous friend which should be given special emphasis and which distinguish the excellence of such a person: first, one is truly able to do that which one teaches, or one has arrived at a specific realization about which one is able to teach others; second, one is free; one is not stuck in confusion or tied up with the same attachments as those people one guides. In reference to the first quality, there are many teachings by the Buddha, for example:

Let one first establish oneself  
In what is proper and good;  
Then instruct others.  
A learned person should be taintless.  
You should act as you teach.

*Dh. verses 158-9.*

Generally, these teachings on distinction focus on conduct or ethics, but if a person has attained a specific realization by way of the mind or by wisdom, and then acts as a virtuous friend, this is the best. If it is not possible to find such a person, then one should seek someone who has progressed farther on the spiritual path, or is at least equal in this respect.

Occasionally, a very learned person, who possesses knowledge through reading texts or other forms of study, can facilitate Dhamma realization in someone else despite he himself having not yet attained such a realization.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, it can happen that two people at equal stages of spiritual maturity discuss and review the Dhamma together and as a consequence they simultaneously arrive at a realization of truth.<sup>35</sup>

One of the great benefits of having a virtuous friend is that he or she acts as a role model. As a result one is confident that those things one practises and aspires to are truly feasible and achievable, and by accomplishing these things one receives true and worthy results. Moreover, a virtuous friend has greater knowledge, understanding, and experience, and is thus able to recommend methods which facilitate or speed up one's practice.

<sup>34</sup>The texts liken such a person to a cowherd who looks after someone else's cattle: he simply counts the cows without ever savouring the fivefold dairy products (see: Dh. verse 19; DhA. I. 155).

<sup>35</sup>E.g.: S. III. 126-32.

A virtuous friend who has achieved the fruits of spiritual practice can provide these benefits or blessings fully, generating profound faith and motivation in others. It is therefore natural to wish for a virtuous friend with a complete set of these attributes.

The second quality of freedom contains two aspects: a person's lifestyle and a person's inner spiritual freedom. {580}

This quality of freedom is vital and is connected to the descriptions above on monks who fraternize with the laypeople. If someone is shackled by the same bonds and fetters as others, or is caught in the same whirlpools and turbulent waters, he will not be able to help himself, let alone help release or liberate others.

Someone who is subject to social constrictions and struggles to obtain things in a worldly way and with worldly values, is under pressure to make a living and support his family. He needs to fight for his own survival and that of his family, in the same way as other people. Whenever there is trouble in society, it will be difficult for him to find time to devote himself to save others or to lead them in a new direction. His attempts to help tend to fall in the category of 'paddling around in a small pond'. When this person lacks freedom both in lifestyle and inwardly it is even more difficult to achieve success in helping others.

It is for this reason that the Buddha established the monastic sangha as an independent community, which has a way of life free from the constraints of the wider society and is guided by the disciplinary code of the Vinaya.

When this independent way of life is combined with individuals whose minds are liberated, the sangha becomes a powerful force in generating virtuous qualities in the wider society and acts as a refuge for the public, enabling other people to also discover various levels of freedom.

On the subject of assisting others, the Buddha gave the following teaching:



Cunda, that one who is himself sinking in deep mud should pull out another who is sinking in deep mud is impossible. That one who is not himself sinking in mud should pull out another who is sinking in mud is possible.

That one who is himself untrained, undisciplined, with defilements unextinguished, should train another, discipline him, and help extinguish his defilements is impossible. That one who is himself trained, disciplined, with defilements extinguished, should train another, discipline him, and help extinguish his defilements is possible.<sup>36</sup>

*M. I. 45.*

The Buddha aimed to ensure for the stable and long-lasting independence of the monastic sangha. In this context, the following teaching can be determined as a code of ethics for renunciants:

A renunciant should not be overly busy, acting indiscriminately; he should not be the man of someone else. Not in dependence on another should he live, nor go about treating the Dhamma as a commodity.<sup>37</sup>

*Ud. 66.*

This matter can be summed up by looking at the peerless attributes of the Buddha himself, who was the supreme virtuous friend. The Buddha was endowed with both qualities: he was truly accomplished and had realized those things he taught; and he was free, liberated from both social constraints and from the oppression of mental defilement. {581}

<sup>36</sup>Referred to at: Nd. I. 31-2; Nd. II. 21.

<sup>37</sup>The phrase 'should not be overly busy, acting indiscriminately' is translated from the Pali: *na vāyameyya sabbattha*, which literally means: 'should not make an effort everywhere' or 'should not make an effort in all matters'. The commentaries explain this phrase as 'should not make an effort in all kinds of unskilful activities', for example by acting as a messenger or a scout, like a royal official (UdA. 334). 'Should not be the man of someone else' means to not be someone's servant or subordinate.

Monks, just as a blue, red, or white lotus is born in the water and grows up in the water, but having risen up above the water, it stands unsullied by the water, so too the Tathāgata was born in the world and grew up in the world, but having risen above the world, he dwells untarnished by the world.<sup>38</sup>

S. III. 140-41.

See here, Bāhuna, the Tathāgata is free, detached, and released from ten things and thus dwells with a boundless mind. What ten? Here, the Tathāgata is free, detached, and released from physical form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness ... from birth ... old age ... death ... from all suffering ... and from all mental impurity, and thus dwells with a boundless mind. In the same way, a blue, red, or white lotus is born in the water and grows up in the water, but having risen up above the water, it stands unsullied by the water.

A. V. 152.

The Blessed One is awakened himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for the sake of awakening. The Blessed One has trained himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for the sake of training. The Blessed One is at peace himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for the sake of peace. The Blessed One has crossed over himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for crossing over. The Blessed One is completely quenched himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for extinguishment.<sup>39</sup>

D. III. 53-4; M. I. 235.

<sup>38</sup>Cf.: A. II. 38-9.

<sup>39</sup>The expressions 'completely quenched' and 'extinguishment' are translated from the phrase: 'He has attained *parinibbāna* himself and thus teaches the Dhamma for attaining *parinibbāna*.'

The following three characteristics of the Buddha's teaching style, which are referred to as the 'Buddha's mode of teaching', can be used as general principles of self-assessment for those people who act as virtuous friends and instruct others:<sup>40</sup>

1. The Buddha teaches the Dhamma through direct knowledge. He teaches those things worthy of realization that he himself has realized in order that others too may realize these things. This principle focuses on the teacher – on the fact that he or she truly understands or has realized the subject being taught.
2. The Buddha teaches the Dhamma with a sound basis. He teaches and explains in a coherent way, so that the persons listening are able to contemplate the subject and understand it by applying their own wisdom. This principle focuses on the pupils or the listeners. The teacher instructs in a way that provides the listeners with the freedom or the opportunity to reflect, apply discernment, develop wisdom, and penetrate the truth by themselves. The teacher merely presents facts, information, reasoned arguments, or suggestions in order to bring aspects of truth to light and to stimulate contemplation in the listener.
3. The Buddha teaches the Dhamma with real, wondrous results. He teaches those things which are true – which are acknowledged by those wise persons and lovers of truth who contemplate them. He teaches those things that are realizable; practitioners will attain those fruits corresponding and appropriate to their application in practice. This principle focuses on the teaching, which is in accord with truth or 'truly so'; it is verifiable, effective, and worthy; it is not trivial, futile or followed in vain; it produces real results for those who practise it – the fruits of practice match the effort made by the practitioner and by accompanying conditional factors.

<sup>40</sup>M. II. 9-10; A. I. 276; Nd. I. 271-2. One finds contradictory translations of this passage; for example, different editions of the Tipiṭaka in Thai contain varying translations. It is helpful to compare this passage with the teachings at: D. I. 193, 198-9, 239; M. II. 33; DA. II. 379, 555; MA. III. 273; SA. III. 254; UdA. 326; NdA. II. 355.

If one is unable to find a virtuous friend who is realized and truly free, it can still be useful to follow and learn from someone who possesses great learning, despite the fact that he or she has not yet reached the gist of the teaching. {582}

In this case, such a person is like a cowherd who looks after the cows belonging to someone else, or like a blind person who carries a lantern – a person with good vision is thus able to see.<sup>41</sup> A person with good vision here refers to someone endowed with wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).

This is not only the case with someone who has vast knowledge and is a highly skilled teacher – even the speech of a simpleton or someone who parrots the wise words of others can provide food for thought. A person with wise reflection may hear these words and consequently attain realization.<sup>42</sup>

In these circumstances, however, the vital factor rests with the listener, that is, he or she possesses the internal spiritual factor of wise reflection, which will be discussed in a following chapter.

### 13.5 RESPONSIBILITY OF A VIRTUOUS FRIEND

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In the context of spiritual training, the participation and support by a good companion in various activities is an external condition. An important factor here is the mutual influence people have on each other in the area of thoughts, opinions, attitudes, values, and understanding, which collectively are called ‘views’ (*diṭṭhi*).

If these ideas, attitudes, values, and forms of understanding are incorrect and harmful, they are known as ‘wrong view’ (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), while if they are correct, wholesome, and beneficial they are called ‘right view’ (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

<sup>41</sup> See: Thag. verses: 1024-1033 (in reference to the first analogy, see footnote 84 above).

<sup>42</sup> For examples, see the stories at: SA. I. 273; SnA. II. 398.

A person who encourages someone to have wrong view is a bad friend (*pāpa-mitta*), while a person who encourages someone to have right view is a good and true friend (*kalyāṇamitta*).

Often a person's mentors at home or school, for instance a person's parents and teachers, have less influence than the friends the person plays and associates with. But it also happens frequently that a person's friends living nearby have less influence than the people who live far away (both in physical distance and in time) and who possess the power to reach a person's heart: the 'companions' who travel via the mass media, say through channels of entertainment and books, including biographies of great people, whose qualities one emulates.

The factor allowing someone to exert an influence on others, or the bridge between the external companion and another person's mind, is belief, confidence, admiration, and inspiration, which together are referred to as 'faith' (*saddhā*).

When faith is generated, one can be influenced by another even though he or she lives far away and is not a close associate. Some people may live close to home, but if one has no confidence in them they will have little influence. Therefore, those who have the responsibility of instructing others and imparting right view should first generate faith and confidence in others.

A basic principle in spiritual training is for a virtuous friend to act as a catalyst for faith: association with wise and honest people is a condition for the arising of faith.

Although one may be good and wise, if one is unable to generate faith and confidence in others, one still does not qualify as a 'virtuous friend' (*kalyāṇamitta*), nor has a true connection with others been established. When faith is generated and another person is receptive, one can help guide the person's thoughts and behaviour (initially the person may simply imitate one's behaviour), or one can engender a correct form of thinking, which is another level of spiritual practice. The decisive factor determining whether one fulfils the responsibility of a 'virtuous friend' is whether the person one associates with arrives at right view. {583}

A technical and doctrinal explanation of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) will be presented in a following chapter.<sup>43</sup> As an introduction it is useful here to point out that the virtuous and correct views, opinions, values, and forms of understanding which are collectively called ‘right view’ have many details and particulars, and may be explained in many different ways. An examination of the formal teachings, however, reveals that these views, etc. can be distilled into two kinds:

1. Beliefs, views, perspectives, and forms of understanding which are correct, wholesome, and rational, and which are related to matters of ethics, to good and bad behaviour and to the corresponding fruits of such actions, epitomized by the saying ‘ones reaps as one sows.’ Further examples of this kind of view are a trust in virtue, say the merits of one’s mother and father, and a belief in line with a religious teaching, say the teaching on the next life. In brief, one can define this as a view in accord with Dhamma or a belief in the law of kamma, which engenders a sense of responsibility in regard to one’s actions. The precise term for this view is *kammassakatā-ñāṇa* – the knowledge of being an owner of one’s deeds.

This is mundane right view (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*), arising from an understanding of cause and effect and instilled by teachings passed down in one’s community. It generates righteous, virtuous behaviour and leads to a peaceful, well-ordered society.

2. Views and forms of understanding about the world, about life, or about conditioned phenomena which accord with truth, which accord with the true nature of phenomena and with the natural law of causality. By this understanding a person recognizes how to relate to things in the world correctly.

For example, one understands that all conditioned things arise from the convergence of interconnected factors; they exist according to the interrelationship of causes and conditions, and therefore they are unstable, impermanent, and unsustainable. Their associated factors are in a constant state of conflict and pressure; these

<sup>43</sup>See chapter 16 on the wisdom factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.

things are not truly independent, they cannot be truly owned by anyone, and they are ultimately not subject to anyone's desires and wishes. When things exist in this way, how should we relate to them? Is it appropriate to be totally engrossed with conditioned things or to dedicate one's life to pursuing them? Every human being too is a conditioned phenomenon and subject to the same natural laws; we are all companions in old age, sickness, and death. As a consequence, how should we relate to one another?

This form of understanding arises through proper discernment, reflection and consideration of things, in accord with reality and with the causal nature of things. It is called 'right view aligned with transcendent understanding'. Although at the beginning it is still a mundane form of understanding, it is on the path to and will develop into transcendent right view (*lokuttara-sammādiṭṭhi*).

The first kind of right view is called *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi* or *kammassakatā-ñāṇa*: the knowledge of how people are the owners of their intentional actions (*kamma*). This is the ability to recognize and distinguish one's own volitional actions. This knowledge generates a sense of responsibility in respect to one's actions. It is right view on the level of righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*) or in relation to the wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṣaṭṭha*). It is a benefit or a goal on both the immediate, mundane level (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*) and the refined, spiritual level (*samparāyikattha*), and it is the basis for the supreme good (*paramattha*).

The second kind of right view is classified as 'insight right view' (*vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi*). In the Pali Canon it is referred to as *saccānulomika-ñāṇa*: 'knowledge consistent with truth' or 'knowledge in line with truth'. It leads to awakening; it leads directly to the supreme good.

It is evident here that the essential kind of right view, leading to the highest goal of Buddhism, is the second kind, of knowledge in line with truth. {584}

All Buddhists, regardless of whether they aim directly for this highest goal or not, should be careful not to stop at the first kind of right view. Rather, they should advance to the second kind, by cultivating this form

of wisdom, at least to an initial degree.<sup>44</sup> This is because this kind of right view reduces and alleviates greed, hatred and delusion; it helps to establish an improved relationship to the world, it makes the mind clear and bright, and it increases happiness. It reduces oppression, conflict and distress in the world more effectively than by using the method of restraint and control that is inherent in a moral discipline. It benefits both an individual and society as a whole.

When one analyzes the sequence of events, one sees that the association with good persons, or to have a virtuous friend, leads to the opportunity to hear the Dhamma – to receive teachings – either directly or indirectly. When the teaching of Dhamma truly conforms to the principles of truth and goodness, and the teaching is presented in a well-reasoned, coherent way, faith will arise in the person who receives the teaching:

Association with a wise person (to have a ‘virtuous friend’) →  
to listen to the Dhamma →  
faith.<sup>45</sup>

Here we come to a vital point in spiritual training or practice: the connection between an external, social factor and an internal, personal factor. The external factor is ‘learning from others’ (*paratoghosa*), here meaning to have a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). On its own it results in faith and leads only to ‘mundane right view’ (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*).<sup>46</sup> {585}

<sup>44</sup>On the Buddha’s words pertaining to mundane and transcendent right view, see the subsequent chapters on the factors of the Eightfold Path. For a commentarial analysis of right view see Appendix 2.

<sup>45</sup>This is one part of a sequence presented at A. V. 114. In Pali it reads: *sappurisa-saṁseva* → *saddhamma-savana* → *saddhā*. At A. V. 145-9 there is a passage describing a process of relinquishment, which includes the teaching: ‘When one has a virtuous friend one is able to eliminate a lack of faith, narrow-mindedness, and indolence.’ Later texts like the *Visuddhimagga* apply this teaching to explain the nature of faith, stating: ‘Faith may have a factor of stream-entry, like association with the virtuous, as a proximate cause’ (*Vism.* 464; *DhsA.* 119; *NdA.* I. 55).

<sup>46</sup>Citing *UdA.* 107. For the connection between wise reflection and transcendent right view, see the same reference.



If one only reaches this stage then one's spiritual training is incomplete and one will not reach the highest goal of Buddhism. When one abides only at the level of faith, one still relies on one's teachers – one's 'virtuous friends' – and one's behaviour is still one of following an example or of imitation. One has not yet gained deep knowledge and clear vision; one has still not reached complete liberation.

The solution is to find a bridge to arrive at the internal, personal factor of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). A person should summon and generate wise reflection to replace faith, because wise reflection leads to transcendent right view, to true knowledge, and to the supreme goal of Buddhism.

The external factor of a virtuous friend enables this link to the internal factor of wise reflection, and it is considered a responsibility of a virtuous friend to help others generate wise reflection within themselves. A good teacher should not settle for the target of generating faith in the student, but should use this faith to 'light the spark' of wise reflection.

A good teacher uses faith as a link in teaching the Dhamma: having instilled confidence he or she teaches the Dhamma so that the listener or pupil rouses wise reflection: the ability to reflect and to see all things according to the truth and in line with causality.

Once wise reflection has been generated, the natural process of awakening unfolds until it reaches its culmination. During this time the virtuous friend may help support and guide this wise reflection by offering regular Dhamma teachings.

When the external factor is linked to the internal factor – when learning from others supports wise reflection – the unawakened person who is receptive to teaching is able to advance in Dhamma training and practice (unless one is a prodigy who initiates wise reflection spontaneously or one is a simpleton who is unable to think for oneself).

In Buddha-Dhamma, a virtuous teacher does not assist others in order to foster devotion or a personal attachment, as such a relationship may only lead to copying the teacher's beliefs and conduct. A virtuous friend acts not so that others form a personal relationship with the teacher,

but acts merely as a medium, to help others connect to their own lives and their surroundings – to point out how they may reflect upon things according to truth and discover for themselves how to relate to the world correctly. The process is expanded thus:

Association with a wise person (to have a ‘virtuous friend’) →  
to listen to the Dhamma →  
faith →  
wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).

In the teaching on wisdom development, or among the factors leading to stream-entry, however, the Buddha does not mention faith. It may be that in this context he considered faith to be a minor or subsidiary factor, and that it does not require emphasis. {586}

The process of wisdom development, or the process involving the factors leading to stream-entry, is illustrated thus:<sup>47</sup>

Association with a wise person (to have a ‘virtuous friend’) →  
listening to the Dhamma →  
wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) →  
practice conforming to truth.

Although they do not explicitly mention wise reflection, the following sutta passages describe the style of instruction of virtuous friends, who provide an independence to their pupils, allowing them to realize the truth by themselves:

<sup>47</sup>The virtues conducive to the growth of wisdom (*paññāvuḍḍhi-dhamma*; factors conducive to wisdom development) are sometimes abbreviated to the four factors for growth (*vuḍḍhi*; *vuḍḍhi-dhamma*). They are equivalent to the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*): *sappurisa-saṁseva*, *saddhamma-savana*, *yoniso-manasikāra*, and *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* (practice in accord with the Dhamma). Many of the sources of these teachings have been cited earlier, including: D. III. 227; S. V. 347, 404, 410-11; A. II. 245-6; cf.: D. II. 214. These virtues are found in teachings throughout the Tipiṭaka, as if the Buddha was looking for opportunities to mention them. Another potent teaching in this context occurs at Kh. 7.

*Māgaṇḍiya*: I have such confidence in Master Gotama. Now is Master Gotama capable of teaching me the Dhamma in such a way that I might rise up from this seat cured of my blindness?

*The Buddha*: Then, *Māgaṇḍiya*, associate with virtuous people. When you associate with virtuous people, you will hear the true Dhamma. When you hear the true Dhamma, you will practise in accord with the true Dhamma. When you practise in accord with the true Dhamma, you will know and see for yourself thus: ‘These are the diseases, tumours, and piercing darts [of the mind]; but here these diseases, tumours, and darts cease without remainder. [That is] with the cessation of one’s clinging comes cessation of becoming. With the cessation of becoming ... sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’

*M. I. 512.*

*Brahmin Dhotaka*: I bow down and honour you, Sir, he who possesses the eye of wisdom, the All-Seeing One. Please, Man of Sākya, free me from confusion!

*The Buddha*: See here, Dhotaka, I am not able to free anyone in the world from confusion. When you have clearly understood the sublime Dhamma, you will cross over the ocean of defilements by yourself.

*Sn. 204-5; Nd. II. 20-21.*

In the case that a virtuous friend has fulfilled the initial responsibility of recognizing the vital independence of other practitioners, it is then important for him or her to emphasize the personal duties of these practitioners, so that they benefit in the optimum way from this independence.

The Buddha therefore performed another responsibility of a virtuous friend, that of enjoining his disciples to perform their personal duties well, as can be seen by the numerous teachings he gave on listening to the Dhamma, conversing on the Dhamma, and seeking guidance and advice. For example:

Monks, when listening to the true Dhamma, a person endowed with five qualities is capable of entering upon the fixed course [consisting in] rightness in wholesome qualities. What five?

1. He does not think disparagingly about the subject being discussed.
2. He does not think disparagingly about the speaker.
3. He does not think disparagingly about himself.
4. He is not distracted; he listens to the Dhamma with one-pointed attention.
5. He reflects wisely.<sup>48</sup> {587}

A. III. 174-5.

The vital quality here is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is the agent giving rise to knowledge and understanding. This quality does not only pertain to listening to the Dhamma or to verbal instruction. Rather, it should be applied to every aspect of one's life and in every circumstance, including to one's perception of sense impressions and to one's interaction with phenomena.

Wise reflection as a primary agent in spiritual development, taking over from the instruction received from a virtuous friend, is the subject of a following chapter. But before finishing this section on the influence by others (*paratoghosa*), it seems appropriate to speak some more on the subject of faith (*saddhā*), which is a key factor in the discussion so far. The focus here will be on the proper role and practice of faith in the course of bringing suffering to cessation.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>This sutta passage is followed by two similar passages, in which some of the factors above are replaced by the following factors: 'he is wise, not a dimwit'; 'he does not listen with contempt'; 'he does not listen with a sense of competitiveness'; 'he does not listen by looking to find fault, with a heart hardened towards the speaker'; and 'he does not presume to understand that which he has not yet understood.' These three suttas also describe the opposite qualities to those mentioned in each passage. These positive qualities are found in many passages throughout the Tipiṭaka.

<sup>49</sup>Trans.: see the following chapter on faith.

### 13.6 APPENDIX 1: FOUR BASES OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY (SAṄGAHA-VATTHU)

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1. *Dāna*: giving; generosity; charity.
2. *Piyavācā*: kindly speech.
3. *Atthacariyā*: life of service; beneficial conduct.
4. *Samānattatā*: even and equal treatment.

This key teaching on the four bases of social solidarity is found frequently in the Pali Canon.<sup>50</sup> One example of the importance the Buddha gave to mutual assistance and to social harmony is the story of Hatthaka Āḷavaka, whom the Buddha praised as one of the two ‘mastheads’ of the assembly of laymen, and who was declared foremost among those who support and protect a following by means of the four bases of social solidarity.<sup>51</sup>

In the *Siṅgālaka Sutta*, when the Buddha describes honouring the six directions within the ‘noble discipline’ (*ariya-vinaya*), he concludes with these four bases of social solidarity.<sup>52</sup>

The commentaries define the term *rājā* (‘king’, ‘majesty’) as someone who gladdens the people by way of the four bases of solidarity,<sup>53</sup> and state that these four bases of solidarity are a form of ‘sublime conduct’ (*brahmacariya*).<sup>54</sup>

The last factor – *samānattatā* – can cause some problems in interpretation because the origin of this word is unclear and it is translated in different ways. The term *samāna* means ‘even’, ‘equal’, or ‘common’, and

<sup>50</sup>D. III. 152-3, 232; A. II. 32-3, 248; A. IV. 219, 363-4; J. V. 330-31.

<sup>51</sup>A. I. 25-6.

<sup>52</sup>D. III. 191-2. The commentaries claim that the Buddha taught this sutta as a disciplinary code for laypeople (*gihi-vinaya*).

<sup>53</sup>JA. I. 135.

<sup>54</sup>JA. I. 136.

thus the term *samānattatā* is often translated as ‘equal to oneself’ or ‘in common with oneself’ (i.e. to do unto others as one would wish them to do unto you). The commentaries generally translate this latter term as ‘in good times and in bad’ (i.e. to be constant), or as equality and impartiality, expressed for example by eating or sitting together;<sup>55</sup> it is related to the term *samāna-kicca*, which means ‘to work together’ or ‘to help one another accomplish a task’.<sup>56</sup>

The commentary to the Paṭisambhidāmagga gives an alternative definition for *samānattatā*, stating that it means ‘proper discrimination’ or ‘to place oneself in a correct relationship’, i.e. to act appropriately in respect to another’s status, as lower, equal, or higher than oneself.<sup>57</sup> The Jātaka commentaries offer yet another definition, stating that it means ‘to be consistent’: not to act one way in private and another way in public, for example to be respectful to one’s parents irrespective of whether one is at home or in a public gathering.<sup>58</sup>

At the highest level, the Buddha acknowledged the equality among those of similar states of realization.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup>DA. III. 928; AA. III. 65; AA. IV. 115; PsA. I. 299.

<sup>56</sup>Nett. Ṭikā: Nidesavāraṇṇanā, Hārasaṅkhepavaṇṇanā; Nett. Vibhāvinī: Nidesavāra-atthavibhāvanā, Soḷasahāraniddesavibhāvanā.

<sup>57</sup>PsA. I. 299.

<sup>58</sup>JA. V. 332.

<sup>59</sup>See: A. IV. 363-4.

### 13.7 APPENDIX 2: COMMENTARIAL ANALYSIS OF RIGHT VIEW (SAMMĀ-DIṬṬHI)

The commentaries provide a more detailed analysis of right view, dividing it into five kinds:<sup>60</sup> *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi*, *jhāna-sammādiṭṭhi*, *vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi*, *magga-sammādiṭṭhi*, and *phala-sammādiṭṭhi*.<sup>61</sup> The first three kinds are mundane; the last two are transcendent. Of the two kinds of right view mentioned in section 5 above ('The Responsibility of a Virtuous Friend'), the first is equivalent to *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi*, while the second is classified as *vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi*. Both of these kinds of right view are thus mundane. The difference is that *vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi* leads to *magga-sammādiṭṭhi* and *phala-sammādiṭṭhi*, which are transcendent, and therefore it is referred to as 'right view on the path to transcendence'.

A familiar example of *kammassakatā-ñāṇa* (or *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi*) is the factor of right view in the teaching on righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*) or the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṭṭha*).<sup>62</sup> This is a form of right view found both within and outside Buddhism, and it existed even before the time of the Buddha, that is, it is a part of all religious teachings that espouse the doctrine of kamma. (No matter what teaching is upheld, in whichever religious tradition, if this teaching accords with truth, Buddhism acknowledges and accepts it.) For more on this subject see the commentaries to the Vinaya Piṭaka and the Majjhima Nikāya.<sup>63</sup> The second of these two commentaries reiterates that both *kammassakatā-ñāṇa* and *saccānulomika-ñāṇa* are mundane forms of right view. *Saccānulomika-ñāṇa* is 'knowledge consistent with truth' or 'knowledge in line with truth';<sup>64</sup> it is equivalent to *vipassanā-ñāṇa*.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Trans.: this appendix comprises material from footnote 1203 of the Thai version of *Buddhadhamma*.

<sup>61</sup>E.g.: AA. II. 24, 162; AA. III. 281.

<sup>62</sup>E.g.: A. V. 267-8; Vbh. 328; ItA. II. 25.

<sup>63</sup>VinA. I. 244 and MA. I. 196.

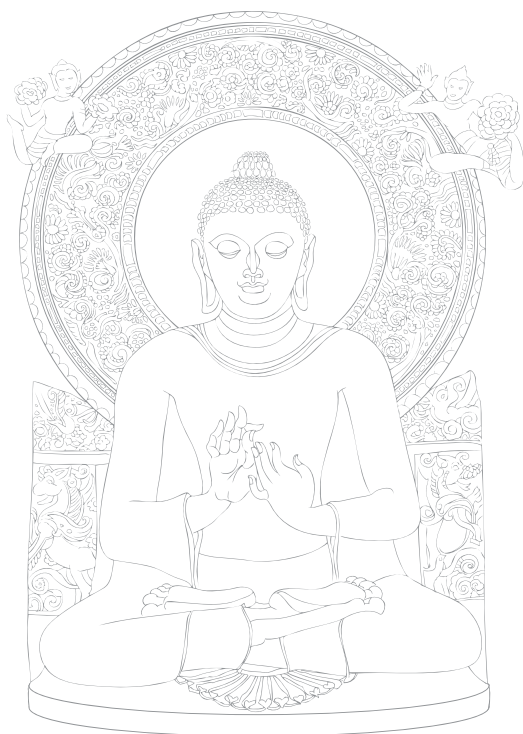
<sup>64</sup>Vbh. 328.

<sup>65</sup>DA. III. 984; VbhA. 415; VinT.: Pārājikakaṇḍaṃ, Sikkhāsāṃvāpādaḥāṇiyavaṇṇanā; VismT.: Khandhaniddesaṇṇanā, Paññāpabhedakathāvaṇṇanā.

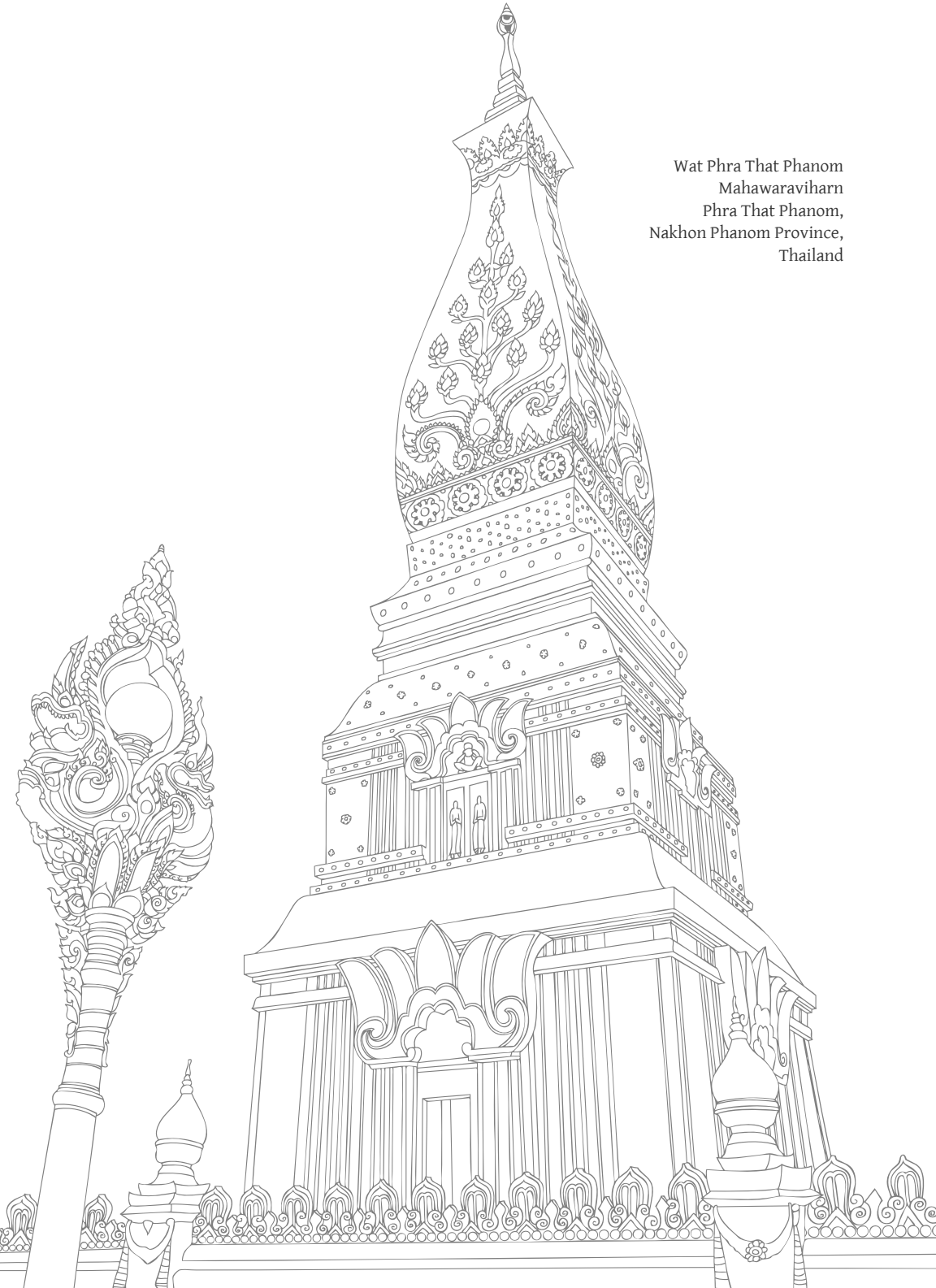
Furthermore, a passage from the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya presents a different division of fivefold *sammādiṭṭhi*, namely: *vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi*, *kammasakatā-sammādiṭṭhi*, *magga-sammādiṭṭhi*, *phala-sammādiṭṭhi*, and *paccavekkhaṇa-sammādiṭṭhi*.<sup>66</sup> Here, *jhāna-sammādiṭṭhi* is removed and replaced by *paccavekkhaṇa-sammādiṭṭhi*. *Jhāna-sammādiṭṭhi* is also a form of mundane right view, but it pertains to those individuals who have achieved *jhāna* and is not directly related to the subject at hand. *Paccavekkhaṇa-sammādiṭṭhi* (right view stemming from reflection) is equivalent to ‘right knowledge’ (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and pertains to those individuals who have realized path and fruit; it too is classified as a mundane form of right view.

<sup>66</sup>MA. IV. 135.





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## CHAPTER 14

# FAITH AND CONFIDENCE

### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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The meaning, role, and importance of faith (*saddhā*)<sup>1</sup> in the Buddhist teachings is as follows:

Faith here does not mean handing over complete responsibility to something or someone without applying reasoned judgement. On the contrary, to do that would be an expression of emotional immaturity.

Faith is merely one stage – and the first stage – in the development of wisdom. Correct faith is connected to reasoned analysis: it must lead to and be validated by wisdom. It is the opposite to handing over complete responsibility or to a total entrusting oneself to something or someone else without applying reasoned judgement, which is an expression of simple emotionality (*āvega*) and leads people to stop making inquiries. Faith based simply on emotion is a form of gullibility; it should be amended and ultimately eliminated. Granted, the emotion stemming from a correct kind of faith can prove useful at early stages of Dhamma practice, but in the end it is replaced by wisdom.

The faith included in wisdom development is perhaps better defined as self-confidence: a person has a strong conviction based on critical

<sup>1</sup>Trans.: *saddhā*: from the Pali verb *saddahati*: ‘to entrust the heart’ (from the Sanskrit roots *śrad* – deemed to be linked to the root *hṛid* – ‘heart’ – and *dhā* – ‘to place’. The English words ‘heart’ and ‘cardiac’ are related etymologically to the root *śrad*). Note that in the Thai edition of *Buddhadhamma*, this chapter is incorporated in the chapter on Virtuous Friends.

## NOTE 14.1: FACTORS STARTING WITH FAITH

There are many examples, including:

- Virtues conducive to future benefits (*samparāyikattha*): faith, moral conduct, generosity, and wisdom.
- Virtues conducive to growth (*vuḍḍhi-dhamma*): faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom.
- Spiritual powers/faculties (*bala/indriya*): faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.
- Qualities making for intrepidity (*vesārajjakaraṇa-dhamma*): faith, moral conduct, great learning, application of energy, and wisdom.
- Noble treasures (*ariya-dhana*): faith, moral conduct, moral shame, fear of wrongdoing, great learning, generosity, and wisdom.

## NOTE 14.2: FACTORS NOT INCLUDING FAITH

For example:

- Virtues to be established in the mind (*adhiṭṭhāna-dhamma*): wisdom, truthfulness, generosity, and serenity.
- Factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*): mindfulness, investigation of truth, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity.
- Qualities which make for protection (*nāthakaraṇa-dhamma*): moral conduct, great learning, association with virtuous people, amenability to correction, willingness to give a helping hand, love of truth, application of energy, contentment, mindfulness, and wisdom.

reasoning that the aspired-to goal or ideal is both valuable and attainable. This faith inspires a person to validate the truth which he or she believes to be reasonably accessible.

To help define faith in a correct manner, all teachings in the Pali Canon containing *saddhā* in a group of spiritual factors also contain wisdom as an accompanying factor, and normally, faith is listed as the first factor while wisdom is listed as the final factor (see Note 14.1). Teachings emphasizing wisdom, however, do not need to include the factor of faith (see Note 14.2).

Because wisdom governs other virtues and is an essential factor, it is more important than faith. Even as a personal attribute, wisdom rather than faith is the decisive factor: those individuals who are most highly praised in Buddhism, like the chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta, are those who possess the greatest wisdom.

There are two distinct benefits to faith:

- faith conditions rapture (*pīti*), which gives rise to tranquillity (*pas-saddhi*), which in turn leads to happiness, then concentration, and finally to wisdom; and
- faith generates effort – the endeavour to undertake spiritual practice and to put to the test those things believed in by faith, in order to witness the truth for oneself, which eventually leads to wisdom. (See Note 14.3)

Although these two benefits stem from an emotional basis, the process leading to their culmination must always contain an inherent aspiration for wisdom.

As the purpose of true faith is to support wisdom, faith must promote critical discernment, which leads to wisdom development. And faith itself is well-grounded and secure only when a person has established confidence and dispelled doubts through rational inquiry and understanding. In Buddha-Dhamma, the quality of faith thus supports inquiry and investigation. The methods of appealing to others to believe, forcing others to accept a prescribed truth, or threatening disbelievers with punishment are all incompatible with this Buddhist principle of faith.

Faith and devotion to another person has drawbacks. The Buddha even encouraged his disciples to abandon devotion to himself, because such devotion is heavily invested with emotion and can become an obstacle to complete and perfect liberation.

Faith is not classified as a factor of the Path, because it is wisdom, guiding and validating faith, that is the necessary factor for progressing on the Path. Furthermore, those persons with great wisdom, for example the perfectly enlightened Buddhas and the Pacceka-Buddhas, begin the

## NOTE 14.3: FAITH AS A SUPPORTING CONDITION

Faith leading to rapture (*pīti*), see: S. II. 31; faith leading to energy (*virīya*), see: S. V. 225. Faith helps to generate mental strength and fearlessness, which are attributes of ‘energy’ (*virīya*): see the Dhajagga Sutta (S. I. 218-20).

Note that faith unsupported by wisdom is a force leading to concentration, including the extremely high levels of concentration which are forms of mental liberation (*cetovimutti*). These states of mind, however, are still subject to vacillation and stagnation: they do not necessarily lead to wisdom and may even obstruct wisdom. Faith accompanied by wisdom, on the other hand, generates concentration that supports the further development of wisdom. In the final stage, faith and concentration lead to liberation by wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*), which makes for an unshakeable liberation of mind.

Path at wisdom, without passing through the stage of faith. The cultivation of wisdom need not always begin with faith – it may also begin with wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). Therefore, the Buddha inserted the concept of faith in the section on developing right view; he did not distinguish faith as a separate factor.

Even faith that passes beyond what is called ‘blind faith’ is still considered incorrect if it does not reach the stage of inquiry and of aiming for clear vision, because it fails to fulfil its function. Spiritual practice stuck at this level is still defective, because it lacks a true objective.

Although faith is of significant benefit, at the final stages it must come to an end. The existence of faith indicates that the true goal has not yet been reached, because as long as one ‘believes’ in that goal, it shows that one has not yet realized it for oneself. As long as faith exists, it reveals that a person still depends on external things, entrusts wisdom to external things, and has not reached perfect freedom. {589}

Faith is therefore not an attribute of an arahant; on the contrary, an arahant has the attribute of being ‘faithless’ (*asaddha*), which means that he or she has directly realized the truth and no longer needs to believe in another person or in a rational explanation for the truth.

To sum up, progression on the Path is gradual, beginning with faith (*saddhā*), developing into a seeing or understanding in line with cause and effect (*ditṭhi*), and finally leading to a knowledge and vision of the truth (*ñāṇa-dassana*). At the final stage, the task of faith is ended.

The importance and advantages of faith should be clearly understood. One should neither give faith too much value nor hold it in contempt, both of which have harmful consequences. A disparagement of faith reveals a misunderstanding of faith's role. A person may possess a high degree of self-confidence, for example, but this may simply be a belief in one's own mental defilements and manifest as conceit and egoism.

In relation to moral conduct (*sīla*), faith is a vital factor. It provides people with supportive principles that act as deterrents, enabling them to resist temptations and provocations and to abstain from performing bad actions.

Faith also provides a channel for thought. When people experience a sense impression that does not overwhelm the mind (does not exceed the power of the principles instilled by faith), the course of their thinking follows the path prepared by faith; thoughts do not stray in unwholesome directions. For people who are still subject to mental defilements, faith thus sustains virtuous conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Although faith has many benefits, if it is not accompanied by wisdom then it can be harmful and it can even hinder the development of wisdom.

In reference to wisdom development, it is possible to give a rough outline of the various stages of faith (before one reaches a consummation of wisdom), as follows:

1. One develops views based on sound reason; one does not believe in things simply because one has been told by others (in accord with the Kālāma Sutta – see below).

<sup>2</sup>For the dependence of virtuous conduct on faith, see: Vism. 511; VismṬ.: Indriyasaccaniddesavaṇṇanā, Magganiddesakathāvaṇṇanā.

2. One safeguards truthfulness (*saccānurakkha*); one listens to the teachings, opinions, and doctrines of various parties with objectivity; one does not rush into making judgements about things that one does not yet truly know; one does not stubbornly insist that one's personal knowledge and opinions represent the truth.
3. When one has listened to the teachings and opinions of others, has seen that they accord with reason, and has observed that the person who offers these teachings is sincere, unbiased, and wise, confidence arises. One accepts the teachings in order to continue an examination of the truth using reasoned analysis.
4. One contemplates and examines these teachings until one is convinced that they are true and correct; one feels deeply impressed by the truth that one has witnessed and makes effort to further one's investigations in order to deepen a realization of the truth.
5. If one has doubts one hastens to inquire from others with a sincere heart; one inquires not to shore up one's identity but in order to gain wisdom. Faith is consolidated by proving the truth of reasoned arguments. In this way the purpose of faith is fulfilled. {590}

#### 14.2 THE BUDDHA'S WORDS ON FAITH

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The Kālāma Sutta offers a principle for establishing a viewpoint founded on reasoned analysis for all people, regardless of whether they already hold to a particular theory, teaching, or doctrine:<sup>3</sup>

At one time the Buddha was wandering and arrived at the township of Kesaputta in the Kosala country which was the residence of the Kālāma clan. Having heard a good report of the Buddha, the

<sup>3</sup>In different editions of the Pali Canon this sutta is variously called the Kesaputta Sutta, the Kesaputti Sutta, the Kesaputtiya Sutta, or the Kesamutti Sutta. The sutta following on from this sutta contains similar material; see also: A. II. 190-91.



Kālāmas approached him, exchanged greetings, and told him the following:

There are, Lord, some ascetics and brahmins who come to Kesaputta. They explain and elevate their own doctrines, but ridicule, disparage, revile, and vilify the doctrines of others. But then other ascetics and brahmins come to Kesaputta, and they too explain and elevate their own doctrines, but ridicule, disparage, revile, and vilify the doctrines of others. For us, Lord, there is perplexity and doubt as to which of these ascetics and brahmins speak truth and which speak falsehood.

[The Buddha replied:]

It is fitting for you to be perplexed, O Kālāmas, it is fitting for you to be in doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, Kālāmas:

- Do not believe on the basis of holding to oral tradition (*anussava*). (See Note 14.4)
- Do not believe on the basis of holding to a lineage of teaching (*paramparā*).
- Do not believe on the basis of hearsay (*itikirā*).
- Do not believe on the basis of referring to scriptures (*piṭaka-sampadāna*).
- Do not believe on the basis of logical reasoning (*takka*).
- Do not believe on the basis of inferential reasoning (*naya*).
- Do not believe on the basis of rational reflection (*ākāra-parivitakka*).
- Do not believe because a teaching accords with personal opinions (*diṭṭhi-nijjhānakkhanti*).
- Do not believe because of a speaker's inspiring appearance (*bhabba-rūpatā*).
- Do not believe because you think: 'This ascetic is our teacher' (*samaṇo no garūti*).

But when you know for yourselves, ‘These things are unwholesome, these things are harmful, these things are censured by the wise, these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to detriment and suffering’, then you should abandon them.... When you know for yourselves, ‘These things are wholesome, these things are harmless, these things are praised by the wise, these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to wellbeing and happiness’, then you should engage in them. {591}

In the case that people lacked an understanding of and a belief in a particular subject matter, the Buddha did not urge them to believe. Instead, he encouraged them to consider and judge the matter according to the causes and effects that they were able to witness for themselves. In reference to the subject of rebirth, for example, there is a passage at the end of the aforementioned sutta, which states:

When, Kālāmas, this noble disciple has thus made his mind free of enmity, free of ill-will, uncorrupted and pure, he has won four assurances in this very life.

The first assurance he has won is this: ‘If there is another world (paraloka), and if good and bad deeds bear fruit and yield results, it follows that with the breakup of the body, after death, I shall arise in a good destination, in a heavenly world.’

The second assurance he has won is this: ‘If there is no other world, and if good and bad deeds do not bear fruit and yield results, still right here, in this very life, I live happily, free of enmity and ill-will.’

The third assurance he has won is this: ‘Suppose evil befalls the evil-doer. Then, as I do not intend evil for anyone, how can suffering afflict me, one who does no evil deed?’

The fourth assurance he has won is this: ‘Suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer. Then right here I see myself purified in both respects.’<sup>4</sup>

## NOTE 14.4: THE TERM 'ANUSSAVA'

Ever since the initial writing stage of *Buddhadhamma* (before the first edition was printed), I have felt that the phrase here 'do not believe' does not clearly convey the meaning of the Pali, but I have not yet found an adequate replacement. [Trans.: the author here is referring to the Thai phrase *yah yeut theu* (อย่ายึดถือ); this can also mean 'do not grasp', 'do not assume'.] I based my translation on the version of the Thai Tipiṭaka: A Tribute to 25 Centuries of Buddhism (published in 2500 BE), which applies the commentarial interpretation of *mā* in this context as *mā gaṇhittha*. In later editions of *Buddhadhamma* I continued to use the phrase *yah yeut theu*, but added the footnote: 'the term "do not believe" here is an interim phrase, as no adequate substitute has been found. Understand this phrase to mean "do not make a judgement or establish an opinion in an absolute, categorical way based on any of these factors alone".' In 1972, when I compiled the 'Dictionary of Buddhism' (พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสนา ฉบับประมวลธรรม), I settled with the translation 'do not (decisively) believe' (*yah bplong jy cheua* – อย่าปลงใจเชื่อ). Later editions of *Buddhadhamma* retained the original translation, with the added footnote: 'the expression *yah yeut theu* should be understood as corresponding to *yah bplong jy cheua*.' For more on this subject, see Appendix 1.

In regard to people who did not follow a specific doctrine or religion, the Buddha would teach with kindness and in a neutral, objective manner. He would encourage the listener to contemplate the truth from an independent standpoint. He would not claim ownership of these teachings nor would he try and persuade people to show devotion to himself or to convert to 'Buddhism'.

The Buddha did not refer to himself or to a supernatural power as proof of the authenticity of his teachings, but rather he referred to the 'way things are' and to the facts that people are able to see for themselves through their own wisdom. Moreover, the Buddha taught the basic principle of practice called the principle of 'certainty' (*apaṇṇakatā*): in regard to those matters of which general people lack an understanding, whether

<sup>4</sup>Trans.: the commentaries explain 'in both respects' thus: 'Because he does no evil and because no evil will befall him.' ('Numerical Discourses of the Buddha' by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi; AltaMira Press, © 1999; note 51.)

this be those things referred to as supernatural or even common phenomena which are not clearly understood, one should choose a definite and certain course of action, rather than get caught up in speculation.

A famous example of this principle is found in the Aṇṇaka Jātaka. Two separate caravans both needed to carry a heavy load of water in order to cross a desert. The first caravan encountered a goblin, transformed in the likeness of a man, who wished to deceive and devour them. Using phoney evidence, he told the members of the caravan that just ahead they would find an area abounding with pools and lakes. He thus told them to throw out all of their water, rather than carry it unnecessarily. The members of the caravan were delighted and poured out all of the water from their jars. But they found no water up ahead, grew weak, and were devoured by demons.

The members of the second caravan were similarly shown the spurious evidence of water, but they applied the ‘principle of certainty’, reflecting: ‘As long as we have not seen the truth of this matter firsthand, we shall not simply follow this logic or conjecture. What we know for certain is the water we are now carrying in our ox carts. When we meet this alleged water source ahead, we can fill up our jars.’ By applying wisdom and relying on that which is directly discernible, this caravan was able to reach safety.<sup>5</sup> {592}

This principle of choosing a definite and certain course of action may also be applied to Dhamma practice and in regard to subtle aspects of the mind (*nāma-dhamma*), as described in the Aṇṇaka Sutta:

At one time the Buddha arrived at the brahmin village of Sālā. Having heard a good report of the Buddha, the brahmin householders approached him and exchanged greetings. The Buddha asked them the following:

‘Householders, is there any teacher agreeable to you in whom you have acquired faith supported by reasoned discernment (*ākāravatī-saddhā*)?’

<sup>5</sup>JA. I. 94.

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Since, householders, you have not found an agreeable teacher, you may undertake and practise this infallible and certain teaching (apaṇṇaka-dhamma); for when this infallible and certain teaching is correctly undertaken it will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time. And what is this infallible and certain teaching?

‘Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: “Gifts bear no fruit, offerings bear no fruit, sacrifice bears no fruit; no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world;<sup>6</sup> no mother, no father....” Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: “Gifts, offerings, and sacrifices bear fruit; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions....” What do you think, householders? Don’t these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?’

‘Yes, venerable sir.’

‘Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: “Gifts bear no fruit, offerings bear no fruit, sacrifices bear no fruit...” it is to be expected that they will forsake these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. Why is that? Because those recluses and brahmins do not see the danger, degradation, and defilement in unwholesome states, nor do they see in wholesome states the aspect of purity – the blessing of renunciation....

‘About this a wise man considers thus: “If there is no other world, then on the dissolution of the body this person will have made himself safe enough. But if there is another world, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell.

Now whether or not the word of those recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no other world: still this person is here and now censured by the wise as an immoral person, one of wrong view who holds the doctrine of nihilism. But on the other hand, if there is another world, then this person has lost on both counts: since he is censured by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell....”

‘Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: “There is no final cessation of being.”’<sup>7</sup> Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: “There is a final cessation of being....” {593}

About this a wise man considers thus: “These recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view ‘there is no final cessation of being’, but that has not been seen by me. And these other recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view ‘there is a final cessation of being’, but that has not been known by me. If, without knowing and seeing, I were to take one side and declare: ‘Only this is true, anything else is wrong’, that would not be fitting for me.

Now as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view ‘there is no final cessation of being’, if their word is true, then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception.<sup>8</sup> But as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view ‘there is a final cessation of being’, if their word is true then it is possible that I might here and now attain final Nibbāna.

However, the view of those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view ‘there is no final cessation of being’ is close to attachment, close to bondage, close to indulgence, close to infatuation, close to clinging; but the view of those recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view ‘there is final cessation of being’ is close to non-attachment, close to non-bondage, close

to non-indulgence, close to non-infatuation, close to non-clinging.” After reflecting thus, he practises the way to disenchantment and dispassion towards being, to the true cessation of being.’

M. I. 400-413.

The following teaching by the Buddha reveals how knowledge still based on faith and logic remains faulty, still prone to error, and not a true realization of the truth:

There are five things, Bhāradvāja, that may turn out in two different ways here and now:

1. Faith (*saddhā*).
2. Approval (*ruci*).
3. Oral tradition (*anussava*; transmitted knowledge).
4. Reasoned thinking (*ākāra-parivitakka*).
5. Conformity to personal views (*diṭṭhi-nijjhānakkhanti*; this includes the act of reflection).

Now something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and unfailing.

Again, something may be fully approved of and agreeable, yet it may be empty and false; but something else may not be fully approved of and agreeable, yet it may be factual, true, and unfailing.

Again, something may be passed down by tradition, yet it may be empty and false; but something else may not be passed down by tradition, yet it may be factual, true, and unfailing.

<sup>6</sup>Trans.: ‘another world’ (*paraloka*): i.e. other realms or future realms of existence.

<sup>7</sup>Trans.: the Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā states that ‘cessation of being’ (*bhava-nirodha*) here refers to Nibbāna.

<sup>8</sup>*Devā arūpino saññāmayā.*

Again, something may be well thought over, yet it may be empty and false; but something else may not resemble that which has been thought over, yet it may be factual, true, and unfailing.

Again, something may be well reflected upon [as conforming to personal views and beliefs], yet it may be empty and false; but something else may not resemble that which has been reflected upon, yet it may be factual, true, and unfailing. {594}

*M. II. 170-71; cf.: M. II. 218.*

In the following sutta the Buddha goes on to reveal a way of protecting or safeguarding the truth (*saccānurakkha*) – the means to conduct oneself in relation to personal views and beliefs and the way to respond to the views and beliefs of others:

It is not proper for a wise man who protects truth to come to the definite conclusion: ‘Only this is true, anything else is wrong.’

If a person has faith, he protects truth when he says: ‘My faith is thus’; but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: ‘Only this is true, everything else is false.’ In this way, there is the protection of truth; in this way he protects truth; in this way we describe the protection of truth. But as yet there is no realization of truth.

If a person approves of something ... if he has received a transmission of knowledge ... if he applies reasoned thinking ... if he gains a reflective acceptance of a personal view, he protects truth when he says: ‘I have an agreeable view thus’ ... ‘I have received a transmission thus’ ... ‘I have considered with reason thus’ ... ‘my reflective acceptance of a view is thus’: but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: ‘Only this is true, everything else is false.’ In this way, there is the protection of truth; in this way he protects truth; in this way we describe the protection of truth. But as yet there is no realization of truth.

*M. II. 171.*



The Buddha clarifies this proper conduct in another sutta. On one occasion the monks were discussing other people's praise and criticism of the Buddhist teachings, and the Buddha explained thus:

'Monks, if anyone should speak in disparagement of me, of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you should not be angry, resentful or upset on that account. If you were to be angry or displeased at such disparagement, that would only be a danger to you. If others disparage me, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, and you are angry or displeased, can you recognize whether what they say is right or not?'

'No, Lord.'

'If others falsely disparage me, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, then you must explain what is incorrect, saying: "For this reason that is incorrect, for this reason that is false, that is not our way, that is not found among us."

'Monks, if others should speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you should not on that account be pleased, happy or elated. If you were to be pleased or elated at such praise, that would only be a danger to you. If others rightly praise me, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, you should acknowledge what is true, saying: "For this reason that is correct, for this reason that is right, that is our way, that is found among us." ' {595}

*D. I. 2.*

In the previous sutta on safeguarding the truth (*saccānurakkha*), the Buddha goes on to describe the way of practice for realizing the truth (*saccānubodhi*) and for arriving at the truth (*saccānupatti*), which includes the arising of faith. This description explains both the importance and the limitations of faith:

'But in what way, Master Gotama, is there the realization of truth? In what way is a person known as one who has realized the truth?'

‘Here, a monk may be living in dependence on some village or town. Then a householder or a householder’s son goes to him and examines him in regard to three kinds of states: in regard to states based on greed, in regard to states based on hate, and in regard to states based on delusion: “Are there in this venerable one any states based on greed such that, with his mind obsessed by those states, while not knowing he might say, ‘I know’, or while not seeing he might say, ‘I see’, or he might urge others to act in a way that would lead to their harm and suffering for a long time?”

‘As he examines him he comes to know: “There are no such states in this venerable one based on greed such that, with his mind obsessed by those states, while not knowing he might say, ‘I know’, or while not seeing he might say, ‘I see’, or he might urge others to act in an unprofitable way that would lead to their harm and suffering for a long time. Moreover, the bodily behaviour and the verbal behaviour of this venerable one are not those of one affected by greed. And the Dhamma that this venerable one teaches is profound, hard to see and hard to penetrate, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. This Dhamma cannot easily be taught by one affected by greed.”

‘When he has examined him and has seen that he is purified from states based on greed, he next examines him in regard to states based on hate ... in regard to states based on delusion....

‘When he has examined him and has seen that he is purified from states based on delusion, then he places faith in him. Filled with faith he visits him and associates with him; having approached him, he gives ear; when he gives ear, he hears the Dhamma; having heard the Dhamma, he memorizes it and examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized; when he examines their meaning, he gains an acceptance of those teachings based on his investigations; when he has gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings, enthusiasm springs up; when enthusiasm has sprung up, he has determination; having determination, he scrutinizes; having scrutinized, he strives; resolutely striving, he realizes within himself

the ultimate truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom. In this way, there is the realization of truth; in this way one realizes truth; in this way we describe the awakening to truth (*saccānubodha*). But as yet there is no final arrival at truth.’

‘But in what way is there the final arrival of truth? In what way does one finally arrive at truth?’

‘The final arrival of truth (*saccānupatti*) lies in the repetition, development, and cultivation of those same things. In this way there is the final arrival at truth; in this way one finally arrives at truth.’<sup>9</sup> {596}

*M. II. 171-4.*

Faith is vital for initial stages of spiritual practice. It is conducive to spiritual growth and when applied correctly it accelerates spiritual development.

For this reason, a person with superior wisdom but who lacks strong faith may attain to a spiritual goal slower than someone who has inferior wisdom but has ardent faith.<sup>10</sup> When faith is placed on a righteous object, a person saves both time and labour, but when faith is placed on something unrighteous, it misleads and hinders a person.

In any case, faith as taught in Buddha-Dhamma is based on reasoned analysis and guided by wisdom, which prevents faith from being misplaced. If faith does go astray, it can be corrected because it is not a blind attachment; one is encouraged to continually examine the justification and validity of faith.

A lack of faith is an obstacle, which can interrupt and delay spiritual development, as confirmed by the Buddha:

<sup>9</sup>See also the *Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta*, which describes the realization of arahantship as the result of gradual study and practice: *M. I. 480*.

<sup>10</sup>Take for example the case of Ven. *Sāriputta*, who attained to the Dhamma more slowly than many other disciples, despite his outstanding wisdom.

Bhikkhus, for a monk who has not been able to remove five stakes in the heart, has not been able to release five mental bonds, it is impossible that he should reach complete growth in this Dhamma and Vinaya. The five stakes in the heart a monk is not yet able to abandon are as follows:

1. A monk has doubts and hesitations about the Teacher; he is indecisive and uncommitted in regard to the Teacher.
2. A monk has doubts and hesitations about the Dhamma; he is indecisive and uncommitted in regard to the Dhamma.
3. A monk has doubts and hesitations about the Sangha; he is indecisive and uncommitted in regard to the Sangha.
4. A monk has doubts and hesitations about the training; he is indecisive and uncommitted in regard to the training.
5. A monk is angry and resentful with his companions in the holy life; he feels hostile and callous towards them.

The mind of a monk who is doubtful, hesitant, indecisive and uncommitted in regard to the Teacher ... the Dhamma ... the Sangha ... the training ... who is angry with his companions in the holy life ... is not inclined towards effort, diligent practice, persistence, and endeavour. A monk who is not inclined towards effort ... is one who has not yet removed the stakes in the heart....<sup>11</sup>

*D. III. 238; M. I. 101.*

A lack of faith and confidence, i.e. doubt and hesitation, are major obstacles for the development of wisdom and spiritual progress. In this case the required task is to dispel doubts and to establish faith.

The establishment of faith here, however, is not an acceptance of something or someone, or an entrusting oneself to something or someone, without honouring one's own wisdom. Rather, a person should examine

<sup>11</sup>The five mental bonds are separate qualities; I have not listed them here because they are not directly related to the subject at hand.

the situation with wisdom in order to clearly see the causal relationships between things; this will lead to confidence and an end of doubt.

In the following sutta, the Buddha describes this wise inquiry, and in this teaching the Buddha encourages people to investigate the validity of the Buddha himself: {597}

Monks, a monk who is an inquirer, not knowing how to read another's mind, should make an investigation of the Tathāgata in order to find out whether or not he is fully enlightened.... A monk who is an inquirer, not knowing how to read another's mind, should investigate the Tathāgata with respect to two kinds of states, states cognizable through the eye and through the ear, thus:

'Are there found in the Tathāgata any defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?' When he investigates him, he comes to know: 'No defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.'

When he comes to know this, he investigates him further: 'Are there found in the Tathāgata any mixed states (sometimes pure, sometimes impure) cognizable through the eye or through the ear?' When he investigates him, he comes to know: 'No mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.'

When he comes to know this, he investigates him further: 'Are there found in the Tathāgata cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?' When he investigates him, he comes to know: 'Cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.'

When he comes to know this, he investigates him further: 'Has this venerable one attained this wholesome state over a long time or did he attain it recently?' When he investigates him, he comes to know: 'This venerable one has attained this wholesome state over a long time; he did not attain it only recently.'

When he comes to know this, he investigates him further: ‘Are there found in this venerable one, who has acquired renown and attained fame, dangers [connected with renown and fame]?’ Because for [some] monks the dangers [connected with renown and fame] are not found in them as long as they have not acquired renown and attained fame; but when they have acquired renown and attained fame, those dangers are found in them. When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘This venerable one has acquired renown and attained fame, but the dangers [connected with renown and fame] are not found in him.’

When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Does this venerable refrain [from evil] without fear, not refraining from evil by fear, and does he avoid indulging in sensual pleasures because he is without lust through the destruction of lust?’ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘This venerable refrains [from evil] without fear, not refraining from evil by fear, and he avoids indulging in sensual pleasures because he is without lust through the destruction of lust.’

Now if others should ask that monk thus: ‘What are your reasons (ākāra) and what is your evidence (anvaya) whereby you say: ‘This venerable refrains [from evil] without fear, not refraining from evil by fear, and he avoids indulging in sensual pleasures because he is without lust through the destruction of lust’? – answering rightly, that monk would answer thus: ‘Whether that venerable one dwells in a group of people or alone, while some there are well-behaved and some are ill-behaved and some there lead a community, while some there are worried about material things and some are unsullied by material things, still that venerable one does not despise anyone because of that. And I have heard and learned this from the Blessed One’s own lips: ‘I refrain [from evil] without fear, not refraining from evil by fear, and I avoid indulging in sensual pleasures because I am without lust through the destruction of lust.’

The Tathāgata, monks, should be questioned further about that thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not any defiled states

cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ The Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘No defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.’ {598}

If asked, ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not any mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ the Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘No mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.’

If asked, ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ the Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘Cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata. These states are my pathway and my domain, yet they are no cause for craving.’

A disciple should approach the Teacher who speaks thus in order to hear the Dhamma. The Teacher teaches him the Dhamma with its higher and higher levels, with its increasingly sublime levels, with its dark and bright counterparts for comparison. As the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to a monk in this way, through direct knowledge of a certain teaching here in that Dhamma, the monk comes to a conclusion about the teaching. He places confidence in the Teacher thus: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practising well.’

Now if others should ask that monk thus: ‘What are your reasons and what is your evidence whereby you say, “The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practising well?”’ – answering rightly, that monk would answer thus: ‘Here, friends, I approached the Blessed One in order to hear the Dhamma. The Blessed One taught me the Dhamma.... As the Blessed One taught the Dhamma to me in this way, through direct knowledge of a certain teaching here in that Dhamma, I came to a conclusion about the teachings. I placed confidence in the Teacher thus: ‘The Blessed one is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practising well.”

Monks, when someone's faith has been planted, rooted, and established in the Tathāgata through these reasons, terms, and phrases, his faith is said to be supported by reason, rooted in vision,<sup>12</sup> firm, and it is unable to be shaken by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahma or by anyone in the world. That is how there is an investigation of the Tathāgata's qualities, and that is how the Tathāgata is well investigated in accordance with the Dhamma.

*Vimamsaka Sutta: M. I. 317-20.*

Doubts and hesitations, even about the Buddha himself, are not considered wrong or wicked; they are merely states of mind which need to be understood and dispelled by applying wisdom. And indeed, doubts can encourage people to increase investigation and inquiry.

When people announced their devotion to and faith in the Buddha, before bestowing approval the Buddha would examine whether their faith and confidence was based on reasoned consideration, as is evident in the following discussion between Ven. Sāriputta and the Buddha:

'Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One thus: "There has never been, will be or is now another ascetic or brahmin who possesses knowledge of perfect awakening superior to that of the Blessed One."'

'You have spoken valiantly,<sup>13</sup> Sāriputta, you have roared the lion's roar of certainty! How is this? Were you able to perceive the minds of all the perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas of the past, so as to say: "These Lords were of such virtue, such was their teaching, such their wisdom, such their attributes, such their liberation"?' {599}

'No, Lord.'

'And were you able to perceive the minds of all the perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas who will appear in the future ... "such their liberation"?'

<sup>12</sup>*Dassana-mūlikā*; the commentaries state that a person is rooted in the path of stream-entry.



‘No, Lord.’

‘And I who am the perfectly enlightened noble Buddha of the present: were you able to use your mind to perceive: “The Lord is of such virtue ... such his liberation”?’

‘No, Lord.’

‘So, as you do not have knowledge to perceive the minds of the perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas of the past, the future or the present, how is it that you have spoken valiantly and roared the lion’s roar of certainty?’

‘Lord, although I do not have the power to read the minds of the perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas of the past, future, and present, yet I know the way to realize the Dhamma.<sup>14</sup>

‘Lord, it is as if there were a royal frontier city, with mighty bastions and a massive encircling wall with fortifications in which is a single gate, at which is a gatekeeper, wise, skilled and clever, who keeps out strangers and lets in those he knows. And he, constantly patrolling and following the course of the wall, does not see any joins or clefts in the wall, even such as a cat might creep through. He considers that whatever larger creatures enter or leave the city must all go through this very gate.

‘And in the same way, Lord, I know the way to realize the Dhamma: all those perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas of the past attained to supreme enlightenment by abandoning the five hindrances, which defile the mind and weaken the strength of wisdom, having firmly established the four foundations of mindfulness in their minds, and developed the seven factors of enlightenment according to the truth. All the perfectly enlightened noble Buddhas of the future will do likewise, and you, Lord, who are now the perfectly enlightened noble Buddha of the present, have attained to supreme enlightenment by abandoning the five hindrances ... developed the seven factors of enlightenment according to the truth.’<sup>15</sup>

When handled correctly as an aid for spiritual progress, devotion to a particular person can be beneficial. But it also has drawbacks because it often turns into an attachment to the person and obstructs progress. First, here is a sutta passage outlining the advantages of devotion:

The noble disciple who is completely dedicated to the Tathāgata and has full confidence in him does not entertain any perplexity or doubt about the Tathāgata or the Tathāgata's teaching. It is indeed to be expected, that a noble disciple who has faith will dwell with energy roused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; that he will be strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. {600}

S. V. 225.

The disadvantages of devotion to an individual are outlined in this teaching:

Monks, there are these five disadvantages of devotion to one person. What five?

When a person becomes very devoted to a person and that person commits an offence such that the Order suspends him, then he will think: 'The Order has suspended him who is dear and lovely to me!'

... When that person commits an offence such that the Order compels him to sit at the end of the line, then he will think....

... When that person leaves for a distant place....

... When that person disrobes....

... When that person dies, then he will think: 'He is dead, he who was dear and lovely to me!'

<sup>13</sup> *Āsabhi-vācā*: literally, 'with a great bull's voice'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Measure of the Dhamma': *dhammanvaya*.

<sup>15</sup> And for an extended account, see: D. III. 102-116.

He will not associate with others monks, and from not associating with other monks he will not hear the true Dhamma, and from not hearing the true Dhamma he will fall away from the true Dhamma.

A. III. 270.

When devotion and faith turn into a feeling of love, personal prejudice can impede the operation of wisdom, as demonstrated in this sutta passage:

Monks, these four things may be generated. What four?

Of love is born love; of love is born anger; of anger is born love; of anger is born anger....

And how is anger born of love? A person who one finds dear, feels affection for, and approves of, is treated by other people in a way that is disagreeable, offensive, and unpleasant, so he conceives ill-will towards those people....

A. II. 213.

Even devotion to the Buddha can be an obstacle for highest liberation when this devotion becomes personal, and the Buddha encouraged his disciples to abandon such love. At times he used rather extreme measures while teaching his disciples, as in the case of Ven. Vakkali, who was ardently devoted to the Buddha and wished to keep close to him at all times.

Towards the end of his life Ven. Vakkali was seriously ill and sent a message to the Buddha requesting to see him. The Buddha visited him and offered the following teaching:

*Vakkali:* 'For a long time, venerable sir, I have wanted to come to see the Blessed One, but my body has not been strong enough to do so.'

*Buddha:* 'Enough, Vakkali! Why do you want to see this foul body? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma. For in seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; and in seeing me, one sees the Dhamma.' {601}

S. III. 119-120.

Spiritual progress restricted to the level of faith is not stable or secure, because faith depends on external conditions and may weaken, as confirmed by this teaching of the Buddha:

Here, Bhaddāli, suppose a man has only one eye; then his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, would help to guard his eye, thinking: ‘Let him not lose his one eye.’ So too, some monk in this Dhamma and Discipline practises by a measure of faith and love. In this case other monks consider thus: ‘This monk practises by a measure of faith and love. We should help by repeatedly urging him to act so that he may not lose that measure of faith and love.’ This is the cause, this is the reason, why one [must] repeatedly urge some monks in this dispensation to attend to [their] obligations.

*M. I. 444-5.*

When not developed to the stage of wisdom, faith is limited. It may lead to a heavenly rebirth but it cannot on its own lead to the final goal of Buddha-Dhamma, as confirmed by this teaching of the Buddha:

Bhikkhus, in the Dhamma well-proclaimed by me, which is clear, open and evident, there are no hidden catches:

There is no future round for manifestation in the case of those bhikkhus who are arahants with taints destroyed....

Those bhikkhus who have abandoned the five lower fetters are all due to reappear spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes] and there attain final Nibbāna....

Those bhikkhus who have abandoned the three lower fetters and attenuated lust, hate, and delusion are all once-returners....

Those bhikkhus who have abandoned three fetters are all stream-enterers....

Those bhikkhus who are truth-devotees (dhammānusārī) or faith-devotees (saddhānusārī) are all headed for awakening....

Those bhikkhus who merely have faith in me, merely have love for me, are all headed for heaven.

M. I. 141-2.

In the context of wisdom development, wisdom initially benefits from correct faith and then develops gradually until it reaches the stage of ‘knowledge and vision’ (*ñāṇa-dassana*). At this stage it is no longer necessary to rely on beliefs and opinions because one knows and sees clearly for oneself, and therefore this stage transcends the domain of faith:

*Ven. Savitṭha*: ‘Friend Musīla, apart from faith, apart from personal preference, apart from oral tradition, apart from reasoned reflection, apart from conformity with doctrinal analysis, does the Venerable Musīla have personal knowledge thus: “With birth as condition, aging-and-death comes to be”?’

*Ven. Musīla*: ‘Friend Savitṭha, apart from faith, apart from personal preference, apart from oral tradition, apart from reasoned reflection, apart from conformity with doctrinal analysis, I know this, I see this: “With birth as condition, aging-and-death comes to be.”’<sup>16</sup>  
{602}

S. II. 115-18.

This sutta passage continues:

‘Monks, is there a method of exposition by means of which a monk – apart from faith, apart from personal preference, apart from oral tradition, apart from reasoned reflection, apart from conformity with doctrinal analysis – can declare final knowledge thus: “Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing more to be done to reach this state”?...’

<sup>16</sup>From here there are questions and answers about each link of Dependent Origination, both in the forward sequence and the reverse sequence, until the process reaches the cessation of becoming: Nibbāna.

‘There is a method of exposition.... Here, having seen a form with the eye, if there is lust, hatred or delusion internally, a monk understands: “There is lust, hatred or delusion internally”; or, if there is no lust, hatred or delusion internally, he understands: “There is no lust, hatred, or delusion internally.”

‘Since this is so, are these things to be understood by faith, or by personal preference, or by oral tradition, or by reasoned reflection, or by conformity with doctrinal analysis?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Aren’t these things to be understood by seeing them with wisdom?’

‘Yes, venerable sir.’

‘This, monks, is [one] method of exposition by means of which a monk – apart from faith ... apart from conformity with doctrinal analysis – can declare final knowledge....’<sup>17</sup>

S. IV. 138-40.

When a person has clear knowledge and vision, faith is no longer required: the person does not need to believe someone else. The Buddha’s disciples who had attained to outstanding qualities knew and spoke about these things without needing to refer to the Buddha, as is illustrated in the following conversation between the Jain leader Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and the householder Citta, an eminent disciple of the Buddha proficient in Buddha-Dhamma:

*Nigaṇṭha:* ‘Householder, do you have faith in the ascetic Gotama when he says: “There is a concentration without applied thought and sustained thought; there is a cessation of applied thought and sustained thought”?’

*Citta:* ‘In this matter, venerable sir, I do not go by faith in the Blessed One when he says: “There is a concentration without applied

<sup>17</sup>From here the questions and answers cover all of the sense faculties in the same manner.

thought and sustained thought; there is a cessation of applied thought and sustained thought”....

‘To whatever extent I wish ... I enter and dwell in the first jhāna ... I enter and dwell in the second jhāna ... I enter and dwell in the third jhāna ... I enter and dwell in the fourth jhāna.<sup>18</sup> Since I know and see thus, I do not believe with faith in any ascetic or brahmin regarding the claim that there is a concentration without applied and sustained thought, there is a cessation of applied and sustained thought.’

S. IV. 298-9.

Arahants, who have reached the highest degree of knowledge and vision, possess the attribute of ‘faithlessness’ (*assaddha*):<sup>19</sup> they do not need to believe anyone else on matters that they clearly see for themselves, as confirmed by this discussion between the Buddha and Ven. Sāriputta: {603}

*Buddha*: ‘Sāriputta, do you have faith that the faculty of faith, when developed and cultivated, penetrates to the Deathless, has the Deathless as its destination, has the Deathless as its final goal? ... That the faculty of energy.... That the faculty of mindfulness.... That the faculty of concentration.... That the faculty of wisdom.... has the Deathless as its final goal?’

*Sāriputta*: ‘In this matter I do not go by faith in the Blessed One.... Those who do not know, see, understand, realize, and discern with wisdom – they would have to go by faith in others in regard to this.... But those who know, see, understand, realize, and discern these things with wisdom – they would be without perplexity or doubt about this matter.... I have known, seen, understood, realized and discerned these things with wisdom – therefore, I have no doubts or uncertainties about this matter: the faculty of faith ... the faculty of energy.... the faculty of mindfulness.... the faculty

<sup>18</sup>From the second jhāna upwards, concentration is without applied and sustained thought (*vitakka* and *vicāra*).

<sup>19</sup>Dh. verse 97.

of concentration.... the faculty of wisdom when developed and cultivated, penetrates to the Deathless, has the Deathless as its destination, has the Deathless as its final goal.’

*Buddha:* ‘Good, good, Sāriputta.’

S. V. 220-22.

These following passages by the Buddha highlight the vital significance of wisdom:

Bhikkhus, by having developed and cultivated how many faculties does a bhikkhu who has destroyed the taints declare the fruit of arahantship and understand thus: ‘Destroyed is birth ... there is nothing more to be done to reach this state’?

It is because he has developed and cultivated one faculty that a bhikkhu who has destroyed the taints declares the fruit of arahantship thus. What is that one faculty? The faculty of wisdom.

For a noble disciple who possesses wisdom, the faith that follows from it becomes stabilized, the energy ... mindfulness ... concentration that follows from it becomes stabilized.

S. V. 222.

So long as the faculty of wisdom is absent, the other faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, and concentration, on their own or combined, cannot bring about enlightenment:

Bhikkhus, just as the footprints of land animals fit into the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be their chief by reason of its size, so too, among the steps that lead to awakening, the faculty of wisdom is declared to be their chief, that is, for the realization of awakening.<sup>20</sup> {604}

S. V. 231-2, 237-9.

<sup>20</sup>Trans.: ‘steps leading to enlightenment’ (*padāni bodhāya saṁvattanti*) = *dhamma-padāni*: ‘Dhamma-steps’ or ‘sections of Dhamma’.



## NOTE 14.5: THREE KINDS OF WISE REFLECTION

A person who helps guide others may use the following three kinds of wise reflection as basic principles for checking other people's level of intelligence or ability to reflect wisely:

1. Thinking corresponding with conditionality: to see whether the other person thinks reasonably and systematically, and is able to investigate causes and conditions.
2. Analytic reflection: to see whether the other person is able to look at things from different perspectives, is able to distinguish various potentialities, and does not look at things in a vague or one-dimensional way.
3. Reflection on the relationship between the principles (*dhamma*) and the objective (*attha*) of things: to see whether the person, after hearing or reading something, is able to grasp both its principles, crucial points, or gist, and its meaning, objective, value, benefit, and ways of elaborating on its main points.

### 14.3 PREPARATION FOR THE MIDDLE WAY

To sum up, ordinary people, who are not yet proficient in wisdom, require guidance and encouragement from others. For them wisdom development begins with the external factor of virtuous friendship, in order for faith to be established. (Faith here refers to the confidence springing from well-reasoned discernment.)

From here one reaches the function of internal factors, beginning with applying the knowledge on which faith is based in order to think independently from others in an analytic way. Such analytic reflection gives rise to right view and advances the development of wisdom, resulting eventually in clear knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*). (See Note 14.5.)

Because faith (*saddhā*) is a very important factor, and when it is appropriate and used correctly it is compatible with analytical reflection, leading to wisdom and right view, let us review its practical dimensions:

1. On the level of virtuous conduct (*sīla*), faith is a basic principle, protecting one's virtue, holding one back from acting immorally, and establishing one firmly in upright behaviour. Although one's faith may not yet be accompanied by wisdom, it is still valid. Indeed, in many circumstances faith based on deep-seated beliefs is more effective on the level of moral conduct than faith based on wise reflection.
2. On the level of concentration (*samādhi*), faith is conducive to concentration. It leads to rapture and bliss, deep tranquillity, and an absence of restlessness and agitation, and it also leads to determined effort, courage, fearlessness, focused attention, potency, and stability. Although faith in this context is also based on deep-seated convictions rather than grounded reasoning, it too is valid.

Although this faith based on beliefs is effective for these first two levels of practice, it has the disadvantages of leading to narrow-mindedness and an unwillingness to listen to others, and sometimes it is the cause for oppressing others due to one's personal beliefs. And importantly in this context, it is not supportive to wisdom development.

3. On the level of wisdom (*paññā*), faith is conducive to wisdom, beginning with establishing mundane right view. From here it links with wise reflection in two ways:
  - First, faith is a channel enabling virtuous friends to point out how to think constructively – to encourage people to apply wise reflection (otherwise they may not be open to guidance and teaching).
  - Second, it prepares the foundation or context for some subjects of contemplation and independent reflection. Faith at this stage is clearly connected to wisdom; it is the most desirable form of faith. {681}

To ensure that faith supports wisdom in the process of analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), there are several factors to bear in mind in regard to one's practice vis-à-vis faith:

First, to have ‘rational’ faith or to have beliefs accompanied by reasoned thinking. One’s faith is not of the kind that forces one to believe; the object of faith does not need to be accepted according to rigid stipulations or followed without giving an opportunity to reasoned discernment. One’s faith neither obstructs nor coerces one’s thinking, nor does it lead to an unwillingness to listen to others.<sup>21</sup> Instead, it supports reasoned analysis and contributes to wisdom development.

Second, one’s behaviour is marked by *saccānurakkha*: a guarding or love of the truth. One is devoted to truth and one expresses one’s faith honestly and accurately. One has the prerogative to state one’s beliefs, for example by saying, ‘These are my beliefs’, or ‘I believe in that’, but one doesn’t use one’s faith as the decisive factor for determining truth. One does not insist that the truth accord with one’s beliefs or declare something that is merely a belief as the absolute truth; for example, instead of saying, ‘This matter is this way!’ one declares, ‘I believe that this matter is this way.’

Third, one uses one’s faith or one’s beliefs as a foundation for analytical reflection, giving rise to wisdom. In other words, faith is not an end in itself, but is rather an instrument or ladder leading to a higher goal: the objective of faith is wisdom.

This corresponds with the standard sequence of wisdom development:

Associating with virtuous people →  
 listening to the true Dhamma →  
 faith →  
 wise reflection, etc.

Following on from wise reflection is the arising of right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*), which marks the advent of the Middle Way – the beginning of a virtuous, righteous way of life. {682}

<sup>21</sup>Note the distinction between faith and belief following on from reasoned discernment, and faith and belief that is established first, followed by rational justifications for one’s beliefs.

#### 14.4 THE TRIPLE GEM AS A CONDUIT TO THE MIDDLE WAY

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The Triple Gem – the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha – is a cornerstone for Buddhists. Generally speaking, taking refuge (*saraṇa-gamana*) in the Triple Gem is a symbol of being a Buddhist or a lay disciple. Even stream-enterers possess the attribute of being one with firm, unshakeable faith in the Triple Gem. It is thus worthy of study to determine how reverence for the Triple Gem fits into the practice of the Middle Way.

Both the respect for the Triple Gem expressed by going for refuge by general people and the unshakeable faith in the Triple Gem belonging to stream-enterers clearly indicate the prominent role of faith (*saddhā*) for Buddhists at initial stages of practice.

From what has been described above one can see that faith is part of the beginning stages of the Middle Way. In particular it helps to link people with virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*) or wholesome instruction by others. The aim is to link faith with analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), and most importantly for faith to lead to wisdom – to give rise to right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path and the Middle Way.

Here we can see the clear relationship between the Triple Gem and practice in accord with the Middle Way, in that faith in the Triple Gem is a conduit to the Middle Way.

To add to this explanation one should consider the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*), also known as the four virtues conducive to growth in wisdom (*paññāvuḍḍhi-dhamma*):

1. *Sappurisa-saṁseva*: association with virtuous people; association with the wise.
2. *Saddhammassavana*: hearing the true Dhamma; learning what is correct and good.
3. *Yoniso-manasikāra*: wise reflection; proper attention; skilful consideration.

4. *Dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*: practising minor principles of Dhamma consistent with major principles; practising the Dhamma correctly.

This group of factors is referred to by many other names, including: ‘qualities conducive to the realization of the fruit of stream-entry up to the realization of arahantship’:

Monks, these four things, when developed and cultivated, lead to the realization of the fruit of stream-entry ... to the realization of the fruit of once-returning ... to the realization of the fruit of non-returning ... to the realization of the fruit of arahantship. What four? Association with superior persons, hearing the true Dhamma, wise reflection, practice in accord with the Dhamma.<sup>22</sup> {683}

S. V. 410-11.

Association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṃseva*) is equivalent to having virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*). The Buddha is the supreme superior person and virtuous friend.<sup>23</sup> Associating with wise people and having virtuous friends leads to beneficial instruction by others (*paratoghosa*), that is, hearing or learning the Dhamma – true, wholesome teachings.

Systematic reflection of the Dhamma – reflection in line with the Dhamma – gives rise to wholesome qualities and to wisdom, which comprehends things correctly according to the truth. Moreover, it leads to a Dhamma practice that is authentic and true to the goal.

A correct practice of the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) culminates in the realization of stream-entry, all the way to the realization of arahantship. Those who have arrived at these noble realizations comprise the genuine Buddhist community. They are called the community of disciples (*sāvaka-saṅgha*) or the noble community (*ariya-saṅgha*), and they represent the ‘Sangha’ in the Triple Gem.

<sup>22</sup>These factors are referred to as ‘factors of stream-entry’ (*sotāpattiyaṅga*; ‘qualities of a stream-enterer’) at, e.g.: S. V. 347. They are referred to as ‘virtues conducive to growth in wisdom’ (*paññāvuḍḍhi-dhamma*) at, e.g.: S. V. 411; A. II. 245-6.

<sup>23</sup>See the preceding chapter on virtuous friends.

In this sense one can describe the duties by Buddhists in relation to the Triple Gem as the following: to start with, one acknowledges the Buddha as a ‘virtuous friend’; one then listens to and studies the Buddha’s teachings. From here one reflects wisely on these teachings, thus completing the two preliminary stages of the Middle Way – virtuous friendship and wise reflection – which are the prerequisites for right view.

When one sees things correctly according to the truth, one practices the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) – one follows the middle path of practice (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*).<sup>24</sup> One completes this path with the attainment of arahantship, and is consequently a ‘noble being’ (*ariya-puggala*) and a member of the noble Sangha. As a noble being one is able to assist others and to act as a virtuous friend one step down from the Buddha himself.

Furthermore, the Sangha is a model community or society, a gathering point of those who receive the benefits of having the Buddha as a virtuous friend and of following the path of righteousness (*dhamma-magga*). The Sangha is a source of virtuous friendship for others; it is a ‘field of merit’ (*puñṇakkhetta*), increasing and spreading goodness in the world.

The Sangha is one of the mainstays of the Triple Gem. The inclusion of the Sangha in the Triple Gem reveals how much importance Buddhism gives to the involvement and participation by virtuous people in society, which is improved and elevated through a collective effort.

Internally, or in relation to the mind, members of the Sangha are safeguarded by their states of realization. Externally, or in relation to life in society, their safeguards are the formal discipline (*Vinaya*), communal harmony, and mutual friendship.

The relationship between these principles of the four factors of stream-entry, practice according to the Middle Way, and the Triple Gem can be illustrated thus:

<sup>24</sup>*Dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* is equivalent to *dhammānudhamma-paṭipadā* – the Path (*magga*) or the practice leading to Nibbāna (*nibbāna-gāmini-paṭipadā*) – a term which occurs frequently in the scriptures, e.g.: Nd. I. 365.

1. Association with the wise (*sappurisa-saṃseva*) = virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) = the Buddha (as the supreme friend).
2. Hearing the true Dhamma (*saddhammassavana*) = wholesome instruction by others (*paratoghosa*) = the Dhamma.
3. Wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) = wise reflection = (one's duty in regard to the Dhamma).
4. Practising the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) = the Path (*maggā*) = to enter into the noble Sangha. {684}

From what has been said above it is possible to provide a brief definition for the Triple Gem as follows:

1. The Buddha: the one who realized and taught the Dhamma, discovered the Path and revealed it to others, and acted as the foremost virtuous friend. He represents an ideal, confirming the goodness, capability, and wisdom that human beings can train in and develop in themselves, culminating in the attainment of the supreme state.
2. The Dhamma: the principles of truth and virtue which the Buddha discovered and taught. Faithful disciples should listen to, study, and contemplate these teachings with wise reflection, in order to correctly understand the truth, cultivate the Path, and reach spiritual fulfilment.
3. The Sangha: the community of individuals who practise according to the Path and who have reached success. Those people who trust that this community of awakened individuals is truly excellent should participate in building and joining this community by cultivating the Path and experiencing its fruits. Such practice begins with emulating the external traits and characteristics of noble beings – of moral discipline, communal harmony, and mutual friendship.

Virtuous friendship, wise reflection of the Dhamma, and practice in accord with the Eightfold Path prospers and reaches fulfilment

in a community which lives in accord with the principles embodied by this noble Sangha.

The Triple Gem is a refuge in so far as recollection of the Triple Gem reminds people to use correct methods for solving problems and ending suffering. One follows the teachings on the Four Noble Truths and walks the noble path (*ariya-vīthi*). At the very least, this recollection helps prevent one from doing evil, generates a determination to do good, builds confidence, dispels fear, and strengthens and brightens the mind. {685}

#### 14.5 APPENDIX 1: TRANSLATING PALI TERMS FROM THE KĀLĀMA SUTTA

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Attempting to translate the ten factors connected to belief contained in the Kālāma Sutta is one example of how difficult it can be to satisfactorily and accurately translate Pali terms and phrases. In this case, one of the reasons for this difficulty is that these phrases lack a verb form; they simply contain the term *mā*, which translates as ‘do not’ (grammatically referred to as an ‘interjection’ – *nipāta*). Let us look at the first three factors as an example:

- *Mā anussavena* (‘do not ... by way of holding to oral tradition’).
- *Mā paramparāya* (‘do not ... by way of a lineage of teaching’).
- *Mā itikirāya* (‘do not ... by way of hearsay’).

The problem here for translators is deciding which verb to place within the ellipsis. Traditionally, this problem has been solved by translating this phrase as: ‘do not believe....’ For a closer inspection of this matter, one should examine Thai translated versions of the Tipiṭaka. When *Buddhadhamma* was first published in 1971, there existed only one Thai translated version: Thai Tipiṭaka: A Tribute to 25 Centuries of Buddhism, 2500 BE., which translates this phrase as *yah yeut theu....* (อย่ายึดถือ – ‘do not grasp’, ‘do not assume’).



Questioning the accuracy of this translation, I examined the commentarial explanation for this phrase. In this context, the commentaries add the verb *gaṇhittha*, rendering the phrase similarly as ‘do not grasp’, ‘do not assume’.<sup>25</sup> {605} This interpretation is consistent with other commentarial texts (these ten factors are found in other suttas, e.g.: the *Sālha Sutta* and the *Bhaddiya Sutta*).<sup>26</sup> The commentaries to the *Bhaddiya Sutta*, for example, provide the same interpretation as *mā gaṇhittha*.<sup>27</sup>

This indicates that the translators of the ‘Thai Tipiṭaka: A Tribute to 25 Centuries of Buddhism, 2500 BE’. translated this passage corresponding to the commentarial explanations. Still not fully satisfied with this translation, I needed to consider the alternatives.

Besides wishing to convey the sense of these passages accurately, one reason why I endeavoured to find a suitable translation is because when *Buddhadhamma* was first published thirty-six years ago, Thai people had only just begun to hear about and discuss the *Kālāma Sutta*. (This sutta was already familiar among Westerners, who found it interesting and astonishing that here was a religion that told people to suspend belief – there is no obligation to believe. This interest then extended to Thai people.) But instead of applying this meaning for the pursuit of wisdom, many Thai people interpreted this teaching for the sake of casualness, glibness, or frivolity. Some people claimed jokingly or disparagingly that the Buddha taught people not to believe their teachers and mentors. (As a result, many teachers of Buddhism during that time period would try and emphasize that the Buddha’s teachings in the *Kālāma Sutta* do not mean that one should disregard one’s teachers.)

These were some of the issues involved in trying to find a suitable translation for these passages.

Besides providing accurate data and factual evidence on these matters, it is also important to allow readers to access the original information, along with related material, in the most complete way as possible, so

<sup>25</sup> AA. II. 305.

<sup>26</sup> A. I. 193-4; A. II. 190-91.

<sup>27</sup> AA. III. 173. This is the same volume containing the commentary to the *Kālāma Sutta*.

that they can consider these matters independently. There is always the danger that the opinions by an author, or interpretations by a translator, conceal the original information, and that authors or translators inadvertently monopolize ideas.

In the case that authors or translators come up with new interpretations or translations, it behoves them to inform the readers of this and share with them the original data, so that the readers can distinguish between what is the original and what is new.

In regard to material within the Tipiṭaka, it is helpful and suitable to provide explanations from the commentaries and other texts. The more the better, because this will provide an opportunity for students of Buddhism to apply their own judgment in these matters. This corresponds with the principle of viewing the Buddhist scriptures as a source of knowledge rather than as texts requiring unquestioned belief.

(In this book in particular, whereby the aim is to describe the traditional Buddhist teachings, rather than to express personal interpretations, it is important to produce as much supportive data as possible. In the case that personal understanding and interpretations are expressed, these should be clearly distinguished from the source material, for example the words of the Buddha contained in the suttas.)

Because I hadn't yet come up with a suitable alternative, I continued to use the translation *yah yeut theu* ('do not grasp', 'do not assume') contained in the 'Thai Tipiṭaka: A Tribute to 25 Centuries of Buddhism, 2500 BE'. and based on the commentaries, but with an explanatory footnote.

The original edition of *Buddhadhamma* (1971, contained within the Wan Waithayakon collection) contains this footnote: 'The term "do not assume" here is an interim phrase, as no adequate substitute has been found. Understand this phrase to mean "do not make a judgement or establish an opinion in an absolute, categorical way based on any of these factors alone".'

A year later, in 1972, I began work on 'A Dictionary of Buddhism' (พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสน์ ฉบับประมวลธรรม), which was first published in 1975. Here, in regard to the ten means for dealing with doubtful matters

as contained in the Kālāma Sutta (*kālāmasutta-kaṅkhāniyaṭṭhāna*), I began to use an alternative translation, which seemed more satisfactory, namely: *yah bplong jy cheua* (อย่าปลงใจเชื่อ – ‘do not (decisively) believe’, ‘be not led by’). This translation does not conflict with the commentarial interpretation *mā gaṇhittha*. {606}

- Be not led by report (*anussava*).
- Be not led by tradition (*paramparā*).
- Be not led by hearsay (*itikirā*).
- Be not led by the authority of texts (*piṭaka-sampadāna*).
- Be not led by mere logic (*takka*).
- Be not led by inference (*naya*).
- Be not led by considering appearances (*ākāra-parivitakka*).
- Be not led by the agreement with a considered and approved theory (*diṭṭhi-nijjhānakkhanti*).
- Be not led by seeming possibilities (*bhabba-rūpatā*).
- Be not led by the idea: ‘This is our teacher’ (*samaṇo no garūti*).<sup>28</sup>

(In 1996 the Thai Tipiṭaka ‘Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Edition’ was printed and for each of these ten factors the translators applied the phrase อย่าปลงใจเชื่อ, *yah bplong jy cheua*.)

In 1978 I began to work on the expanded version of *Buddhadhamma* (‘Buddhadhamma: Revised and Expanded Edition’), which was first printed in 1982. Although many changes and additions were made to this expanded version, I did not change the translation of this phrase in the Kālāma Sutta according to the changes made in the Dictionary of Buddhism. (In contrast, the ‘Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology’ – พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสน์ ฉบับประมวลศัพท์ – first published in 1979,

<sup>28</sup>Trans.: these are the English translations contained within ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Teachings’ (พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสน์ ฉบับประมวลธรรม).

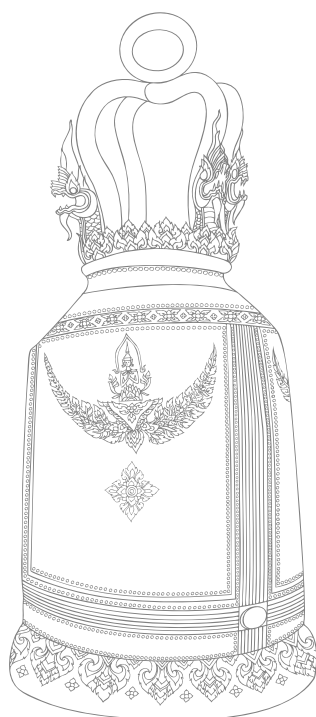
contained the changes made in the Dictionary of Buddhist Teachings.) Instead, the volume ‘Buddhadhamma: Revised and Expanded Edition’ contains the following footnote:

‘The expression here *อย่ายึดถือ* (*yah yeut theu*) means to not make a judgement or establish an opinion in an absolute, categorical way based on any of these factors alone; it should be understood as corresponding to the expression *อย่าปลงใจเชื่อ* (*yah bplong jy cheua*). Moreover, one should not interpret this expression to mean that the Buddha taught his disciples to disbelieve these particular things and rather to believe in other things. The Buddha warned his disciples from being utterly convinced even by these highly inspiring qualities: one should not be too eager to believe in them and take them as the ultimate criteria for truth, as they may possibly be incorrect. He encouraged people to carefully reflect on these highly inspiring and credible factors with wisdom. Consider how much care we must take when we engage with other factors and people.’

Although I have provided these various translations along with the background on how they have been determined, this does not confirm that they are the most suitable translations. Students of Buddhism can refer to the information and source material presented here in order to increase their own understanding on this matter. In the same vein, if one encounters a more suitable translation for this phrase one should accept it with satisfaction.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from learning about this specific subject matter, readers may gain an appreciation here for how complicated and difficult it can be to translate Pali terms and phrases contained in the Buddhist scriptures.

<sup>29</sup>Trans.: perhaps, in English, a valid translation here would be: ‘remain skeptical about...’ or ‘sustain a healthy dose of skepticism about....’ The approach here seems to be consistent with a blend of religious skepticism (allowing room for doubt, even of religious beliefs and claims) and scientific skepticism (subjecting all claims to systematic investigation).



Ancient Bell

A Buddha Image  
under a Naga  
Chedi Ched Taew  
Sri Satchanalai,  
Sukhothai Province,  
Thailand



# CHAPTER 15

## WISE REFLECTION

### *Forerunners of the Middle Way*

*Initial Stage of Practice 2:*  
*Yoniso-manasikāra*

#### 15.1 THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN A WHOLESOME WAY OF LIFE

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For people to find true happiness they must live their lives correctly and relate to things properly, including their own personal lives, their society, technology, and their natural environment. Those people who live their lives correctly experience a personal happiness inherently conducive to the happiness of others.

The expression to live one's life correctly, or to relate to all things properly, is a general or undetailed reference to spiritual practice. For a clearer description one must separate and distinguish correct practice into various minor activities, and examine many aspects of a person's life. It is useful therefore to describe the different parts of spiritual practice, which together comprise the entirety of living one's life correctly. Hereby, one defines the subtleties of living correctly, revealing the different aspects of proper practice.

From one perspective, to live one's life is to struggle for survival, to try and escape from oppressive and obstructive forces, and to discover wellbeing. In brief, this aspect to life is the solving of problems or the ending of suffering. Those people who are able to solve and escape from

problems correctly reach true success in life and live free from suffering. Therefore, to live correctly and with success can be defined as an ability to solve problems.

From another perspective, to live one's life is to engage in various activities, manifesting as different forms of physical and verbal behaviour. When such activity is not expressed outwardly, then it manifests internally, as mental behaviour. This refers to acts of body, speech and mind, which are technically referred to as volitional physical actions (*kāya-kamma*), verbal actions (*vacī-kamma*), and mental actions (*mano-kamma*). Collectively, they are referred to as kamma by way of the three 'doorways' (*dvāra*).

From this perspective life consists of engaging in these three kinds of actions. Those people who perform these three actions correctly live their lives well. Therefore, to live correctly and with success can be defined as knowing how to act, speak, and think – to be skilled at performing physical actions (including one's work and profession), speaking (or communication in general), and thinking. {608}

From yet another perspective, an analysis of human life reveals that it consists of various forms of cognition, of experiencing objects of awareness or sense stimuli, which are collectively referred to as 'sense objects' (*ārammaṇa*). These sense impressions pass through or manifest by way of the six sense bases (*āyatana*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The receiving of these sense impressions consists of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, contacting tactile impressions, and cognizing mind objects: i.e, to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to feel physical feelings, and to think.

The response and attitudes of people in regard to cognition of these sense stimuli have a crucial bearing on their lives, conduct, and fortune. If they respond to sense impressions solely with delight and aversion, with likes and dislikes, the chain of distress is set in motion. If they respond in the manner of recording information, however, and see things according to the truth – see things according to cause and effect – they will go in the direction of wisdom and towards a true solution to problems.



A factor that is no less vital than the response and attitudes towards sense impressions is the ability to select sense objects. For example, one may incline towards and choose to listen to and watch those things which gratify desire, or one may choose to listen to and observe those things that support wisdom and enhance the quality of the mind.

From this perspective to live correctly and successfully can be defined as knowing how to receive and select sense impressions – to be skilled at seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, contacting tactile objects, and thinking.

There is one more perspective to take into consideration. One way to describe human life is to highlight the engagement and relationship to phenomena in order to derive benefit from these things.

For most people the consumption or enjoyment of sense pleasures plays a very significant role. When engaging with people or things in their surroundings, whether this be their society or the natural environment, most people seek to derive some kind of benefit or advantage from them in order to satisfy their wishes or to gratify their desires. In other words, when they wish to satisfy desires they go out and engage with these people and things.

The preceding factor – of looking at life as a process of cognition – contains two aspects: that of pure cognition, say of seeing and hearing, and that of engagement, say of looking and listening. The skill of receiving and selecting sense impressions (e.g. a skill at seeing or hearing) is related to this factor of engagement.

To engage with or to consume things properly is a vital factor in determining and shaping a person's life and degree of happiness. Therefore, to live correctly and successfully can be defined as being skilled in engaging with and relating to things. In the context of society this refers to knowing how to relate and associate with other people. In the context of material things and the natural environment this refers to knowing how to use and consume things properly.

In sum, a correct and successful way of life encompasses several subsidiary forms of behaviour and is comprised of various aspects, notably:

- From the perspective of escaping from problems, one is skilled at solving them.

- From the perspective of performing actions, one is skilled at thinking, speaking (or communicating), and performing physical deeds.
  - From the perspective of receiving sense impressions, one is skilled at seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, contacting tactile impressions, and thinking.
  - From the perspective of engagement or consumption, one is skilled at using and consuming things, and at relating to other people.
- {609}

To practise these various aspects of life properly is referred to as ‘living one’s life correctly’, ‘knowing how to live’, or ‘being skilled at conducting one’s life’. According to Buddha-Dhamma, a life lived in such a manner is considered a virtuous life.

These various aspects of life, or aspects of spiritual practice, can be summed up by the phrase: ‘knowing how to think’ or ‘being skilled at reflection’. They all involve the process of thinking, which is a vital factor for living one’s life correctly. Thinking plays an important role on many levels, including:

- In the context of cognition, thinking is the meeting point, where various information and data gathers and assembles. It is where data is analyzed, shaped, and applied.
- In the context of volitional actions, thinking is the starting point, which leads to outward verbal and physical expressions – to speech and physical action. Moreover, it is the command centre, which determines or controls speech and physical deeds, according to one’s thoughts.
- In the relationship between these two forms of behaviour, thinking is the centre point – it is the link between cognition and volitional actions. When one experiences things by way of the sense bases, and then gathers, processes, and analyzes this sense data, thinking dictates the consequent outward expressions of speech and physical actions.

In sum, correct thinking or the skill of reflection is the seat of administration in regard to correct living in its entirety. It is the leader, guide and director for all other aspects of right practice. When one is able to think correctly, one is also able to speak correctly, act correctly, and solve problems correctly. One is skilled at seeing, hearing, eating, using material things, consuming things, and associating with others – one is skilled at living. A skill in thinking and reflection leads to a virtuous life.

A decisive factor determining a person's skill in regard to volitional action is spiritual balance. Generally speaking, in this context the terms 'skill' and 'balance' have the same meaning. To act skilfully is to act in a correct, even way, giving rise to desired results according to one's intentions and objectives. One acts in a way that is accurate, coherent, direct, and consistent, enabling one to reach one's goal in the most optimum way, without creating any kinds of harm or faults.

In the context of reaching one's goal, the Buddhist teachings give great emphasis to the characteristics of faultlessness, freedom from affliction, and suitability, the meanings of which are encompassed in the word 'spiritual balance'. Thus the term 'skill in conducting one's life' can be defined as 'living a balanced life': to live with moderation and in a suitable way in order to attain the goal of life in a truly blameless and joyful manner.

The technical term for a life of balance, for suitable practice, or for a virtuous life is the 'middle way' (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), which refers to the Path (*magga*): the Noble Eightfold Path. The Middle Way is the virtuous, sublime life, free from harm and affliction, leading to utter safety and complete happiness.

Buddha-Dhamma teaches that in order to live correctly or to lead a virtuous life one must pass through a process of spiritual training and study. One can say that the Path arises as a result of spiritual training. Just as skilful reflection is the guiding principle of a virtuous life or of the Path, so too, cultivating one's skills in the area of thinking is the leading factor in formal spiritual training (*sikkhā*). {610}

Within the process of spiritual training, developing a skill in reflection leads to correct understanding, correct ideas, and even correct beliefs,

which are collectively referred to as ‘right view’ (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is the mainstay of a virtuous life in its entirety. The cultivation of right view is the gist of wisdom development, which is at the heart of spiritual training.

A skill in reflection involves many methods of thinking and analysis. Developing such skill in reflection is a unique form of spiritual training and cultivation.

## 15.2 THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN SPIRITUAL TRAINING AND WISDOM DEVELOPMENT

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Before discussing the various methods of thinking, let us review the role of thinking in spiritual training, especially in the area of wisdom development, which is the core of such training.

### A. COMMENCEMENT OF TRAINING

The essence of spiritual training is self-development, with wisdom development at its core. The key elements of such training are correct understanding, opinions, ways of thinking, attitudes, and values, which benefit one’s life and society and conform to truth. In short, this refers to ‘right view’ (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

When one understands things correctly, one’s thoughts, speech, and physical actions – that is, all of one’s actions – will be correct, virtuous, and beneficial, leading to the end of suffering.

Conversely, if one has incorrect understanding, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking – collectively referred to as ‘wrong view’ (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) – all of one’s actions, including one’s thoughts, speech, and physical actions, will also be incorrect. Instead of solving problems and ending suffering, one will create more suffering, accumulate problems, and increase trouble.

Right view can be separated into two levels:

- First, those kinds of views, thoughts, opinions, beliefs, preferences, and values which are connected to an awareness of one's actions and the effects of such actions, or which foster a sense of personal accountability. One sees things correctly in the light of Dhamma teachings. The precise term for this kind of view is 'knowledge of being an owner of one's deeds' (*kammassakatā-ñāṇa*). It is mundane right view (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*) and pertains to the level of moral conduct.
- Second, those views and ways of thinking which help to discern how all conditioned things exist in accord with the law of causality. It is an understanding of things according to how they really are. One is not biased by preferences and aversions or swayed by how one wants things to be or not be. It is a knowledge in harmony with natural truth and is technically referred to as 'knowledge consistent with truth' (*saccānulomika-ñāṇa*). It is right view aligned with transcendent understanding and pertains to the level of absolute truth.

Wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), likewise, is comprised of two kinds: those views, notions, and values which deny a sense of personal accountability – a refusal to admit one's own responsibility; and an ignorance of the world as it really is – the formation of deluded images according to how one personally wants the world to be. {611}

In any case, the internal spiritual training of an individual begins with and continues as a result of an engagement with his or her external environment; it is dependent on external influences which act as a source of motivation or as conditioning factors. If one receives teachings, advice, and transmissions from correct sources, or if one is able to select, discern, contemplate and engage with things properly, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) will arise and true training will ensue.

Conversely, if one receives incorrect teachings, advice and transmissions, or if one is unable to reflect on, consider, and gain insight into one's experiences, wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) will arise and one will train incorrectly or not train at all.

To review, there are two basic sources of spiritual training, which are called the ‘prerequisites of right view’:

1. The external factor of the instruction of others (*paratoghosa*): the words or utterance of others. This refers to social influences and transmissions, for example from parents, teachers, friends, associates, books, the media, and one’s culture. These outside influences provide correct information and teachings and they encourage one to go in a wholesome direction.
2. The internal factor of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*): to be skilled at reflection; to apply proper methods of thinking and reasoning.

Similarly, there are two sources to wrong training or to a lack of spiritual training, which are the prerequisites of wrong view: incorrect, unwholesome instruction by others and an absence of wise reflection – an inability to reflect wisely.

## B. PROCESS OF TRAINING

As mentioned above, the essence of spiritual training is right view. When right view is firmly established, spiritual training proceeds effectively.

This process is divided into three major stages, which collectively are referred to as the three trainings or the threefold training:

1. Training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*): training in the area of conduct, moral discipline, and uprightness in physical actions, speech, and livelihood. It can be simply referred to as ‘virtue’ (*sīla*).
2. Training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*): the training of the mind, the cultivation of spiritual qualities, and the development of mental strength, mental aptitude, and mental health. It can be simply referred to as ‘concentration’ or ‘mental collectedness’ (*samādhi*).
3. Training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*): the development of wisdom, giving rise to a knowledge of things as they truly are, a discernment of the causal nature of things, which enables one to solve

problems in line with cause and effect; a thorough understanding of phenomena, to the extent that one is able to liberate the mind from all clinging and attachment, eliminate mental defilement, and bring an end to suffering – to live with a mind that is free, pure, joyous and bright. It can be simply referred to as ‘wisdom’ (*paññā*).

The formulation of these three trainings is directly connected to the teaching referred to as the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*): the ‘supreme way’, the ‘noble method for solving problems belonging to the noble ones’, or the ‘path leading to the cessation of suffering and to the state of awakening’.

The Noble Path contains eight essential factors or eight aspects of practice:

1. Right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*): correct views, ideas, opinions, beliefs, attitudes and values; to see things according to causes and conditions; to see things in harmony with truth or with reality. {612}
2. Right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*): thoughts, considerations, and motives which do not harm oneself or others, are not corrupted by defilement, and are conducive to wellbeing and happiness, for example: thoughts of renunciation, well-wishing, kindness, and benefaction; pure, truthful and righteous thoughts; thoughts free from selfishness, covetousness, anger, hatred, and malice.
3. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*): honest and upright speech; speech that is not abusive, deceitful, divisive, slanderous, coarse, trivial, or pointless; speech that is polite and gentle, promoting friendship and harmony; rational, beneficial speech.
4. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*): righteous, beneficial actions; non-oppressive, non-harmful actions; actions that build good relationships, promote cooperation, and lead to a peaceful society. Specifically, this refers to actions that are not involved in or contributive to killing or physical injury, to violating the belongings of others, or to violating the rights of others in regard to their spouse or cherished items and people.

5. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*): earning a living in righteous ways, which do not cause trouble or harm to others.
6. Right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*): righteous effort, that is: to strive to prevent and avoid unarisen evil, unwholesome qualities; to strive to abandon and eliminate arisen evil, unwholesome qualities; to strive to establish and foster unarisen wholesome qualities; and to strive to cultivate, increase, and perfect arisen wholesome qualities.
7. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*): to be vigilant and attentive; to sustain attention on whichever necessary task one faces in the moment; to be circumspect about one's activities; to recollect those virtuous, supportive, or required factors connected to a specific activity; to not be absentminded, careless, or negligent. Most notably, this refers to mindfulness fully attentive to one's own physical activities, feelings, state of mind, and thoughts. One does not allow alluring or annoying sense impressions to lead one astray or to cause confusion.
8. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*): firmly established attention; the mind is focused on an activity or on an object of attention (*ārammaṇa*); the mind is one-pointed, calm, relaxed, pure, bright, and strong; it is malleable and engaged, ready for the effective application of wisdom; it is not distracted, disturbed, confused, stressed, rigid, or despondent.

The threefold training is designed to bear fruit according to the principles of practice inherent in the Noble Eightfold Path. This training generates and develops the eight Path factors. A Dhamma practitioner makes full use of these Path factors and gradually solves problems until he or she reaches the complete end of suffering. The relationship between the threefold training and the Eightfold Path is as follows:

1. Training in higher virtue: aspects of training giving rise to right speech, right action, and right livelihood. These three Path factors are cultivated to the point where one reaches the standard of a



noble being in regard to moral conduct, discipline, and skilful social interaction. This is the basis for developing the power of mind.

2. Training in higher mind: aspects of training giving rise to right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These three Path factors are cultivated to the point where one reaches the standard of a noble being in regard to spiritual qualities, power of mind, mental capability, and mental health. This is the basis for developing wisdom. {613}
3. Training in higher wisdom: aspects of training giving rise to right view and right thought. These two Path factors are cultivated to the point where one reaches the standard of a noble being in regard to wisdom. One's mind is bright, joyous, and freed from all forms of grasping and affliction; one reaches true deliverance of mind by way of wisdom.

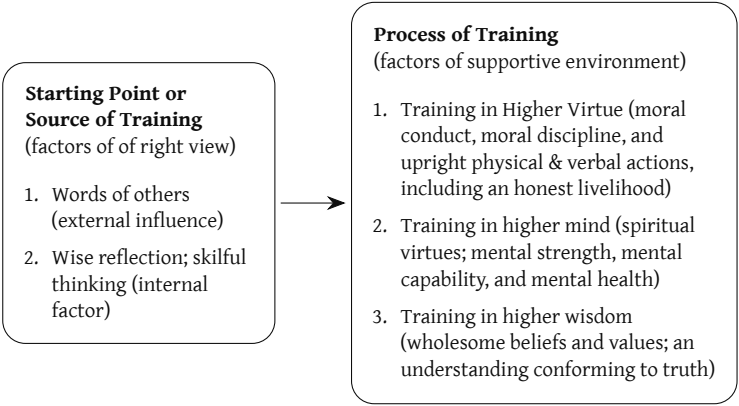
As mentioned above, right view – the mainstay of spiritual training – arises dependent on two factors (the prerequisites of right view), which are the source, origin and starting point of practice. Therefore, in the activities pertaining to spiritual training special emphasis should be given to these two factors. Indeed, the expression ‘providing training’ relates precisely to these two factors. As for the three stages of training – *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* – they are used simply as reference points for creating a supportive environment and for ensuring that the direction of practice proceeds according to proper principles.

Based on this understanding one is able to outline spiritual training as shown on Figure 15.1.

### C. BASIC ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL TRAINING

From the above section we see that thinking or reflection comprises one of the two initial factors or sources of spiritual training. To gain a clear understanding of the vital role of thought, however, it should be explained in conjunction with the second factor, of the teachings by others:

Figure 15.1: Outline of Spiritual Training



Monks, there are these two conditions giving rise to right view: the words of others and wise reflection.<sup>1</sup> {614}

A. I. 88.

In reference to external factors, I know not of any other single factor so conducive to great benefit as having a virtuous friend.

In reference to internal factors, I know not of any other single factor so conducive to great benefit as wise reflection.

A. I. 17.

These two prerequisites of right view can also be called the forerunners to spiritual training. They are the wellspring of right view, which is the starting point and key principle of spiritual practice in its entirety. Let us review these factors in more depth:

1. The words of others (*paratoghosa*): external motivation and influence; teachings, advice, instruction, transmission, schooling, proclamations, information, and news coming from external sources. This also includes imitating or emulating others' behaviour and ideas. It is an external or social factor.

<sup>1</sup>Here, 'the words of others' (*paratoghosa*) refers to skilful, wholesome words by others.

Examples of such sources of learning include: one's parents, teachers, mentors, friends, companions, co-workers, bosses, and employees; famous and esteemed people; books, other forms of media, and religious and cultural institutions. In this context, it refers specifically to those external influences leading one in a correct, wholesome direction and providing correct knowledge, and in particular those enabling one to attain the second factor of wise reflection.

A person with suitable attributes and qualities, who is able to perform the function of instruction well, is called a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*). Generally speaking, for a virtuous friend to act effectively and succeed in instructing others, he or she must be able to instil confidence in the student or practitioner, and therefore the method of learning here is referred to as the 'way of faith'.

If the persons offering instruction, for example parents or teachers, are unable to establish a sense of trust in the pupil (or child, as the case may be), who subsequently develops greater interest and trust in another source of information and thinking, say in the words of a movie star transmitted via the media, and if this alternative information is bad or wrong, the process of learning or training is beset by danger. The end result may be a wrong form of learning or an absence of true learning.

2. Wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*); skilful modes of thinking; systematic thinking; the ability to contemplate and discern things according to how they truly exist, for example the recognition that a specific phenomenon 'exist just so'. One searches for causes and conditions, inquires into the source of things, traces the complete sequence of events, and analyzes things in order to see things as they are and as conforming to the law of causality. One does not attach to or distort things out of personal craving and clinging. Wise reflection leads to wellbeing and an ability to solve problems. This is an internal, spiritual factor and may be referred to as the 'way of wisdom'.

Of these two factors, wise reflection is essential and indispensable. Spiritual training truly bears fruit and its goal is reached as a result of

wise reflection. Indeed, it is possible for wise reflection to initiate spiritual training without the assistance of external influences. If one relies on the first factor of external instruction, it must lead to wise reflection for one's training to reach completion. Intuition, insight, and the discovery and realization of truth is accomplished by way of wise reflection. {615}

Having said this, one should not underestimate the power of the first factor, of the instruction by others, because only a minute number of individuals do not need to rely on this factor – those who can progress solely by the application of wise reflection. These individuals, like the Buddha, are exceptional. Almost everyone in the world relies on the instruction by others to help show the way.

All forms of formal and systematic education, both in the past and in the present, and all forms of schooling in the field of the arts and sciences are matters pertaining to this factor of the 'words of others' (*paratoghosa*). The wholesome transmission of knowledge by way of virtuous friends thus deserves the utmost care and attention.

A point that needs to be reiterated here is that in providing an education or skilful instruction, a virtuous friend needs to constantly keep in mind that this instruction must act as a catalyst for the arising of wise reflection in the students.

#### D. THINKING CONDUCTIVE TO SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Thinking is linked to and follows cognition. The process of cognition begins at the point where a sense base (*āyatana*) encounters a sense object (*ārammaṇa*). At this point consciousness arises (*viññāṇa*) – the awareness of a sense object – for example seeing a form, hearing a sound, or knowing a mental object. When this process is complete it is called 'cognition', or literally, according to the Pali, as 'contact' (*phassa*).

With cognition there arises some form of sensation (*vedanā*), say of pleasure and ease, suffering and discomfort, or a neutral feeling.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, there arises perception (*saññā*) – the naming, designation, or

<sup>2</sup>Note that the term 'feeling' here refers to sensation, not to emotions.

recognition of the sense object. From here there follows thinking (*vitakka*) – thoughts, reflections and deliberations.

This process of cognition is the same, regardless of whether one encounters and experiences something externally, or whether one thinks of something and contemplates it in the mind.

Using the act of seeing as an example, this process can be illustrated as follows (similar to earlier at Figure 2.2 on p.43).

Eye (*āyatana*) +  
 physical form (*ārammaṇa*) +  
 seeing (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) =  
 contact (*phassa*) →  
 sensation (*vedanā*) →  
 perception (*saññā*) →  
 thinking (*vitakka*)

The act of thinking plays a very important role in determining a person's personality and way of life, as well as shaping society as a whole. Thinking, therefore, is an essential factor in spiritual training. Thinking, however, is itself determined by various factors and conditions.

One factor which exerts a powerful influence on thinking is sensation (*vedanā*), in particular the feelings of pleasure and pain.

Ordinarily, when people contact sense impressions and experience feelings, unless other factors enter to correct or intercept the process, these feelings determine the way a person thinks:

- If the feelings are pleasurable or comforting one delights in them; one wishes to acquire or consume the object (this is craving – *taṇhā* – in an affirmative sense).
- If the feelings are painful or oppressive one is averse to them; one wishes to escape from or eliminate the object (this is craving in an adversative sense). {616}

At this point a person creates elaborate thoughts and ideas about the sense object acting as the source of that feeling. The object becomes the

focus of a person's thinking, accompanied by *saññā* – memories and perceptions of this object. These proliferations of thought follow the course of the person's likes and aversions. The determining factors for thought are a person's accumulated proclivities, prejudices, habits, disposition, and mental defilements (collectively referred to as mental formations – *saṅkhāra*). He or she thinks within the confines and limitations and along the line of these mental formations. Expressions of speech and physical actions may then follow in the wake of these thoughts.

Even if these thoughts are not expressed as outward actions, they still have an impact on a person's mind. They limit and constrict the mind and create various forms of mental distress, agitation, disturbance, depression, and confusion. Thoughts related to specific subjects can create mental bias and distortion, resulting in a failure to see things according to the truth, while some thoughts may be tainted by greed or hostility.

In the case that one experiences neutral sensations – neither pleasurable nor painful – if one is not skilled at reflection and allows oneself to remain under their influence, one's thinking will be aimless and incoherent or completely stifled. This is an unfavourable and unwholesome situation, leading to problems and greater suffering.

The main factors of this process can be illustrated thus:

Contact (*phassa*) →  
 sensation (*vedanā*) →  
 craving, both affirmative and adversative (*taṇhā*) →  
 suffering (*dukkha*)

For most people this process of compounding problems occurs almost continually. In a single day it may occur repeatedly and countlessly. The life of a person lacking spiritual training tends to be dominated and determined by this way of thinking. It requires no intelligence, understanding, or special capability. It is the most basic way in which a human being operates. And the more a person has accumulated the habit of thinking in this way, the easier this process unfolds automatically, as if stuck in a pre-established rut.

Because this process functions without any guidance by mindfulness and wisdom, it generates ignorance (*avijjā*). Rather than being conducive to solving problems, it creates more problems and increases suffering. It is antithetical to spiritual training. Technically, it is thus referred to as the ‘mode of conditionality leading to suffering’.

The basic attribute of this way of thinking is that it serves to gratify craving. In sum it can be referred to as the ‘process of thinking that panders to craving’, ‘thinking that causes problems’, or simply as the ‘cycle of suffering’.

The beginning of spiritual training begins with the application of mindfulness and wisdom. Here, a person no longer allows this aforementioned process of thinking or mode of conditionality to function unabated and unchecked. One uses mindfulness, wisdom, and other spiritual factors to interrupt or reduce the flow of this way of thinking, resulting in a severance of the cycle or a transformation and altered course of thinking. One begins to be liberated – to no longer be enslaved by this process of thinking. {617}

At first, an altered course of thinking may result from views or traditional ways of thinking transmitted by external sources, say by other people or social institutions, to which one adheres out of faith. Generally speaking the most such external instruction can do is to deter or restrain one from blindly following a course of thinking pandering to craving, or perhaps it can provide one with an alternative fixed pattern of thinking. But it does not necessarily lead to a progressive, independent way of thinking. If the instruction is exceptional, however, it can generate the kind of faith that leads people to think for themselves.

An example of instruction that leads to a strictly prescribed, unyielding form of faith, and is not a vehicle for further contemplation, is to have others believe that everything in the world is governed and controlled by some divine being or occurs randomly or by accident. If one believes in such teachings, all one has to do is wait for the will of God or leave everything up to fate. One need not investigate or reflect on things.

Conversely, an example of instruction that generates a kind of faith leading to contemplation is to have others believe that all things exist

according causes and conditions. If one believes this then no matter what happens one will investigate and probe into the underlying causes and conditions, and one will develop an increased knowledge and understanding.

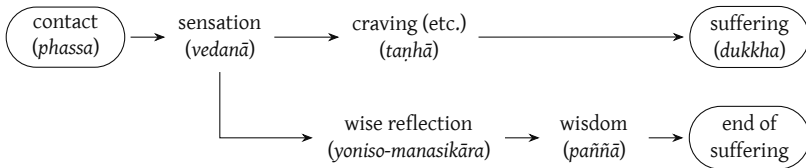
Wholesome thinking and contemplation induced by a faith in external instruction begins with wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). In other words, skilful instruction generates a faith leading to wise reflection.

With the arising of wise reflection, spiritual training has begun. From this point a person applies and develops wisdom, which helps to solve problems and is the path to the cessation of suffering. In a nutshell, thinking that supports and promotes wisdom is spiritual training.

Wise reflection plays an especially important role by preventing feeling (*vedanā*) from producing craving (*taṇhā*). When one applies wise reflection, one experiences feeling but without it leading to craving. And when there is no craving, one does not create fanciful ideas (‘mental proliferation’) subject to the power of craving.

When one severs thinking processes pandering to craving, skilful, systematic reflection leads to the path of wisdom development and to the end of suffering. The two kinds of thinking can be illustrated as shown on Figure 15.2.

Figure 15.2: Two Kinds of Thinking



In any case, for ordinary people, even if they have begun a spiritual training, these two ways of thinking arise alternately, and one way of thinking may interfere with the other. For example, the first process may unfold until it reaches craving, but then wise reflection steps in to cut off the process and steer it in a new direction. Or the latter process may reach the stage of wisdom, yet craving in a new guise hijacks the process. It can



thus occur that the fruits of wisdom are corrupted to serve the interests of craving. {618}

When those persons who have completed spiritual training think, they apply analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). When they are not thinking they abide mindfully in the present moment, that is, they are attentive to those activities in which they are engaged.

To say that one applies analytical reflection when one thinks also implies that one applies mindfulness (*sati*), because wise reflection is a source of nourishment for mindfulness. When thinking proceeds in a systematic, purposeful way, attention does not stray or drift aimlessly. Mindfulness then functions to keep attention on the tasks at hand.

Analytical reflection is thus a key factor in spiritual training, connected to the essential stage of wisdom development. It is required for living a virtuous life, helping to solve problems and acting as a refuge for people.

In the gradual process of wisdom development, wise reflection is part of a stage beyond faith, because at this stage a person begins to think independently from others.

Within the system of spiritual training, wise reflection is an internal factor, connected to the development and application of thought. It can be defined as a proper method of thinking, methodical thinking, or analytical thinking, and it has the following attributes: it prevents one from looking at things superficially; it leads to self-reliance; and it leads to liberation, freedom from suffering, true peace, and pure wisdom, which are the highest goals of Buddhism.

The preceding material has presented a general introduction to the two initial factors of spiritual training: the utterances of others (*paratoghosa*), which can also be described as having a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), which is an external factor and a matter dealing with faith; and wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is an internal factor and a matter dealing with wisdom.

From here on in this chapter the focus will be solely on wise reflection, to elucidate the methods of thinking distinctive to Buddha-Dhamma. {619}

### 15.3 IMPORTANCE OF WISE REFLECTION

Monks, just as the dawn is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, the fulfilment of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path for a monk. It is to be expected of a monk who has brought wise reflection to completion that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

S. V. 31.

Monks, just as the dawn's silver and golden light is the precursor to the rising of the sun, so too, for a monk wise reflection is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the seven factors of enlightenment. When a monk is accomplished in wise reflection, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the seven factors of enlightenment.

S. V. 79.

Monks, just as this body is sustained by nutriment, subsists in dependence on nutriment, and cannot subsist without nutriment, so too the five hindrances are sustained by nutriment, subsist in dependence on nutriment, and cannot subsist without nutriment. And what is [their] nutriment?: ... a frequent lack of wise reflection....

Monks, just as this body is sustained by nutriment, subsists in dependence on nutriment, and cannot subsist without nutriment, so too the seven factors of enlightenment are sustained by nutriment, subsist in dependence on nutriment, and cannot subsist without nutriment. And what is [their] nutriment?: ... a repeated application of wise reflection.<sup>3</sup>

S. V. 64-7.

<sup>3</sup>The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*, or 'covetousness' – *abhiññhā*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), 'sloth and torpor' (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). The seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*): mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of Dhamma (*dhamma-vicaya*), effort (*virīya*), bliss (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Monks, by careful attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*), by careful right striving (*yoniso-sammappadhāna*), I arrived at unsurpassed liberation, I realized unsurpassed liberation. You too, by careful attention, by careful right striving, shall arrive at unsurpassed liberation, shall realize unsurpassed liberation. {620}

*Vin. I. 23; S. I. 105.*

Monks, I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and see. Who knows and sees what? Wise attention and unwise attention.<sup>4</sup> When one attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase. When one attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned.

*M. I. 7.*

Monks, whatever states there are that are wholesome, partaking of the wholesome, pertaining to the wholesome, they are all rooted in wise reflection, converge upon wise reflection, and wise reflection is declared to be the chief among them.

*S. V. 91.*

See here, Mahāli, greed ... hatred ... delusion ... unwise reflection ... wrongly directed attention is the cause, the condition, for evil actions, for the existence of evil. Non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion ... wise reflection ... rightly directed attention is the cause, the condition, for virtuous actions, for the existence of virtuous actions.

*A. V. 86-7.*

No other thing do I know which is so responsible for causing unarisen wholesome states to arise and arisen unwholesome states to wane as wise reflection. In one who reflects wisely wholesome states not yet arisen will arise and unwholesome states that have arisen will wane.

*A. I. 13.*

<sup>4</sup>In particular, one knows the means of generating wise attention and preventing unwise attention.

No other thing do I know which is so conducive to great benefit ...

*A. I. 16.*

... which is so conducive for the stability, non-decline, and non-disappearance of the true Dhamma as wise reflection.

*A. I. 18.*

In regard to internal factors, no other thing do I know which is so conducive to great benefit as wise reflection.

*A. I. 17; cf.: S. V. 101.*

For a monk who is still in training, who has not yet realized the fruit of arahantship, and who aspires to the unsurpassed security from bondage I do not see any other internal factor that is so helpful as wise reflection. A monk who applies wise reflection is able to eliminate the unwholesome and to cultivate the wholesome.

*It. 9-10.*

I do not see any other thing so conducive for generating unarisen right view or for increasing arisen right view as wise reflection. In one who reflects wisely unarisen right view will arise and arisen right view will increase.

*A. I. 31.*

I do not see any other thing so conducive for generating unarisen enlightenment factors or for bringing arisen enlightenment factors to completion as wise reflection. In one who reflects wisely unarisen enlightenment factors will arise and arisen enlightenment factors will be brought to completion. {621}

*A. I. 14-15.*

No other thing do I know on account of which unarisen doubt does not arise and arisen doubt is abandoned as much as on account of wise attention.

*A. I. 4-5.*

For one who attends properly to signs of impurity, unarisen lust will not arise and arisen lust will be abandoned.... For one who attends properly to the liberation of the mind by lovingkindness, unarisen hatred will not arise and arisen hatred will be abandoned.... For one who attends properly to [all] things, unarisen delusion will not arise and arisen delusion will be abandoned.

*A. I. 201.*

When one attends wisely, unarisen sensual desire ... ill-will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and worry ... doubt does not arise and arisen sensual desire ... doubt is abandoned. At the same time the unarisen enlightenment factor of mindfulness ... the unarisen enlightenment factor of equanimity arises and the arisen enlightenment factor of mindfulness ... equanimity comes to fulfilment.

*S. V. 85.*

There are nine things that are greatly supportive and which are rooted in wise reflection: when one possesses wise reflection, joy arises; when one is joyful, delight arises; when one experiences delight, the body is relaxed and tranquil; when the body is relaxed, one experiences happiness; for one who is happy, the mind is concentrated; when the mind is concentrated, one knows and sees according to the truth; when one knows and sees according to the truth, one becomes disenchanted; with disenchantment one becomes dispassionate; by dispassion one is liberated.

*D. III. 288.*

## 15.4 DEFINITION OF WISE REFLECTION

The compound term *yoniso-manasikāra* is comprised of the two words *yoniso* and *manasikāra*.

*Yoniso* is derived from the word *yonī* (‘origin’, ‘place of birth’, ‘womb’) and is variously translated as ‘cause’, ‘root’, ‘source’, ‘wisdom’, ‘method’, ‘means’, or ‘path’. (See Note 15.1)

*Manasikāra* is translated as ‘mental activity’, ‘thinking’, ‘consideration’, ‘reflection’, ‘directing attention’, or ‘contemplation’. (See Note 15.2)

As a compound the term *yoniso-manasikāra* is traditionally defined as ‘skilfully directing attention’. The commentaries and sub-commentaries elaborate on this definition and explain the nuances of this term by presenting various synonyms, as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. *Upāya-manasikāra*: ‘methodical reflection’; to think or reflect by using proper means or methods; systematic thinking. This refers to methodical thinking that enables one to realize and exist in harmony with the truth, and to penetrate the nature and characteristics of all phenomena. {622}
2. *Patha-manasikāra*: ‘suitable reflection’; to think following a distinct course or in a proper way; to think sequentially and in order; to think systematically. This refers to thinking in a well-organized

<sup>5</sup>For the definition of *yoniso-manasikāra* as *upāya-manasikāra* (‘methodical reflection’), *patha-manasikāra* (‘suitable reflection’) and *uppādaka-manasikāra* (‘effective reflection’), see: SA. III. 165; as *upāya-manasikāra* and *patha-manasikāra*, see: DA. II. 459, 643; DA. III. 777 = VbhA. 270 = MA. I. 64, 281; ItA. I. 62; SA. II. 21; as *upāya-manasikāra* alone, see: MA. II. 346; SA. I. 171; SA. III. 133; AA. I. 46; AA. II. 23; VinT.: Mahāvaggaṭṭhā, Mahākhandhakam, Aññatitthiyapubbavatthukathāvaṇṇanā, Dutiyamārakathāvaṇṇanā; as *uppādaka-manasikāra*, see: MA. I. 296; as *kāraṇa-manasikāra* (i.e. as an elaboration of the definition as *patha-manasikāra*), see the sub-commentaries of the Dīgha Nikāya. For noteworthy general definitions of *yoniso-manasikāra*, see: Vism. 131-32; VinT.: Tatiya-pārājikaṃ, Ānāpānassatisamādhikathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Pathavikāsiṇaniddesaṇṇanā, Dasavidha-appanākosallavaṇṇanā; cf.: Pañcika Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-atthayojanā: [1/432; 2/115, 267]. These definitions also include some of my own interpretations.

## NOTE 15.1: YONISO: A MEANS AND A PATH

*Yoniso* is most often defined in the commentaries solely as *upāya* ('means', 'method'): MA. V. 81; SA. I. 88; AA. I. 51; AA. II. 38; AA. IV. 1; KhA. 229; NdA. II. 343; DhA. 402; VismT.: Silaniddesavaṇṇanā, Paccayasannissitasīlavaṇṇanā; VismT.: Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā, Maraṇassatikathāvaṇṇanā.

It is defined as both *upāya* and *patha* ('path') at: [AA. 2/157]; AA. III. 394; ItA. I. 62; NdA. II. 463; Vism. 30. It is defined as *upāya*, *patha* and *kāraṇa* ('means', 'doing') at: DA. II. 643. It is defined as *kāraṇa* at SA. II. 268, 321; [SA. 3/390]. It is defined as *paññā* in the Nettipakaraṇa (see the Nettipakaraṇa; see also the later text the Abhidhānappadīpikā: verse 153).

way, e.g. in line with cause and effect; to not think in a confused, disorderly way; to not at one moment be preoccupied by one thing and then in the next moment jump to something else, unable to sustain a precise, well-defined sequence of thought. This factor also includes the ability to guide thinking in a correct direction.

3. *Kāraṇa-manasikāra*: 'reasoned thinking'; analytical thinking; investigative thinking; rational thinking. This refers to inquiry into the relationship and sequence of causes and conditions; to contemplate and search for the original causes of things, in order to arrive at their root or source, which has resulted in a gradual chain of events.
4. *Uppādaka-manasikāra*: 'effective thinking'; to apply thinking in a purposeful way, in order to yield desired results. This refers to thinking and reflection that generates wholesome qualities, e.g.: thoughts that rouse effort; an ability to think in a way that dispels fear and anger; and contemplations which support mindfulness or which strengthen and stabilize the mind.

These four definitions describe various attributes of the kind of thought referred to as 'wise reflection' (*yoniso-manasikāra*). At any one time, wise reflection may contain all or some of these attributes. These four definitions may be summarized in brief as 'methodical thinking',

## NOTE 15.2: SYNONYMS OF MANASIKĀRA

Noteworthy synonyms for *manasikāra* include:

- *āvajjanā*: paying attention, adverting the mind;
- *ābhoga*: ideation, thought;
- *samannāhāra*: consideration, reflection; and
- *paccavekkhaṇa*: consideration, reflection, reviewing.

See: DA. II. 643; MA. I. 64; ItA. I. 62; Vism. 274.

There are many other synonyms, including:

- *upparikkhā*: examination, investigation (S. III. 42, 140-41);
- *paṭisaṅkhā*: reflection, consideration (A. II. 39-40);
- *paṭisañcikkhaṇā*: thinking over, reflection (A. V. 184); this term is equated with *yoniso-manasikāra* at: S. II. 70 and S. V. 389;
- *parivīmaṇsā*: thorough consideration, examination (S. II. 81).

The term *sammā-manasikāra* (D. I. 12-13; D. III. 30; DA. I. 104; DA. III. 888; MA. I. 197) has a meaning very close to that of *yoniso-manasikāra*, but it is seldom used and its meaning is not considered to be strictly defined.

‘systematic thinking’, ‘analytical thinking’, or ‘thinking inducing wholesomeness’. It is challenging, however, to come up with a single definition or translation for *yoniso-manasikāra*. Most translations will only capture limited nuances of this term and are not comprehensive. The alternative is to give a lengthy definition, as presented above.

The difficulty of translating this term notwithstanding, there are prominent attributes of this way of thinking which can be used to represent all the other attributes and which can be translated in brief, for example: ‘methodical thinking’, ‘skilful thinking’, ‘analytical thinking’, and ‘investigative thinking’. Once one has gained a thorough understanding of this Pali term, it is convenient to rely on a concise translation like ‘wise reflection’, ‘systematic reflection’, or ‘careful attention’. (See Note 15.3)

Earlier, I mentioned the relationship between the internal factor of wise reflection and the external factor of instruction by others or virtuous friends. Here, let us focus more closely on how a virtuous friend, by



## NOTE 15.3: TRASLATION OF YONISO MANASIKĀRA

There are many English translations for *yoniso-manasikāra*, some of them literal translations, e.g.: proper mind-work, proper attention, systematic attention, reasoned attention, attentive consideration, reasoned consideration, considered attention, careful consideration, careful attention, ordered thinking, orderly reasoning, genetical reflection, critical reflection, analytical reflection, etc. [Trans.: in this text, when encountering the terms ‘wise reflection’ and ‘systematic reflection’, know that I am referring to *yoniso-manasikāra*.]

relying on the principle of faith, can help those people who are unskilled at thinking for themselves and applying wise reflection.

In respect to the first three attributes of wise reflection described above, virtuous friends are only able to point out or throw light on specific truths, but practitioners must contemplate and gain understanding by themselves. When it comes to the stage of true understanding, faith is inadequate.<sup>6</sup> In regard to these three attributes, faith is thus extremely limited. {623}

In respect to the fourth attribute (reflection generating wholesome qualities), however, faith plays a powerful role. For example, some people are weak and easily daunted or think in irrational and harmful ways. If a virtuous friend is able to establish faith in such people, this will be very helpful for them. He or she may inspire and encourage them by using skilful means. Having said this, there are some people who are naturally endowed with wise reflection and are able to think for themselves. In discouraging or distressing situations they are able to effectively motivate themselves and think of ways to address the problem.

On the contrary, if one has evil friends or applies unwise attention, despite finding oneself in good circumstances and encountering good things, one is likely to think or act in bad ways. For instance, when discovering a pleasant, secluded place, a bad person may think of it as a suitable place to commit a crime. In a similar vein, some people are highly

<sup>6</sup>This is the true meaning of the axiom: *Attā hi attano nātho* – ‘one is indeed one’s own refuge.’

suspicious – when they see someone else smile, they think that they are being ridiculed or insulted.

If one allows this course of thinking to proceed unimpeded, unwise attention will nourish and strengthen such unwholesome states of mind. For example, a person who habitually sees things in a negative light will begin to see others as adversaries. Similarly, a person who is habitually afraid and sees others as thinking ill of him may develop a mental disorder of paranoia.<sup>7</sup>

Depending on either wise reflection or unwise reflection, the same subject matter may result in very different behaviour for different people. For example, one person may think of death with improper attention and consequently experience fear, depression, apathy, or confusion. Another person may think of death with wise reflection and thus appreciate the need to abstain from unwholesome actions. He or she will be calm, heedful, and ardent, hastening to perform good deeds.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of insight into reality, wise reflection is not wisdom itself, but rather a condition for the arising of wisdom, that is, wise reflection generates right view. The Milindapañhā describes the difference between reflection and wisdom thus:<sup>9</sup>

- First, animals such as goats, sheep, cows, buffalo, camels, and donkeys possess a form of reflection (*manasikāra* – ‘mental application’), but they do not possess wisdom (nor is their reflection ‘analytical’ – *yoniso*).
- Second, *manasikāra* has the characteristic of contemplation and reflection, whereas wisdom (*paññā*) has the characteristic of severing. *Manasikāra* gathers together and submits ideas to wisdom,

<sup>7</sup>This is referred to as ‘devotion to unwise attention’ (*ayonisomanasikāra-bahula*), which nourishes the five hindrances. Conversely, devotion to wise attention (*yonisomanasikāra-bahula*) nourishes the seven factors of enlightenment. There are many passages describing these dynamics, e.g.: S. V. 64-7.

<sup>8</sup>See: Vism. 230; VismṬ.: Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesaṇṇanā, Maraṇassatikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>9</sup>Miln.: Manasikāralakkhaṇapañho aṭṭhamo.

which is then able to eliminate mental defilement, similar to a man grasping an ear of rice by his left hand, enabling him to successfully harvest it with a sickle held in his right hand.

Based on this interpretation, *yoniso-manasikāra* is a kind of mental engagement (*manasikāra*) leading to an application and development of wisdom.<sup>10</sup> {624}

The Papañcasūdanī states that unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) is the root source of the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*), causing beings to accumulate problems and to swim around in suffering. This text also explains that, when it is allowed to prosper, unwise attention increases both ignorance (*avijjā*) and the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*). With the arising of ignorance the cycle of Dependent Origination begins, starting with ignorance acting as the condition for volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), and completed with the arising of the whole mass of suffering. The beginning of the cycle of Dependent Origination can also be designated by the arising of craving (*taṇhā*), starting with craving acting as a condition for grasping, and similarly completed with the mass of suffering.

Conversely, wise reflection is the root cause for the cycle of ‘turning away’ (*vivaṭṭa*), enabling one to escape from the whirlpool of suffering and to truly solve problems. With the arising of wise reflection a person begins to practise according to the Eightfold Path, with right view as the leading factor. Right view here is equivalent to true knowledge (*vijjā*).

<sup>10</sup>The following passages containing the terms *yoniso-manasikāra* and *ayoniso-manasikāra* may clarify the meanings of these terms: when quarrels erupt in the community, a person who uses wise reflection ceases to quarrel and seeks a way to bring the contentious issues to a close (VinA. V. 1151; MA. IV. 205; JA. III. 489; DhA. I. 65); vengeance can be quelled by way of wise reflection (DhA. I. 51); grasping the meaning of sutta passages with unwise reflection leads to misunderstanding – for instance, by encountering the word *sambhavesi* (‘a being subject to rebirth’) one may wrongly conclude that the Buddha affirmed an intermediate state of existence (*antarābhava*) – see: UdA. 93; wise reflection helps a trainable person to realize the Dhamma (SA. III. 6); wise reflection helps a person to benefit from listening to the Dhamma (ItA. II. 25; NdA. I. 8 – based on A. III. 174-5); the term *yoniso-manasikāra* refers to ‘insight’ (*vipassanā*) and is used as a substitute for the phrase ‘developing insight’ (in many passages, e.g.: MA. I. 72 = ItA. I. 62; AA. I. 214, 380 – cf.: [AA. 1/215]; UdA. 354. Apart from these references, see: MA. I. 195; SA. III. 111; AA. III. 266; KhA. 232; DhA. I. 157; ItA. II. 150; PsA. I. 302.

With the arising of true knowledge, ignorance ceases. With the end of ignorance the cessation cycle (*nirodha-vāra*) of Dependent Origination is set in operation, leading gradually to the cessation of suffering.<sup>11</sup> These processes can be illustrated thus:

Round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*):

Unwise reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*):

Ignorance (*avijjā*) →  
volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) ...  
aging, death, sorrow, lamentation =  
the arising of suffering.

Craving (*taṇhā*) →  
grasping (*upādāna*) ...  
aging, death, sorrow, lamentation =  
the arising of suffering.

Cycle of ‘turning away’ (*vivaṭṭa*):

Wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) →  
cultivation of the Path (*magga-bhāvanā*):  
right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) =  
true knowledge (*vijjā*) →  
the cessation of ignorance →  
the cessation of volitional formations ...  
the cessation of suffering.

The term *yoniso-manasikāra* has a wide range of meaning, including thinking concerned with moral issues and thinking in line with virtuous and truthful principles which one has studied and understood. Basic levels of contemplation which do not require a profound degree of wisdom include: thoughts of amicability, thoughts of lovingkindness, thoughts of generosity and assistance, and thoughts of generating inner strength, determination, and courage. Some contemplations, however, require refined and subtle degrees of wisdom, for example an analysis of subsidiary factors or an investigation into causes and conditions.

<sup>11</sup>MA. I. 65.

Because the meaning of wise reflection is so comprehensive, everyone is capable of applying it, especially elementary levels of contemplation. All people need to do is direct their course of thinking in a wholesome direction, corresponding to teachings they have received and ideas they have nurtured. This basic form of wise reflection helps to generate mundane right view and is greatly influenced by faith, which comes about through the words of others (*paratoghosa*), including one's education, culture, and the presence of virtuous friends. Faith acts as an anchor for the mind and an internal force. When a person cognizes a sense object or encounters a particular situation, the course of his or her thinking is directed by the force of faith, as if faith has already dug a channel for thinking to go. {625}

For this reason the Buddha stated that (correct) faith is the nourishment for wise reflection.<sup>12</sup> External instruction from virtuous friends, which uses faith as a channel, is able to gradually increase understanding and introduce a person to new ideas, for example by way of consultation and by asking questions to clear up doubts.

When it is applied repeatedly and nourished by faith, proper reflection develops and becomes more agile, deepening wisdom. When one contemplates and sees that the teachings one has received are truly correct and beneficial, one becomes more confident and faith increases. In this way, wise reflection enhances faith.<sup>13</sup> It urges people to make greater effort in their studies, until eventually their own reflections lead them to realization and deliverance.

Here, a person's spiritual practice relies on an integration between internal and external factors. Wholesome influence from external sources is implied in the phrase: 'Be your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge.'<sup>14</sup> The Buddha did not reject external influences. Indeed,

<sup>12</sup>A. V. 115, 118.

<sup>13</sup>For wise reflection acting as a root cause for faith, see, e.g.: ItA. II. 79.

<sup>14</sup>See: D. II. 100-101; see also footnote n. 27. To be one's own refuge is to have the Dhamma as one's refuge. This refers to living one's life with effort, mindfulness, clear comprehension, and wisdom, knowing thoroughly the body, feelings, the mind, and mind objects, according to the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. *Yoniso-manasikāra* nourishes mindfulness and generates wisdom (A. I. 87-8; A. V. 115, 118).

external influences and the quality of faith are extremely important, but the key determining factor lies within, that is, wise reflection.

The more one is able to apply wise reflection, the less one relies on external factors. Similarly, if someone does not apply wise reflection at all, any amount of help from virtuous friends is in vain.

As most students of Buddhism know, mindfulness (*sati*) is a vital factor that is required for every activity. The problem arises, however, of how to establish mindfulness in time and, once it is established, how to sustain it in a consistent, continuous way so that it is not broken and does not slip away.

In this context, there are teachings which explain how wise reflection nourishes mindfulness, assisting the establishment and the uninterrupted flow of mindfulness.<sup>15</sup>

If one possesses systematic, coherent, and effective reflection, one is able to sustain mindfulness consistently. If one is unable to reflect properly, however, or if one's thinking is ineffectual or aimless, mindfulness will keep slipping away and one will be unable to sustain it. It is neither correct nor possible to truly compel or constrain mindfulness. The correct course is to nourish mindfulness and to generate its supportive conditions. If these conditions are present, mindfulness arises – this is part of a natural process. One thus needs to act in accord with this process.

The function of wise reflection is to cut off ignorance and craving (or in an affirmative sense, it summons wisdom and wholesome qualities).

Generally speaking, when a person encounters a sense object, the process of thinking begins immediately. At this point two distinct forces vie with one another:

- If ignorance and craving are able to seize control of thinking, the thought process will be subject to these factors and shaped by mental formations based on likes and dislikes and on pre-established concepts and ideas.

<sup>15</sup>E.g.: S. V. 65, 94, 103-104; A. V. 115, 118.

- If wise reflection is able to bar and cut off ignorance and craving, it will lead thinking in a correct direction, resulting in a thought process free from these negative factors. The corrupted thought process is replaced by the process of knowing and seeing (*ñāṇa-dassana*) or of true knowledge and liberation (*vijjā-vimutti*). {626}

Generally speaking, when ordinary, unawakened beings encounter a sense object, their thinking follows the course of ignorance and craving. They overlay the experience with their likes and dislikes, or with their pre-established ideas. This is the point at which thoughts connected to that experience or sense object begin to be shaped and moulded by ignorance and craving, a process which occurs because of a person's accumulated habitual tendencies.

To be influenced by ignorance and craving in one's thinking is to see things as one wants them to be or not to be. One's thinking is bound by personal attachments and aversions. This results in an incorrect discernment of things, in prejudices based on preferences and aversions, in misunderstanding, and in distorted conceptions. Moreover, it is a cause for confusion, listlessness, loneliness, despondency, fear, gratification and subsequent disappointment, stress, and frustration, all of which are various forms of mental affliction.

Reflecting wisely entails seeing things according to the truth or according to causal relationships, not according to ignorance and craving. In other words, one sees things according to their own nature, not according to one's wishes and desires.

When unawakened persons experience something, their thoughts immediately align themselves with likes and dislikes. The function of wise reflection is to cut off this process and to seize the active role. It then directs the course of thinking in a pure, systematic direction, by contemplating according to causes and conditions. The result is that one understands the truth and generates wholesome states, or at the very least one responds to things in the most appropriate way.

Wise reflection allows people to make good use of thinking, to be a master of their own thoughts, to call upon thinking in order to solve

problems and to live at ease. This is the opposite to unwise reflection, which allows thoughts to manipulate and enslave the mind, to drag people into difficulty, oppress them in various ways, and take away their independence. Note also that in the course of wise reflection, mindfulness and clear comprehension are constant factors inherent in the process, because wise reflection constantly nourishes these factors.

In sum, wise reflection cuts off ignorance and craving. These two negative qualities always appear in tandem, although in some cases ignorance is prominent and craving unpronounced, while at other times craving is dominant and ignorance concealed.<sup>16</sup> Given this fact, it is possible to present two definitions for wise reflection, according to the dominant role of either ignorance or craving: wise reflection is a form of thinking that cuts off ignorance; or it is a form of thinking that cuts off craving. The distinction is as follows:

- When ignorance is dominant, thinking gets stuck on and revolves around a single theme in a confused and disconnected way. One does not know which direction to go, or else one's thoughts are incoherent, disordered, and irrational, for example in the case of someone who is caught in fear.
- When craving is dominant, thinking inclines in the direction of likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions, or attachment and revulsion. One is preoccupied with those things one likes or dislikes, and one's thinking is shaped in accord with pleasure and displeasure.

This distinction notwithstanding, on a profound level ignorance is the source of craving, and craving reinforces ignorance. Therefore, if one is to eliminate all affliction and unwholesomeness completely, one must go to the source and eliminate ignorance. {627}

<sup>16</sup>In respect to ignorance and craving acting as the chief agents and root causes for the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*), apart from the passage cited earlier at MA. I. 65, see also the original teaching on this matter in the Pali Canon at A. V. 113 and 116-17, and the later explanation at Vism. 524-5 and 577-8.



## 15.5 WAYS OF REFLECTING WISELY

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The ways of reflecting wisely here refers to the practical application of *yoniso-manasikāra*. Although there are many methods for applying wise reflection, technically speaking they are divided into two main categories:

1. Wise reflection aiming directly at the cutting off or elimination of ignorance.
2. Wise reflection aiming at cutting off or reducing craving.

Generally speaking, the first method is necessary for the final stages of Dhamma practice, because it gives rise to an understanding according to the truth, which is a requirement for awakening. The latter method is most often used during preliminary stages of practice, with the purpose of building a foundation for virtue or of cultivating virtue, in order to be prepared for more advanced stages. This method is limited to subduing mental defilement. Many methods of applying wise reflection, however, can be used for both benefits simultaneously: for eliminating ignorance and for reducing craving.

The chief methods for applying wise reflection contained in the Pali Canon can be classified as follows:

1. The method of investigating causes and conditions.
2. The method of analyzing component factors.
3. The method of reflecting in accord with the three universal characteristics (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*).
4. The method of reflecting in accord with the Four Noble Truths (reflection used to solve problems).
5. The method of reflecting on the relationship between the goals (*attha*) and the principles (*dhamma*) of things.
6. The method of reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of things, and on the escape from them.

7. The method of reflecting on the true and counterfeit value of things.
8. The method of reflection in order to rouse wholesome qualities.
9. The method of reflection by dwelling in the present moment.
10. The method of reflection corresponding to analytic discussion (*vibhajja-vāda*). {628}

#### A. INVESTIGATION OF CAUSES AND CONDITIONS

The method of investigating causes and conditions refers to a contemplation of phenomena in order to ascertain the truth, or to a contemplation of dilemmas in order to find a solution by examining various interrelated causal factors. It can also be described as the way of thinking in line with ‘specific conditionality’ (*idappaccayatā*) or according to the teaching on Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This is a fundamental form of wise reflection, and it is sometimes referred to when describing the Buddha’s awakening.

This form of reflection is not restricted to beginning at the results and then investigating the causes and conditions. In the way of thinking in line with specific conditionality it is also possible to begin with a cause and then trace its results, or to select any point in the middle of a process and then track either forwards to the end result or backwards to the source.

In the Pali Canon this form of wise reflection is described as follows:

1. Reflections on mutual conditionality: here, a noble disciple reflects wisely on how all conditioned things are interdependent, enabling them to exist:

Monks, it would be better for the uninstructed worldling to take this body composed of the four great elements as a ‘self’; but for him to take the mind as a ‘self’ is truly unsuitable. For what reason? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four, five, or ten years, for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, for a hundred years,

or even longer. But that which is called ‘mind’ or ‘mentality’ or ‘consciousness’ arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.

Monks, in regard to that collection of great elements, the instructed noble disciple attends closely and carefully to dependent origination thus: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.’ In dependence on contact acting as a basis for pleasant feeling, a pleasant feeling arises. With the cessation of that contact acting as a basis for pleasant feeling, that pleasant feeling arising dependent on that contact ... ceases and subsides. In dependence on contact acting as a basis for painful feeling, a painful feeling arises. With the cessation of that contact acting as a basis for painful feeling, that painful feeling ... ceases and subsides. In dependence on contact acting as a basis for neutral feeling, a neutral feeling arises. With the cessation of that contact acting as a basis for neutral feeling, that neutral feeling ... ceases and subsides.

Monks, just as heat is generated and fire is produced from the friction of two fire-sticks, but with the separation and laying aside of the sticks the resultant heat ceases and subsides; so too in dependence on contact acting as a basis for pleasant feeling, a pleasant feeling arises, and with the cessation of that contact acting as a basis for pleasant feeling, that pleasant feeling arising dependent on that contact ... ceases and subsides....<sup>17</sup> {629}

*S. II. 96-7.*

2. Inquisitive reflection or the posing of questions; e.g. the following contemplation by the Buddha:

<sup>17</sup>The standard formula: ‘... with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, there are volitional formations....’ occurs frequently, e.g.: S. II. 65, 70, 95-7; S. V. 389; Nd. II. 43.

Then it occurred to me: ‘When what exists does clinging come to be? By what is clinging conditioned?’ Then, through careful attention, I knew by way of wisdom: ‘When there is craving, clinging comes to be; clinging has craving as its condition.’

Then it occurred to me: ‘When what exists does craving come to be? By what is craving conditioned?’ Then, through careful attention, I knew by way of wisdom: ‘When there is feeling, craving comes to be; craving has feeling as its condition....’<sup>18</sup>

S. II, 10, 104.

For more on this form of wise reflection see Chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

## B. ANALYSIS OF COMPONENT FACTORS

The analysis of component factors, or the elaboration on a specific subject matter, is another form of reflection which aims to generate an understanding of things as they truly are.

This form of contemplation is most often used to recognize the true insubstantiality or selflessness of all things, in order to give up clinging to conventions and designations (*sammati-paññatti*). In particular, this refers to a contemplation of beings or people as existing merely as a collection of assorted aggregates (*khandha*), each of which exists dependent on subsidiary conditional factors. This form of reflection is conducive to seeing the ‘selfless’ nature of things (*anattā*).

A clear discernment of the selfless nature of things, however, normally requires the simultaneous participation by the previous kind of reflection (investigative reflection) and/or the following kind of reflection (reflection in accord with the three characteristics; see below). Through careful analysis one sees how the five aggregates are interdependent and subject to related causes and conditions; they are not truly independent. Moreover, these aggregates and conditional factors all proceed according

<sup>18</sup>In reference to the contemplations of the Buddha Vipassī and of all seven of the perfectly enlightened Buddhas, see: D. II. 31; S. II. 5-9.

to natural laws, that is, they exist in a perpetual state of rise and decay; they are unstable, unenduring, and impermanent.

If one is unable to accurately see this rising and ceasing of phenomena – their conditionality and their oppression by various factors – by way of investigative reflection described above, which can be a difficult task, one can reflect on these attributes as universal characteristics of all things, which is encompassed in the third kind of contemplation below. In the Pali Canon this second kind of wise reflection is mentioned together with the third kind.

The commentaries, however, which are aligned with later Abhidhamma texts, prefer to distinguish this second kind of reflection, and they classify it as a mode of detailed analysis (*vibhajja-vidhi*).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, they tend to begin with a basic analysis by focusing on mentality and corporeality (*nāma-rūpa*), rather than immediately analyzing the five aggregates.

This kind of reflection is not restricted to analyzing and distinguishing various factors, but also includes classification and categorization. The emphasis, however, is given on analysis and it is thus referred to as *vibhajja* ('detailed analysis'). {630}

In the traditional practice of insight meditation as described in the commentaries, the basic analysis of mentality and corporeality is referred to as 'analysis of mind and body' (*nāmarūpa-vavatthāna*) or 'contemplation of mind and body' (*nāmarūpa-pariggaha*).<sup>20</sup> Here, one does not look at

<sup>19</sup>See: VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Rūpakkhanda-kathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Dīṭṭhivisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Nāmarūpapariggahakathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārapaccayāviññāṇapadavittthāra-kathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Maggāmagga-vavatthāna-kathāvaṇṇanā. An analysis of causes and conditions according to Dependent Origination is also considered a mode of detailed analysis (Vism. 523-4; VbhA. 129; VismṬ.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭiccasamuppāda-kathāvaṇṇanā).

<sup>20</sup>See: Vism. 587; Comp.: Kammatṭhānaparicchedo, Vipassanākammattṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo. It is also sometimes called the 'division of mentality and materiality' (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda*) or the 'division of formations' (*saṅkhāra-pariccheda*).

people according to their conventional names and designations, of being ‘them’ or ‘us’, ‘Mr. A’ or ‘Mrs. B’. Instead one sees them as a combination of physical and mental phenomena. One determines each of the component factors in such a way: ‘This is material form, this is mind’, ‘material form has these specific characteristics, mental phenomena have these specific characteristics’, ‘this factor has this kind of attribute and is thus classified as “form”, while this factor has another kind of attribute and is thus classified as “mind”.’

An analysis of human beings reveals only mind-and-body, or material and mental phenomena. Having trained in such discernment, or gaining skill at such reflection, when encountering living beings and other objects, one will see them as simply a collection of mental and physical elements. They are merely natural phenomena, which are empty of any kind of true substance or permanent self. One’s course of thinking helps to prevent one from being misguided or from overly attaching to conventional reality.

Examples in the Pali Canon of this kind reflection are as follows:

Just as, with an assemblage of parts,  
The word ‘wagon’ is used,  
So, when the aggregates exist,  
There is the convention ‘a being’.

*S. I. 135.*

Friends, just as when a space is enclosed by timber, twine, clay and thatch, it comes to be called a ‘house’, so too, when a space is enclosed by bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be called a ‘body’ (*rūpa*).

*M. I. 190.*

Monks, suppose that this river Ganges was carrying along a great lump of foam. A man with good sight would inspect it, examine it, and carefully investigate it.<sup>21</sup> By inspecting it, examining it, and carefully investigating it, it would appear to him to be void, empty

and insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a lump of foam?

So too, monks, whatever kind of material form there is, whether past, future, or present ... far or near: a bhikkhu inspects it, examines it, and carefully investigates it. By inspecting it, examining it, and carefully investigating it, it would appear to him to be void, empty, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in material form?<sup>22</sup>

Form is like a lump of foam,  
 Feeling like a water bubble;  
 Perception is like a mirage,  
 Volitions like a plantain trunk,  
 And consciousness like an illusion,  
 So explained the Kinsman of the Sun.  
 However one may consider,  
 And carefully investigate [these five aggregates],  
 They are but void and empty. {631}

S. III. 140-3.

### C. REFLECTION IN LINE WITH UNIVERSAL CHARACTERISTICS

Reflection in line with universal characteristics, or reflective discernment of natural truths, refers to a clear understanding of things as they are: an understanding of how things exist, and must exist, according to their own nature. The focus of this reflection is on living beings and things that ordinary people are aware of, that is, conditioned things – things arising from and shaped by causes and conditions and subject to conditionality.

One of these natural truths is the law of impermanence, that all conditioned things, once they are arisen, must cease; they are inconstant, unstable, unenduring, and impermanent (*anicca*).

<sup>21</sup>In the sutta the term *yoniso-upaparikkhā* ('thorough investigation') is used as a substitute for *yoniso-manasikāra*.

<sup>22</sup>The Buddha continues to describe the other four aggregates in a similar way and then concludes with the following verse.

Likewise, all conditional factors, both internal and external, perpetually arise and cease. Their interaction with one another causes conflict and friction, which results in conditioned things being under stress. They are unable to maintain an original state of existence and they are subject to alteration and disintegration, a truth which is referred to as *dukkha*.

The very nature of conditioned phenomena means that they do not belong to anyone, they are not subject to anyone's wishes or desires, and they cannot be truly owned or controlled by anyone. Similarly, they possess no 'soul' or 'essence', either internal or external, which is able to dictate or rule over them. They exist according to their own nature; they exist according to causes and conditions, not according to anyone's will. This is referred to as the truth of 'nonself' (*anattā*).

The reflection here entails an acknowledgement of how all things one engages with exist equally as natural phenomena; they are conditioned formations, existing dependent on conditional factors.

The reflection in line with universal characteristics can be divided into two stages:

1. The first stage includes a discernment and acknowledgement of the truth. At this stage one relates to things in harmony with nature. Such conduct is marked by wisdom and an inner freedom; one is not bound by things.

Even if one encounters unpleasant or undesirable circumstances, one is able to reflect on how these things, or these situations, proceed in line with a natural course and exist according to causes and conditions. By thinking in this way one begins to accept one's situation; one is consequently released from suffering, or at the very least one's suffering abates.

When one possesses greater mental agility, all one needs to do in such challenging situations is to establish mindfulness and call to mind: 'I will see things according to the truth, not how I want them to be.' By doing this one's suffering will decrease immediately, because one begins to be released – one does not subject oneself to



stress. Indeed, one does not create a sense of self that is subject to stress.

2. The second stage includes managing and resolving things in line with causal factors. Here one acts with insight, wisdom, and freedom.

When one acknowledges the conditional nature of things and one wishes for things to be a particular way, one studies and understands the causes and conditions required for things to reach a desired result. One then acts and deals with things at their specific conditional factors. When one fulfils the necessary conditions, irrespective of whether one desires the result or not, it will occur automatically. Similarly, if these necessary conditions are lacking, the result will fail, regardless of one's desires. In sum, one deals with things by way of knowledge and in line with conditional factors, not through willpower or desire. {632}

In terms of Dhamma practice, all one needs to do is acknowledge one's wishes, determine the relevant causes and conditions, and then deal with matters at the point of these conditional factors. By practising in this way one extricates oneself from problems; one is not bound. One does not allow one's desires to lead one into oppression (one does not allow one's desires to create a fixed sense of identity). One both acts directly in line with causes and conditions, and allows things to proceed according to such causes and conditions. This way of practice is both the most effectual and is also free from suffering.

This second stage of reflection in line with universal characteristics is related to the fourth kind of reflection described below, that is, the fourth kind of reflection takes over from the third.

In the traditional practice of insight development (*vipassanā*), which was developed into a formal system described in the commentaries, the teaching on the seven forms of purity (*visuddhi*) is used as the master template.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the commentaries use the list of different

<sup>23</sup>See the Rathavinā Sutta: M. I. 145-51.

forms of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) described in the Paṭisambhidāmagga as a set of criteria,<sup>24</sup> and maintain the basic contemplation of phenomena, of separating them into ‘mind-and-body’ (*nāma-rūpa*).

According to this teaching, the development of insight is set down as a system containing clearly defined, progressive steps. The three kinds of reflection mentioned so far are included in this system, in which they are combined into a distinct group of affiliated methods of reflection. The order in which they are presented, however, differs from the order presented above:<sup>25</sup>

1. The first step entails analytical reasoning or an investigation into component factors (method #2 described above). Here, one distinguishes between mental and material phenomena: one determines what is mind and what is body, what are the different kinds of material and mental phenomena, and what sort of attributes these distinct phenomena possess. This step is referred to as ‘contemplation of name-and-form’ (*nāmarūpa-pariggaha*), ‘analysis of name-and-form’ (*nāmarūpa-vavatthāna*), ‘division of name-and-form’ (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda*), or ‘division of formations’ (*saṅkhāra-pariccheda*). It is classified as ‘purity of views’ (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) – the third of the seven kinds of purity.

The objective here, however, is primarily on understanding and distinguishing phenomena or component factors – to know which things one encounters are comprised of materiality and which are comprised of mentality – rather than emphasizing analysis in general.

2. The second step entails an investigation of conditionality (method #1 described above). Here, one searches for and contemplates the causes and conditions of material and mental phenomena in various ways, for example: to contemplate in line with the teaching of Dependent Origination; to contemplate ignorance, craving,

<sup>24</sup> Nāṇakathā: Ps. I. 1-4, 53-7.

<sup>25</sup> See: Vism. 587-638; Comp.: Kammatṭhānaparicchedo, Vipassanākammatṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo.

grasping, volitional actions (*kamma*), and nourishment (*āhāra*); to contemplate in accord with the cognitive process (say by contemplating how eye-consciousness depends on the eye and material forms); and to contemplate according to the cycles of volitional actions (*kamma*) and their results (*vipāka*). All of these contemplations are part of the contemplation on Dependent Origination; they simply separate and highlight different aspects of this teaching.

This step is referred to as ‘contemplation of the conditions for name-and-form’ (*nāmarūpapaccaya-pariggaha*), or in short an ‘analysis of conditions’ (*paccaya-pariggaha*). When this contemplation is complete, it gives rise to an understanding referred to as ‘knowledge of the relationship of things’ (*dharmatṭhiti-ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge according to reality’ (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*), or ‘right vision’ (*sammā-dassana*). This step is classified as ‘purity of knowledge leading to the end of doubt’ (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) – the fourth of the seven kinds of purity.

3. The third step entails a thorough understanding of nature or a reflection in line with universal characteristics (method #3 described above). Here, one contemplates mind-and-body, or conditioned phenomena, according to the teaching on the Three Characteristics. One sees things as impermanent and unstable (*anicca*), subject to the stress of conditioning factors (*dukkha*), and as nonself (*anattā*) – they do not exist as independent entities, they are ultimately insubstantial, and they cannot be truly owned by anyone or controlled by way of desire.

This step is referred to as ‘investigative knowledge’ (*sammasana-ñāṇa*). It is the beginning of ‘purity of knowledge regarding Path and not-path (*maggāmaggañāṇadassana-visuddhi*) – the fifth of the seven kinds of purity. {633}

The following passages from the Pali Canon describe the joint application of the second and third kinds of reflection mentioned above (the method of analyzing component factors and the method of reflecting in accord with universal characteristics):

Monks, attend carefully (*yoniso-manasikāra*) to form, and recognize the impermanence of form as it really is.... Attend carefully to feeling, and recognize the impermanence of feeling as it really is.... Attend carefully to perception, and recognize the impermanence of perception as it really is.... Attend carefully to volitional formations, and recognize the impermanence of volitional formations as they really are.... Attend carefully to consciousness, and recognize the impermanence of consciousness as it really is.

*S. III. 52.*

An instructed *bhikkhu* should carefully attend to the five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent, as oppressed by conditioning factors ... as nonself.<sup>26</sup>

*S. III. 169.*

The following passage describes an investigation of conditionality combined with a reflection in line with universal characteristics. The objective of this joint contemplation is to gain a thorough understanding of reality, to realize mental freedom, and to be free from suffering:

Monks, dwell with yourselves as a sanctuary, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as a sanctuary, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge. When you dwell with yourselves as a refuge ... with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge, you should reflect wisely thus: ‘From what are sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair born? What is their source?’

Monks, from what are sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair born? What is their source? Here, the uninstructed worldling, who does not associate with the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who does not associate with superior persons and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or

<sup>26</sup>This form of reflection is described through almost the entire *Khandhavagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, and is also found spread throughout other volumes of the Pali Canon.

self as in form. That form of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

He regards feeling as self ... perception as self ... volitional formations as self ... consciousness as self.... With the change and alteration of consciousness, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

But a monk who has understood the impermanence of form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, its changeability, and its terminability, and when he sees as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'In the past and also now all form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is impermanent, subject to stress, and of the nature to change', then he abandons sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. With their abandonment, he does not become alarmed or frightened. Unafraid, he dwells happily. A bhikkhu who dwells happily is said to be quenched in that respect.<sup>27</sup> {634}

*S. III. 42-3.*

#### **D. REFLECTION IN LINE WITH THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

Reflection in line with the Noble Truths, or reflection used to solve problems, is informally called the 'method of ending suffering'. It is classified as a key form of reflection because it is possible to expand it so that it encompasses all other forms of wise reflection.

<sup>27</sup>'Quenched in that respect' = *tadaṅga-nibbāna* ('Nibbāna by substitution of opposites' or 'temporary Nibbāna').

This short passage encapsulates this kind of reflection:

A monk attends wisely thus: ‘This is suffering’; he attends wisely; ‘This is the origin of suffering’; he attends wisely: ‘This is the cessation of suffering’; he attends wisely: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ When he attends wisely in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: personality view, doubt, and adherence to rules and practices.

M. I. 9.

This kind of reflection has two general attributes:

1. It is in line with cause and effect. The investigation begins with results and traces back to causes, followed by a subsequent attending to and solving things at their source. It is divided into two pairs:

**Pair #1:**

- Suffering (*dukkha*) is the result: it is the problem; it is an unsatisfactory situation.
- The origin of suffering (*samudaya*) is the cause: it is the source of the problem; it is the agent which must be eliminated or attended to in order to be released from the problem.

**Pair #2:**

- Cessation (*nirodha*) is the result: it is the end of the problem; it is the goal to be reached.
  - The Path (*magga*) is the cause: it is the method; it is the way of practice for dealing with the cause of problems and for reaching the goal – the end of suffering.
2. It is relevant, to the point, straightforward and direct; it focuses on those things that one must practise and engage with in order to solve life’s predicaments; it does not digress to matters of indulgence and excess, i.e. to thoughts seeking to gratify craving,

conceit, and fixed opinions, which are irrelevant – which cannot be used to solve problems.<sup>28</sup>

As mentioned earlier, this fourth kind of reflection corresponds with or is connected to the third kind – the reflection in accord with universal characteristics. To begin with, when one encounters a problem and experiences suffering, one is able to come to an acceptance of the situation (in accord with stage #1 of the third kind of reflection, above). Then, when one is prepared to apply wisdom in order to solve the problem (in accord with stage #2 of the third kind of reflection, above), one gradually reflects on the details and particulars described in this fourth kind of reflection.

The principle or essence of reflection in line with the Noble Truths is to begin with an acknowledgement and clear understanding of a problem or of suffering. From here, one searches for the source of this problem in order to attend to it. At the same time, one clearly establishes one's goal – one knows the goal, one knows whether it is accessible or not, and one knows how to reach it. Finally, one thinks of ways to eliminate the source of the problem, leading to the realization of one's determined goal.

In the context of this kind of reflection it is necessary to be aware of the responsibilities or duties vis-à-vis each of the Four Noble Truths. To understand the gist of this matter, a summary of the Four Noble Truths along with the corresponding stages of practice is presented below: {635}

### **Stage 1:**

Suffering (*dukkha*): problems, affliction, frustration, stress, oppression, and deficiencies encountered by people in their lives. In the most comprehensive sense this refers to the state in which conditioned phenomena, the mind and body, the five aggregates, or the entire world is subject to the laws of nature: they are impermanent and inconstant; they are under pressure by and dependent upon conditioning factors; they do not possess a 'self' which can be controlled and dominated by anyone – consequently they conflict with desire and attachment, leading to misery and dissatisfaction.

<sup>28</sup>See the Cūḷamālunkayovāda Sutta: M. I. 426-32.

Our sole responsibility in the face of suffering is to recognize and understand it: to clearly understand its nature and the extent of the problems. This is similar to a doctor who examines and diagnoses an illness. This responsibility is referred to as ‘thorough knowledge’ (*pariññā*).

Our responsibility is not to brood over or worry about these problems, or to resent the suffering and try and get rid of it, for thinking in this way only increases it. It is fine to desire the end of suffering, but suffering cannot be dispelled by desire. It can only be dispelled by understanding it and by eliminating its causes. Hankering to end suffering only causes further harm.

Besides acknowledging suffering, one also accepts the natural course of things, as described in stage #1 of the third kind of reflection, above. When one has gained a thorough understanding of suffering, or of problems, then one’s duties in the context of this stage are complete. One is prepared to move on to the second stage.

## Stage 2:

The cause of suffering (*samudaya*): the origin of problems; the various conditioning factors that come together and conflict with one another, leading to diverse forms of stress, pressure, affliction, discomfort, and deficiency. One needs to discover these causes and then perform the responsibility of *pahāna*: elimination or abandonment.

The Buddha described the principal agents that go hand-in-hand with human suffering, both the actor standing at the front of the stage – craving (*taṇhā*)<sup>29</sup> – and the entire cast, or the complete process, that is, the chain of conditioning factors beginning with ignorance (*avijjā*), outlined in the teaching of Dependent Origination.<sup>30</sup>

When one experiences suffering or encounters a specific problem one needs to look for the related causes and conditions in accord with the first kind of reflection, above (the investigation of causes and conditions). If

<sup>29</sup>Craving (*taṇhā*) as the origin of suffering: see, e.g.: Vin. I. 10; D. II. 308; S. V. 421-22.

<sup>30</sup>The process of Dependent Origination, beginning with ignorance, as the origin of suffering: see, e.g.: A. I. 177, and see the passages by the Buddha on Dependent Origination ending with the phrase: *evametassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*.



the problem stems from conditioning factors within oneself, one reflects on the principal agents (craving, or all factors of Dependent Origination) along with accompanying conditions specific to that situation. When one has investigated, analyzed, and discovered the root of the problem which must be eliminated or abandoned, one's reflections in the context of this second stage are complete.

### **Stage 3:**

Cessation (*nirodha*): the cessation of suffering; the release from suffering; the end of all problems. This is the goal, in respect to which our responsibility is *sacchikiriya*: to realize, actualize, accomplish or reach it.

This stage requires the following reflections: What is the desired goal? What is the purpose of spiritual practice? Where am I going in this practice? Is this goal realistic? How can it be achieved? What are the principles having to do with reaching this goal? What are the subsidiary goals or the gradual sequence of lesser goals along the path to reaching the main goal?

### **Stage 4:**

Path (*magga*): the way leading to the cessation of suffering; the ways of practice for bringing suffering to an end; the methods for solving problems. This refers to those methods and details of practice required for eliminating the cause of problems and for reaching the desired goal. Our responsibility in this stage is *bhāvanā*: cultivation, practice, application.

In regard to contemplation, the necessary task is to determine those measures, procedures, and tactics required for successfully dealing with the source of problems, and which are in harmony with the desired goal.

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## E. REFLECTION ON GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

This method refers to reflecting on and understanding the relationship between goals (*attha*) and principles (*dhamma*).<sup>31</sup> This is a very important reflection when one undertakes spiritual practice or follows a specific teaching, preventing one's actions from being erratic, aimless, or gullible.

The term *dhamma* here means 'principle' or 'basis'. It refers to principles of truth, of virtue, and of practice, and it includes teachings which should be applied and followed correctly.

*Attha* is defined as 'meaning', 'objective', 'goal', 'desired benefit', or 'desired essence'.

In Dhamma practice, or when following any sort of principle, it is necessary to understand the meaning or purpose of that activity. One should ask the questions: 'Why was this principle (*dhamma*) established?' 'Where does it lead to, both in terms of the final goal, and in terms of intermediate targets which are connected to other principles?'

A correct understanding of principles and objectives leads to the right practice referred to as *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*, which is traditionally translated as 'to practise the Dhamma in a way appropriate to the Dhamma'. It can also be translated as 'practising minor principles of Dhamma consistent with major principles of Dhamma'. Very simply, this means practising the Dhamma correctly: acting in such a way that subsidiary factors of practice are in harmony with and nourish key principles of practice, leading to the desired goal.<sup>32</sup>

Practising the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*) as described above is vital. One can say that it is the criterion determining whether Dhamma practice or a specific activity will succeed and reach its goal or not. {637}

<sup>31</sup>The expression 'the method of reflecting on the relationship between goals and principles' is not the original title for this way of reflection. Technically, the order of these two terms should be 'principles and goals' (*dhamma attha*), but as a compound word the term *attha-dhamma* is common in the scriptures (e.g.: D. III. 155; J. VI. 222; JA. VI. 223; Ps. II. 194).

<sup>32</sup>For definitions of the term *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* see Appendix 2.

If one practises the Dhamma incorrectly one's practice will be defective, fruitless, and naive; it may even have the opposite desired effect and cause harm.

Every principle (*dhamma*) has an objective and goal (*attha*); whatever one engages in, one must be able to answer the question: 'What am I doing this for?'

There is a great emphasis on this form of reflection in Dhamma practice, both as an attribute of individuals, for example in the seven qualities of a virtuous person (*sappurisa-dhamma*) and the four kinds of analytic insight (*paṭisambhidā*), and as part of a gradual sequence of practice, for example in the four virtues conducive to growth in wisdom (*paññāvuḍḍhi-dhamma*) and in the ways of practice described below.

Following are some passages from the Pali Canon on this subject:

Monks, how is a monk a Dhamma-knower (*dhammaññū*)? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Vinaya knows the Dhamma, that is, the discourses, stanzas, expositions, verses, exclamations, sayings, birth stories, marvels, and answers to questions.

How is a monk a meaning-knower (*atthaññū*)? Here, a monk knows the meaning of various teachings thus: 'This is the meaning of this teaching; this is the meaning of that teaching.'<sup>33</sup>

A. IV. 113-14.

Monks, how is a person one of great knowledge (*bahussuta*) and one who understands by way of learning (*suta*)? Some people have learned much in respect to the discourses, stanzas, expositions, verses, exclamations, sayings, birth stories, marvels, and answers to questions. They thoroughly understand the essence and principles of that large body of learning; they are ones who practise the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*). In this way a person is called one of great knowledge and one who understands by learning.

A. II. 7-8.

Monks, the Dhamma that I have taught is extensive, that is, the discourses, stanzas, expositions, verses, exclamations, sayings, birth stories, marvels, and answers to questions. If a monk thoroughly understands the meaning and principle of even one verse consisting of four lines, and is one who practises the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*), he is worthy to be called one of great knowledge, a champion of the Dhamma.

A. II. 178-9.

Monks, these five things make for the dissolution, for the disappearance of the true Dhamma: the monks do not listen to the Dhamma respectfully; they do not study the Dhamma respectfully; they do not recollect the Dhamma respectfully; they do not reflect respectfully on the meaning (*atthupaparikkhā*) of that Dhamma they have memorized; when they understand the meaning and principle, they do not practise the Dhamma in a way appropriate to the Dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*).

Monks, these five things make for the stability, for the non-dissolution, for the non-disappearance of the true Dhamma: the monks listen to the Dhamma respectfully; they study the Dhamma respectfully; they recollect the Dhamma respectfully; they reflect respectfully on the meaning of that Dhamma they have memorized; when they understand the meaning and principle, they practise the Dhamma in a way appropriate to the Dhamma.<sup>34</sup> {638}

A. III. 176-7.

The sequence of the principles described in the previous quotation can be outlined as follows:

<sup>33</sup>In relation to an emperor or great king, the term *dhamma* in the context of *dhammaññū* refers to principles of governing; e.g. the customs of rulership according to royal tradition (see: A. III. 148-9; AA. III. 283).

<sup>34</sup>The term ‘respectfully’ (*sakkaccaṃ*) means to act with sincere determination, to take a matter seriously, for example in the phrase: *vacchakaṃ sakkaccaṃ upanijjhāyati* = ‘to watch over a calf with commitment and careful attention’ (Vin. I. 193).

To listen to and study the Dhamma →  
 to memorize the Dhamma →  
 to reflect on its meaning →  
 to practise the Dhamma in a way appropriate to the Dhamma.

This same sequence is found in many other suttas, and can thus be considered an important principle of Buddhist training and practice.<sup>35</sup>

Let us compare this teaching with the principle of wisdom development, or the four factors making for stream-entry:

Monks, these four things are conducive to the growth of wisdom, that is: association with superior persons, hearing the true Dhamma, wise reflection, and practice in accordance with the Dhamma.<sup>36</sup>

A. II. 246.

These two teachings are essentially the same. Note, however, that in the former teaching the factor of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is replaced by the term ‘reflection on the meaning’ (*atthupaparikkhā*).

The use of the term *atthupaparikkhā* here seems to be narrowing the definition of *yoniso-manasikāra* in this circumstance, by focusing primarily on this fifth kind of reflection being discussed in this section. That is, when one understands the relationship between principles (*dhamma*) and objectives (*attha*), one reaches the next step of proper application of the teachings (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*).

Many sutta passages clarify the relationship between *dhamma* (principle) and *attha* (objective; essence; benefit; purpose) for example:

<sup>35</sup>See: A. I. 35-6; A. II. 97; A. IV. 116, 220-23, 296 (= 328), 337-8, 391-92; A. V. 126-7, 154-5.

<sup>36</sup>This teaching occurs in many places; see previous references.

Monks, Dhamma and not Dhamma (*adhamma*) are to be understood, likewise essence and non-essence (*anattā*). When Dhamma and not Dhamma, essence and non-essence, are understood, one should practise according to Dhamma and essence.

What is not Dhamma? What is Dhamma? What is non-essence? What is essence?

Wrong view ... wrong thought ... wrong speech ... wrong action ... wrong livelihood ... wrong effort ... wrong mindfulness ... wrong concentration ... wrong knowledge ... wrong liberation is not Dhamma.

Right view ... right thought ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration ... right knowledge ... right liberation is Dhamma.

Various evil, unwholesome states arising with wrong view ... wrong thought ... wrong speech ... wrong action ... wrong livelihood ... wrong effort ... wrong mindfulness ... wrong concentration ... wrong knowledge ... wrong liberation as condition are the non-essence.

Various wholesome states that come to completion by right view ... right thought ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration ... right knowledge ... right liberation are the essence.<sup>37</sup> {639}

The benefit of the discipline (*vinaya*) is restraint (*saṃvara*); the benefit of restraint is non-remorse; the benefit of non-remorse is joy; the benefit of joy is delight; the benefit of delight is serenity; the benefit of serenity is happiness; the benefit of happiness is concentration; the benefit of concentration is knowledge and vision according to reality; the benefit of knowledge and vision according to reality is disenchantment; the benefit of disenchantment is dispassion; the benefit of dispassion is deliverance; the benefit of deliverance is knowledge and vision of deliverance; the benefit of knowledge and vision of deliverance is final, absolute Nibbāna (*anupādā-parinibbāna*).

Wholesome, virtuous conduct has non-remorse as its benefit and reward (*ānisaṁsa*).

Non-remorse has joy as its benefit and reward.

Joy has delight as its benefit and reward.

Delight has serenity as its benefit and reward.

Serenity has happiness as its benefit and reward.

Happiness has concentration as its benefit and reward.

Concentration has knowledge and vision according to reality as its benefit and reward.

Knowledge and vision according to reality has disenchantment as its benefit and reward.

Disenchantment has dispassion as its benefit and reward.

Dispassion has deliverance as its benefit and reward.

Deliverance has knowledge and vision of deliverance as its benefit and reward.

Thus, monks, things flow into other things, things bring other things to fulfilment, for the sake of going from what is not the goal to what is the goal.<sup>37</sup>

A. V. 312-3.

The purpose of seeing rightly is disenchantment.

The purpose of disenchantment is dispassion.

The purpose of dispassion is deliverance.

The purpose of deliverance is Nibbāna.

<sup>37</sup> An abridged translation from A. V. 222-32. At A. V. 254-61 and 275 the ten unwholesome courses of action (*akusala-kammaṣaṭṭha*) are defined as *adhamma* and the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṣaṭṭha*) are defined as *dhamma*.

S. III. 189-90.

Purity of virtue is for the sake of (*attha*) purity of mind.

Purity of mind is for the sake of purity of view.

Purity of view is for the sake of purity of overcoming doubt.

Purity of overcoming doubt is for the sake of purity of the knowledge and vision regarding Path and not-Path.

Purity of the knowledge and vision regarding Path and not-Path is for the sake of purity of the knowledge and vision of the way of practice.

Purity of the knowledge and vision of the way of practice is for the sake of purity of knowledge and vision.

Purity of knowledge and vision is for the sake of final, absolute Nibbāna.

M. I. 149-50.

The following sutta passages clarify the meaning of the terms *attha* and *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*: {640}

The doing of good (*attha*) by one who does not recognize what is good is not conducive to happiness; a fool squanders the good like a monkey watching over an orchard.<sup>39</sup>

J. I. 251.

One should investigate the source of things in order to clearly understand their essence (*attha*).<sup>40</sup>

A. IV. 3-4.

A person who practises the Dhamma correctly is difficult to find in the world.

A. III. 168-9, 240.

<sup>38</sup>See similar passages at: A. V. 1-3, 311-12.



[Wandering Ascetic:] ‘Friend Sāriputta, what is difficult to do in this Dhamma and Discipline?’

[Venerable Sāriputta:] ‘Going forth, friend, is difficult to do in this Dhamma and Discipline.’

‘What, friend, is difficult to do by one who has gone forth?’

‘To find delight, friend, is difficult to do by one who has gone forth.’

‘What, friend, is difficult to do by one who has found delight?’

‘To practise in accord with the Dhamma, friend, is difficult to do by one who has found delight.’

‘But, friend, if a bhikkhu practises in accord with the Dhamma, would it take him long to become an arahant?’

‘Not long, friend.’

S. IV. 260-61.

This reflection and understanding of goals and principles is worthy of constant attention. Indeed, the ‘middleness’ (*majjhima*) of the Middle Way is determined by an understanding and awareness of the true goal of practice. Moreover, each subdivision or factor of the Middle Way has specific objectives, as well as a common goal, which need to be borne in mind and understood in order to practise them correctly: for these factors to be well-integrated with one another and for them to lead gradually

<sup>39</sup>‘One who does not recognize what is good’ is a translation of *anatta-kusala*; this term literally means a ‘clever person who misses the point’. The *Abhidhānapadīpikā* presents nine different definitions for the term *attha*. Note that in the secondary texts of the Pali Canon and in the commentaries the term *attha* is generally used as ‘in the meaning of’ or ‘in the sense of’, for example: ‘It is called right concentration in the sense of “non-distraction”’ (Ps. I. 21; similar to Ps. II. 96); ‘It is called concentration in the sense of “well-established”’ (Vism. 84-5). In the original Pali texts, however, this term is used to denote ‘benefit’ or ‘objective’, for example: ‘The benefit [or purpose] of concentration is knowledge and vision according to reality’ (e.g.: A. V. 1-2).

<sup>40</sup>‘The source of things’ is a translation of *yoniso*. The commentaries explain this passage from the Pali Canon in an elevated, ideal way, stating that an investigation of things here refers to a wise reflection on the Four Noble Truths, resulting in a realization of truth by way of Path-wisdom (*magga-pariñā*) along with insight (*vipassanā*) – AA. IV. 1.

to the intended goal. In other words, a knowledge and understanding of the objectives, benefits, and limitations of specific spiritual factors determines the correctness and evenness of one's practice, resulting in *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*: to practise the Dhamma in a way appropriate to the Dhamma.

From a perspective of the ultimate good (*paramattha*) – not from the perspective of mundane welfare (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*), heavenly welfare (*samparāyikattha*), others' welfare (*parattha*), or social welfare – virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) share the same final goal of Nibbāna. But from a more limited perspective, each of these three factors has its own perimeter and sphere of activity which must be linked with the function of the others, enabling the attainment of the final goal. By themselves these factors cannot lead to ultimate success; at the same time each one of these factors is essential and indispensable. Thus the maxim: virtuous conduct leads to concentration; concentration leads to wisdom; and wisdom leads to liberation.

If one practises moral conduct without a clear direction it may become an adherence to rules and religious practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), feeding into the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). If one develops concentration without reflecting on its true purpose, one may get caught up in psychic powers, strengthening wrong view or various forms of base arts (*tiracchāna-vijjā*). If one develops wisdom that is not conducive to liberation, one deviates from the Middle Way and does not reach the goal of Buddhism; one may get lost along the path or become stuck in some form of wrong view. {641}

For this reason, it is possible for a Dhamma practitioner to practise incorrectly and go astray at every stage of practice. For example, in relation to the beginning stage of practice, of virtuous conduct, there exists the general tenet that a strict and pure observance of moral precepts and rules is an essential quality of a Dhamma practitioner; he or she must constantly give great import to moral conduct. Nevertheless, despite a strict observance to morality, if one lacks an awareness of the relationship between principles (*dhamma*) and goals (*attha*) – if one forgets the true purpose and objective of moral conduct, as well as its parameters,

benefits, and place in relation to other factors – one may be remiss in one's practice at any time.

A person may mistakenly consider morality as inherently complete, as something existing in isolation, not as part of a larger spiritual process. Alternatively, a lack of awareness about the true purpose and objective of moral conduct may lead people to attach to various conventions, to simply follow traditional ways of behaving without understanding the reasons for such behaviour; they do not see that *sīla* is a tool for training oneself.

Some people unconsciously entertain the belief that moral strictness or puritanism is good and complete in itself; goodness and spiritual accomplishment is achieved simply by adhering to a code of ethics. Morality thus becomes an end in itself rather than a stage of practice leading to a higher goal.

Other people indulge in the belief that the stricter or more austere one practises, the better. For such people an awareness of the true purpose of moral conduct is completely absent. They create increasingly severe and austere forms of practice. Those who witness such practices in others and who lack wise reflection will equally be led astray: their faith will increase in proportion to the extreme austerities they see in others.

This kind of belief is one cause for peculiar forms of ascetic practices, which the Buddha referred to as 'severe (or brutish) practices of naked ascetics'. Such practices are examples of an adherence to rules and practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) and fall under the extreme of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). Examples of such practices include: eating only fermented vegetables; eating grass; eating only fallen fruit; wearing discarded cloth; wearing grass garments; pulling out the head hair and beard; and lying on a bed of thorns. Indeed, there exist many more extreme forms of practice as those just mentioned. (See Note 15.4)

People who understand the true objective of moral conduct will also give precedence to moral strictness and ethical codes, but they will reflect on the relationship of morality to other aspects of spiritual practice. They are able to discriminate, by reflecting in the following ways: 'These are

## NOTE 15.4: ASCETIC PRACTICES

See the ascetic practices (*nijjhāma-paṭipadā*) listed at: A. I. 295.

The Buddha included some of these practices in Buddhism, permitting the monks to observe them, for example to wear only rag-robles (robes made from discarded cloth). But the reason for including them is that they are consistent with a simple life and do not cause harm (A. II. 26-7).

In the case of discarded cloth, a monk must first wash, sew and dye it according to prescribed standards. These ascetic practices are considered special; they are observed voluntarily and are not compulsory.

universal principles of morality, while these are supplementary observances and practices'; 'This person should strictly observe this precept for this reason'; 'This precept should be compulsory for everyone equally, for this reason or for this desired result'; 'This practice should be voluntary, because of these differences between individual people'; 'This person practises strictly and has attained success, while this other person practises strictly and has not succeeded – why is this so?'; 'This person does not practise very strictly but has made more progress than another person who practises strictly – what are the reasons for this?'

This kind of reflection, on principles and goals, may be less important when one has a virtuous friend and teacher nearby. In such a circumstance, one relies in large part on faith in the teacher's wisdom and a trust that one's practice will gradually progress. If the teacher is truly wise and skilled, he or she will be able to explain the principles and objectives at each stage of practice. {642}

#### F. REFLECTION ON ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND THE ESCAPE

The reflection on advantages (*assāda*), disadvantages (*ādinava*), and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) is another method of discerning things as they really are, by emphasizing the acknowledgement of every aspect of a particular object, including its good and bad features. This reflection is directly linked to the practical application of Dhamma teachings, and includes a recognition of how important it is to clearly understand a problem and to know one's intended destination before making the effort to solve the

problem. Similarly, before abandoning one thing in order to take up another, one must know both things well, leading to the insight that such action is suitable, correct, and done with circumspection.

- *Assāda*: advantage; merit; good quality; sweetness; gratifying aspect; delicious aspect.
- *Ādīnava*: disadvantage; fault; defect; drawback; shortcoming; danger; harmful aspect.
- *Nissaraṇa*: escape; way out; state of deliverance; relinquishment; freedom from problems; inherent completeness; a state of true goodness, independent of merits and defects, free from problems and those things that one has abandoned.

There are two important attributes of this form of reflection:

1. To see things according to the truth means that one sees both the good and bad sides, both the merits and harmful aspects, of an object. One does not simply see only the good aspects or only the negative aspects. For example, to truly see into the nature of sense desire (*kāma*), one knows both its merits and its harmful aspects.<sup>41</sup>
2. When one wishes to solve a problem or to escape from an undesirable situation, it is not enough to simply know the merits and harm – the advantages and disadvantages – of that problematic item or that unsatisfactory situation. One must also see the way out and to see the goal – to see the nature of the goal and how to get there. How is the goal better than those defects, weaknesses, and harmful aspects that one is currently facing? Is it true that by reaching this goal one is no longer dependent on these former advantages and disadvantages? Does this goal – this freedom from problems – truly exist?

<sup>41</sup>Beware of an overly restricted interpretation of the word *kāma* (which can be used to refer specifically to sexual desire). Take for example a monk who meets with some laypeople and asks about their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their relatives. If instead of acting through lovingkindness he wants them to like him and to offer patronage, this is called speech with the desire for ‘sensuality’ (*kāma*) – see: DhA. II. 156.

One should not hastily try and get rid of problems or be too rash in one's practice. For example, although the Buddha clearly understood the many harmful effects and faults of sensuality, until he had seen the way out of sensuality, he did not assert that he would not return to indulge in it:<sup>42</sup>

Before my awakening, O monks, when I was still a bodhisatta and not yet enlightened, this thought occurred to me: 'What is the positive aspect (*assāda*) in the world, what is the deficiency (*ādinava*) in the world, and what is the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from the world?' Then I thought: 'Whatever delight and happiness there is dependent on worldly things, that is the positive aspect in the world; that the world is impermanent, pervaded by suffering, and subject to change, that is the deficiency in the world; the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world [i.e. *Nibbāna*], that is the escape from the world.' {643}

I went in search of the gratification (*assāda*) in the world, O monks. Whatever gratification there is in the world, that I have found; and in how far there is gratification in the world that I have clearly seen by wisdom. I went in search of the danger (*ādinava*) in the world. Whatever danger there is in the world, that I have found; and in how far there is danger in the world, that I have clearly seen by wisdom. I went in search of an escape from the world. That escape from the world I have found; and in how far there is an escape from the world, that I have clearly seen by wisdom.

So long, monks, as I did not fully understand as they really are the world's gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, and the escape from the world as escape, for so long I did not claim that I had awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment....

If, monks, there were no gratification in the world, beings would not become attached to the world. But as there is gratification in the world, beings become attached to it. If there were no danger in

<sup>42</sup>Here the way out (*nissaraṇa*) is the bliss and happiness independent of sensuality (see the following quote).

the world, beings would not become disenchanted with the world. But as there is danger in the world, beings become disenchanted with it. If there were no escape from the world, beings could not escape from the world. But as there is an escape from the world, beings can escape from it.

So long, monks, as beings do not fully understand as they really are the world's gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, and the escape from the world as escape, for so long they cannot escape, be released, and be liberated from the world ... they cannot dwell with a boundless mind. But when they fully understand as they really are, the world's gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, and the escape from the world as escape, then they can escape, be released, and be liberated from the world ... they can dwell with a boundless mind.

So long, monks, as various ascetics and brahmins do not fully understand as they really are the world's gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, and the escape from the world as escape, for so long they cannot confess to being ascetics among ascetics, to being brahmins among brahmins, and they are not yet called those who have realized with supreme wisdom, here and now entering upon and abiding in the goal of asceticism or the goal of brahminhood.

*A. I. 258-61.*

Before my awakening, O monks, when I was still a bodhisatta and not yet enlightened, this thought occurred to me: 'What is the positive aspect of physical form, what is its deficiency, and what is its escape? ... What is the positive aspect of feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness, what is its deficiency, and what is its escape?' .... So long, monks, as I did not fully understand as they really are the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment.<sup>43</sup> {644}

*S. III. 27-8.*

<sup>43</sup>The following two suttas follow a similar template to the previous quotation, on the gratification in, danger in, and escape from the world. There are several other

Monks, that those ascetics and brahmins who do not understand as it actually is the merits as merits, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape in the case of sensual pleasures, can either themselves fully understand (*pariññā*) sensual pleasures or instruct another so that he can fully understand sensual pleasures – that is impossible. That those ascetics and brahmins who understand as it actually is the merits as merits, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape in the case of sensual pleasures, can either themselves fully understand sensual pleasures or instruct another so that he can fully understand sensual pleasures – that is possible.

*M. I. 87-8.*

What, monks, is the advantage in regard to sensual pleasures?.... The happiness and delight that arises dependent on these five cords of sensual pleasure are the advantage in regard to sensual pleasures. And what is the danger in regard to sensual pleasures?.... A mass of suffering visible here and now ... a mass of suffering in the life to come.... And what is the escape in regard to sensual pleasures? It is the removal of desire and lust, the abandonment of desire and lust for sensual pleasures [i.e. *Nibbāna*]. This is the escape in regard to sensual pleasures.

*M. I. 85-87, 92.*

passages by the Buddha similar to this one, on the following subjects: the four elements (*dhātu*) – S. II. 170-73; the six internal sense bases and the six external sense objects (S. IV. 6-12); and the five spiritual faculties (S. V. 204).



When a monk considers sensual pleasures (*kāma*), his mind does not leap forward and take satisfaction in them, attach to or become devoted to them. But when he considers renunciation it does leap forward, takes satisfaction in it, fixes on it, and becomes devoted to it. His mind is well-set, well-trained, well-departed, well-liberated, and released from sensual pleasures. Whichever taints and afflictions arise dependent on sensual pleasures, he is freed from these taints and afflictions. He does not feel that kind of feeling.<sup>44</sup> This is called the deliverance from sense desire (*kāma*).<sup>45</sup>

*D. III. 239-40, 278; A. III. 245.*

So too, formerly when I lived the home life, I enjoyed myself, provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure.... On a later occasion, having understood as they actually are the causes, the unsustainability, the merits, the danger, and the escape in regard to sensual pleasures, I abandoned craving for sensual pleasures, I dispelled the fever for sensual pleasures, and I abide without thirst, with a mind inherently at peace.

I see other beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures being devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, burning with fever for sensual pleasures, indulging in sensual pleasures, and I do not envy them nor do I delight therein. Why is that? Because I experience delight in a happiness apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states. I therefore do not envy an inferior happiness, I do not delight in an inferior happiness. {645}

*M. I. 505.*

<sup>44</sup>Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi quotes the *Manorathapūraṇī*, explaining this sentence as: 'He does not feel that sensual feeling or that distressful and feverish feeling.'

<sup>45</sup>The following passages address the escape from ill-will, cruelty, etc. At It. 61 renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is described as the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from sense desire.

See here, Mahānāma, before my awakening, while I was still only an unenlightened bodhisatta, I too clearly saw as it actually is with proper wisdom how sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering, and much despair, and how great is the danger in them, but as long as I still did not attain to the rapture and pleasure that is independent of sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to a happiness more peaceful than that, I could not assert to being one who will not return to seek out sensual pleasures.

But when I clearly saw as it actually is with proper wisdom how sensual pleasures provide little gratification ... and I attained to the rapture and pleasure that is free from sensual pleasures, free from unwholesome states, and to a happiness more peaceful than that, I could assert to being one who will not return to seek out sensual pleasures.

M. I. 91-92.

These passages from the Pali Canon describe this kind of reflection, which can be applied in a general context, even to individual spiritual factors. For example, the Paṭisambhidāmagga describes the advantages and disadvantages of the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*). In regard to concentration, the absence of restlessness (*uddhacca*), the absence of agitation due to restlessness, the strength resulting from having a steadfast mind, and the refined states of happiness (*sukhavihāra-dhamma*) comprise the advantages (*assāda*) of concentration. The fact that restlessness and the agitation due to restlessness can return, and that concentration is impermanent, subject to stress, and not-self, comprise its disadvantages (*ādinava*).<sup>46</sup>

Generally speaking, in everyday life and practice, people are faced with choices, between those things that are harmful and other things that are meritorious and free from danger. Even in the case of an escape (*nissaraṇa*), the possible ways out are relative, that is, one chooses the optimum way out in a specific circumstance.

<sup>46</sup>Ps. II. 8-10.

In these situations one should not neglect to use this form of reflection on the advantages, disadvantages, and escape. One should acknowledge the positive aspects of those things or those practices that one is abandoning. And very importantly, one should not overlook the dangers, faults, shortcomings, and opportunities for loss of those things that one chooses to undertake.

Reflecting on things in this manner enables one to practise in an optimal and vigilant way. One may be able to retain the positive aspects of those things one has abandoned, and one may be able to avoid or to redeem the negative or faulty aspects of those things one has undertaken.

An example of this form of reflection in the context of formal Dhamma teachings is the Buddha's key teaching referred to as the 'graduated sermon' (*anupubbikathā*). The Buddha gave this teaching regularly and to a general audience, especially before describing the Four Noble Truths.

The graduated sermon outlines a virtuous, charitable, and upright life, based on the principles of generosity (*dāna*) and moral conduct (*sīla*). It then describes the abundant happiness and contentment – referred to as a happy or heavenly abiding (*sagga*) – that results from living such a virtuous life. From here it describes the drawbacks, deficiencies, dangers and imperfection of that form of happiness and abundance, referred to here as the 'disadvantages of sensual pleasure' (*kāmādīnava*). Finally, it describes the escape along with the benefits of escape, referred to as the 'benefits of renouncing sensual pleasure' (*nekkhammānisaṃsa*). When the listener saw these benefits, the Buddha concluded by teaching the Four Noble Truths. {646}

### G. REFLECTION ON THE TRUE AND COUNTERFEIT VALUE OF THINGS

The reflection on the true and counterfeit value of things, or the reflection on using and consuming (*paṭisevanā*), acts to prevent or dispel craving (*taṇhā*). It is applied to subdue defilements or to prevent defilements from overwhelming the mind, and it then influences people's subsequent behaviour.

This form of reflection may be applied often in everyday life because it is connected to the use of the four requisites and to the consumption of

material objects. It follows the basic maxim that human beings relate to things because they have needs and believe that these things will satisfy their needs. Whichever things satisfy our needs are considered valuable or useful. The value of things can be classified into two kinds, according to the nature of a person's needs and requirements:

1. True value: this refers to the direct value, benefit, or meaning of an object in meeting the requirements for human life. Alternatively, it refers to the way in which people use things in order to address personal issues, aiming for personal wellbeing or the welfare of others.

This true value relies on wisdom for assessment and evaluation; it can even be called the value conforming to wisdom. For example, the true value of food is that it nourishes the body, sustains life, facilitates good health and physical comfort, and provides one with strength to perform one's activities. The true value of a car is that it enables one to travel quickly, and supports one's work, overall way of life, and meritorious actions; in choosing a car one should focus on convenience, safety, stability, endurance, etc.

2. Supplementary or counterfeit value: this refers to the value, benefit, or meaning of an object that people add to it in order to experience sense pleasure or to boost and reinforce a cherished sense of self. This counterfeit value relies on craving for assessment and evaluation; it can be called the value gratifying craving. For example, a person gives value to food because it is delicious, it adds to a sense of fun, it is a mark of luxury, or it helps one to look smart and stylish. Similarly, a person chooses a car because it is a sign of wealth and status; here, one focuses on the car's beauty and brand name distinction.

This form of reflection is applied when relating to things in general: when acquiring, consuming, using, and owning things. Here, one gives emphasis to understanding the true value of things, recognizing what is of genuine benefit to oneself and others.

Besides truly benefitting people's lives, a recognition of the true value of things supports the development of wholesome qualities like mindfulness, and through the application of wisdom it frees people from the enslavement by material things. Moreover, it is accompanied by a sense of appropriateness and moderation. This is in contrast to attaching a counterfeit value on things through craving, which provides little benefit and can even endanger people's lives. It increases such unwholesome qualities as greed, infatuation, jealousy, arrogance, conceit, and false views, and leads to conflict and oppression. For example, a meal costing three dollars eaten with discernment may be of more benefit to one's body than a meal costing fifty dollars eaten in order to boost one's self-image or simply for sensual gratification.

Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, uses the robe only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with horseflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of concealing the private parts. {647}

Reflecting wisely, he eats almsfood neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for the sake of boasting and physical attractiveness, but only for the continuance of this body, for the sustenance of life, for warding off hunger leading to distress, and for assisting the holy life, considering: 'Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.'

Reflecting wisely, he uses the dwelling place only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with horseflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of mitigating the perils of climate and for enjoying retreat.

Reflecting wisely, he uses the medicinal requisites only for dispelling arisen feelings stemming from illness and for the benefit of being free from afflicting disease.<sup>47</sup>

## H. REFLECTION ROUSING WHOLESOME QUALITIES

Wise reflection rousing wholesome qualities can also be referred to as reflection mobilizing virtue, reflection on cultivating virtue, or contemplation conducive to a wholesome and beneficial course of thinking. It is used to prevent, reduce, or dispel craving, and is thus classified as part of preliminary spiritual practice. It promotes the growth of wholesome qualities and generates mundane right view.

The general premise behind this form of reflection is that different people may experience or cognize the same phenomenon in different ways. They may see and think in a different manner, according to the structure of their minds, their accumulated habits and proclivities (i.e. their *saṅkhārā* – the ‘fashioners’ or ‘determinants’ of the mind), or their considerations in that moment.

In regard to a single object, one person may look at it and think in wholesome, beneficial and virtuous ways, while another person may look at it and think in negative, harmful or unwholesome ways. Similarly, and for the same reasons mentioned above, a single person may experience the same object at different points in time, and create different ideas and opinions about it. At one moment he likes it, in the next he does not. {648}

This form of reflection plays an important role in generating wholesome thoughts and actions during the time of reflection, and in helping to rectify longstanding negative habits and inclinations, while at the same time creating new, alternative wholesome habits.

<sup>47</sup> Cf.: D. III. 130. Of these reflections on the four requisites, the most commonly mentioned one is the reflection on eating; a person who practises this is called ‘one who knows moderation in eating’ (*bhojane-mattaññutā*): e.g.: M. I. 273; M. III. 2-3; S. IV. 104, 176-7; A. II. 39-40; A. IV. 167-8. Moderation in eating is a way to reduce craving for flavours (*rasa-taṇhā*): Nd. I. 240-41. Note that the term *yoniso paṭisaṅkhā* is used here for ‘reflecting wisely’, but the meaning of this term lies within the scope of the term *yoniso-manasikāra*, according to the principle expressed at M. I. 7. These two terms are clearly used interchangeably at: M. I. 11 and S. V. 79. The Sabbāsavaśamvara Sutta provides a good example for showing the range of meaning of the term *yoniso-manasikāra* (M. I. 6-12); a similar sutta exists at A. III. 387-8.

## NOTE 15.5: AUTHOR'S NOTE

Originally, I wrote at length about the final three kinds of reflection (kinds 8-10) – more than I wrote about the other kinds – but the original manuscript has disappeared. What is contained in this chapter is simply the core of that original manuscript, written as a replacement. This new material took ten months less time to write than that spent on the original manuscript, and it was written in a remote residence where I did not have access to a complete set of texts. Moreover, this new material was not part of the original manuscript's framework. The order and content of this material may thus be deficient, excessive, or different in regard to the original. In particular, at this time I tried to keep this material brief in order to meet the deadline for publication which had been delayed for a long time.

On the contrary, if one lacks this skilful means of reflection, one's thoughts and actions will be influenced by the power of accumulated habits alone, which will in turn be continually reinforced by these thoughts and actions.

One simple example of this which is found in the scriptures is the reflection on death. If one applies unwise or unskilful attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*), unwholesome states will arise. For example, when one thinks of death one feels depressed, sad, discouraged, or frightened, or when one thinks of the death of an enemy one feels delight.

If one applies wise reflection, on the other hand, wholesome states will arise. One will feel vigilant and inspired; one will strive to perform one's duties, act in beneficial ways, and practise the Dhamma, and one will gain insight into the true nature of conditioned phenomena.

As outlined in the scriptures, a skilful reflection on death includes the factors of mindfulness (*sati*; to be circumspect; to bear in mind those things that need to be engaged with), a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*; motivation), and knowledge (*ñāṇa*; knowledge in line with the truth). Many skilful methods are recommended in regard to reflection on death.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup>See: Vism. 229-39.

There are many passages in the Tipiṭaka in which the Buddha describes how in the same incident or situation one way of thinking will lead to laziness while another way will lead to effort. Here is one example:

Monks, there are eight occasions of indolence (kusīta-vatthu). What eight?

Here, a monk has a job to do. He thinks: 'I've got this job to do, but it will make me tired. First, I'll have a rest.' So he lies down and does not marshal energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realize the unrealized.

Or he has done some work, and thinks: 'I've done this work, now I'm tired. I'll have a rest.' So he lies down....

Or he has to go on a journey, and thinks: 'I have to go on this journey. It will make me tired. First, I'll have a rest.' So he lies down....

Or he has been on a journey, and thinks: 'I've finished the journey, now I'm tired. I'll have a rest.' So he lies down.... {649}

Or he goes on almsround in a village or town and does not get his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: 'I've gone for alms in a village or town and have not got my fill of food, whether coarse or fine. My body is tired and not fit for work. I'll have a rest.' So he lies down....

Or he goes on almsround in a village or town and gets his fill of food, either coarse or fine, and he thinks: 'I've gone for alms in a village or town and have got my fill of food, either coarse or fine. My body is heavy like a load of soaked beans and not fit for work. I'll have a rest.' So he lies down....

Or he has developed some slight sickness, and he thinks: 'I've developed some slight sickness. There is a good reason to lie down. I'd better have a rest.' So he lies down....

Or he is recuperating, having not long recovered from an illness, and he thinks: 'I am recuperating, having not long recovered from an illness. My body is weak and not fit for work. I'll have a rest.' So he lies down....



By reflecting in another manner, however, each of these identical situations can lead to the application of effort. The eight occasions for commencing the making of effort (*ārabha-vatthu*) are as follows:

Monks, there are eight occasions for rousing effort. What eight?

Here, a monk has a job to do. He thinks: ‘I’ve got this job to do, but in doing it I won’t find it easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy to complete the uncompleted, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realize the unrealized.’

Or he has finished some work, and thinks: ‘Well, I did the job, but while doing it I wasn’t able to pay ample attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’

Or he has to go on a journey, and thinks: ‘I have to go on this journey, but in doing so I won’t find it easy to pay attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’

Or he has been on a journey, and thinks: ‘I’ve finished the journey, but while doing so I wasn’t able to pay ample attention to the teaching of the Buddhas. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’

Or he goes on almsround in a village or town and does not get his fill of food, whether coarse or fine, and he thinks: ‘I’ve gone for alms in a village or town and have not got my fill of food, whether coarse or fine. My body is light and fit for work. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’

Or he goes on almsround in a village or town and gets his fill of food, either coarse or fine, and he thinks: ‘I’ve gone for alms in a village or town and have got my fill of food, either coarse or fine. My body is light and fit for work. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’ {650}

Or he has developed some slight sickness, and he thinks: ‘I’ve developed some slight sickness. It is quite possible that this illness will get worse. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’

Or he is recuperating, having not long recovered from an illness, and he thinks: ‘I am recuperating, having not long recovered from an illness. It is quite possible that the illness will return. So I will stir up sufficient energy....’<sup>49</sup>

In the case that negative thoughts arise, the scriptures suggest methods for addressing them, and most of these methods entail the use of reflection rousing wholesome qualities. For example, in the Vitakkasamāhāna Sutta the Buddha describes five general principles or stages for dealing with unwholesome thoughts.<sup>50</sup> In sum, if evil, unwholesome thoughts accompanied by greed,<sup>51</sup> hatred, or delusion arise, one can rectify them in the following ways:

1. To think about or pay attention to (*manasikāra*) something else – something wholesome and virtuous. For instance one thinks about something generating a feeling of lovingkindness, instead of something that rouses anger. If by doing this, the negative thoughts still prevail:
2. To consider the harm of such negative thoughts – on how they are unskillful and destructive, and lead to suffering. If they continue:
3. To conduct one’s life by not paying attention to such negative thoughts, similar to how a person who does not want to see something closes his eyes or looks at something else. If they still do not cease:
4. To reflect on the conditioned nature (*saṅkhāra-saṅṭhāna*) of such thoughts: to hold these thoughts in awareness as objects of study for increasing knowledge, rather than considering them as personal problems. One investigates the nature of these thoughts and searches for their root causes. If they still do not disappear:

<sup>49</sup> A description of *kusīta-vatthu* and *ārabha-vatthu* occurs at: D. III. 255-8, 287; A. IV. 332-5.

<sup>50</sup> M. I. 118-22. The summary below includes a commentarial analysis and explanations by the author of *Buddhadhamma*.

<sup>51</sup> *Chanda*; here, this term refers to *taṇhā-chanda*, i.e. lust (*rāga*) or greed (*lobha*).

5. To clamp down on one's teeth and press one's tongue to the roof of one's mouth, making a firm determination to restrain and eliminate these negative thoughts.

In some passages, methods are described for addressing specific kinds of unwholesome thoughts. For example, the Buddha suggested the following methods for eliminating malice and resentment: one should develop lovingkindness, compassion, and equanimity in regard to that person who is the object of one's resentment; one should simply disregard that person; or one should consider that person in light of the principles of kamma, that that person is the owner of his kamma, the heir to his kamma, born of his kamma, related to his kamma, abides supported by his kamma, whatever kamma he should do, for good or for ill, of that he will be the heir.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Ven. Sāriputta suggested five methods for eliminating malice and aversion, which are based on an understanding of the differences between people:

1. Some people, although their physical actions are not impeccable, their speech is well-mannered and disciplined.
2. Some people, although their speech is bad mannered, their physical actions are impeccable.
3. Some people, although neither their speech nor their physical actions are well-mannered, their mind is still occasionally wholesome and pure.
4. Some people have bad-mannered speech and physical actions, and their minds have no opportunity to be virtuous and pure, even temporarily.
5. Some people have impeccable speech and physical actions, and their minds are constantly virtuous and pure. {651}

<sup>52</sup>A. III. 185-6.

In regard to those people whose physical actions are faulty but whose speech is well-mannered, one should dispel one's aversion by focusing on their wholesome speech and disregarding their unwholesome physical deeds. This is similar to a monk who keeps the *dhutaṅga* rule of wearing only rag robes. When he finds a discarded rag on the road, he steps on it with his left foot, spreads it out with his right foot, and tears off only those parts which are good and usable.

In regard to those people whose speech is faulty but whose physical actions are well-mannered, one should focus on their wholesome deeds and disregard their unskilful speech. This is similar to a lotus pond completely covered by algae. When a traveller arrives, hot, tired, and thirsty, he goes down into the pond, sweeps the algae away with his hands, cups his hands together to scoop up the water, drinks, and goes on his way.

In regard to those people whose verbal and physical actions are faulty, but who know occasional moments of goodness and purity, one should disregard their tainted verbal and physical actions. Instead, one should focus on the fact that their minds are occasionally open to goodness. This is similar to a small amount of water contained in a cow's hoof print. A traveller, hot, tired, and thirsty, sees this water and thinks: 'There is only a little water in this hoof print. If I scoop it up with my hands or with a bowl, the water will become so cloudy that it may become unpotable. Why don't I kneel down, support myself with my arms, and drink like a cow?' In this way he drinks the water and goes on his way.

In regard to those people whose verbal and physical actions are faulty, and furthermore whose minds are not virtuous and pure even temporarily, one should establish oneself in kindness and compassion, thinking of ways to assist them, by considering: 'Indeed, let this person abandon such unwholesome actions by body, speech, and mind, and cultivate wholesome actions. May this person not die and be reborn in a state of perdition, misery, ruin, in hell.' This is like a sick person, afflicted and gravely ill, who is on a long journey. Both the next village ahead and the preceding village behind are far away. He is unable to obtain suitable food, medicine, and nursing care, or to find someone to lead him to a village. Another traveller sees him and responds with kindness and eagerness to help, thinking: 'May this person obtain suitable food, medicine, and care,

or find someone to lead him to a village. May this person not end in ruin and destruction here.’

In regard to those people whose speech and physical actions are impeccable, and whose minds are continually virtuous and pure, one should focus on their constant verbal, physical and mental purity. Such people are considered worthy of respect in all facets of their lives. Moreover, they engender a joyous and pure mind in those who think of them. This is similar to a beautiful lotus pond with clear and cool water and with tranquil borders covered with various plants. When a traveller arrives, parched, tired, and thirsty, he goes down into the pond and drinks the water, and then either sits or lies down in the shade of the bordering trees.<sup>53</sup> {652}

The Visuddhimagga describes many methods of contemplation for dispelling angry, resentful thoughts. These can be summarized as a series of stages and should be applied as is suitable to a person’s individual disposition:<sup>54</sup>

1. To recollect the Buddha’s teachings on overcoming anger and on practising lovingkindness; to remind oneself that getting caught up in anger is to fail to follow the teachings of one’s teacher – the Buddha. There are numerous teachings by the Buddha on anger. For example, he told the monks that even if one were to be captured by bandits and cut in half with a saw, if one were to harbour malice and hatred towards them, one could not be said to be following the Buddha’s teachings. Moreover, an angry

<sup>53</sup>A. III. 186-91 (this is a liberal translation). See also: the nine *āghāta-vatthu* (things giving rise to malice) and the nine *āghāta-paṭivīnaya* (means for eliminating malice) at: D. III. 262-3, 289 and A. IV. 408-409; and the ten *āghāta-vatthu* and the ten *āghāta-paṭivīnaya* at: A. V. 150-51. (The *āghāta-vatthu* alone are mentioned at: Vin. V. 168; Vbh. 389, 391.)

<sup>54</sup>Vism. 295-306. Here, in the Visuddhimagga, this subject is discussed in the context of developing the meditation on the divine abiding of lovingkindness. In a similar way, numerous methods of contemplation exist in reference to other meditation techniques, like the meditation on foulness (*asubha*) and the meditation on the four elements. Note also that these contemplations are intended for monks, but laypeople can select and apply them as is suitable to their disposition.

person creates self-inflicted harm consistent with the wishes of his enemies, for example: his appearance is wretched, his facial features are cheerless, he sleeps miserably, etc. Furthermore, if someone else is angry and one responds with anger, one is worse than that person. Someone who does not respond to anger with anger is called one who has won an extremely difficult battle, and helps both parties – both himself and the other person involved. If by considering in this way one's anger is not dispelled:

2. To think about the other person's good qualities; to reflect only on the person's good attributes. If one does not discern any good qualities in that person, one should establish one's mind in compassion, by considering how he will invariably encounter harmful effects from his evil actions. If by considering in this way, one's anger is not dispelled:
3. To inform oneself that getting caught up in anger only creates trouble and misery for oneself. The person with whom one is angry is unaware of one's misery and remains unaffected. An angry person thus ends up hurting himself, destroys the good qualities acting as a basis for virtuous conduct, and performs the actions of an 'ignoble person' (*anariya-puggala*). If an angry person thinks of harming someone else, regardless of whether he accomplishes this deed or not, he invariably hurts himself first and experiences suffering. If by contemplating in this way, one's anger is still not appeased:
4. To reflect in line with the law of kamma that every person is the owner of his or her actions; all people, including oneself, must reap the fruit of their individual actions. If we are caught up in anger, this itself is negative kamma and we will experience the ill-effects of this unskilful action. Likewise, if others behave badly, they will receive the effects of these actions. If by thinking in this way one's anger is still not dispelled:
5. To consider the Buddha's goodness – his cultivation of the perfections (*pāramī*); to recollect as an ideal the Buddha's acts of self-sacrifice, ever since he was a bodhisatta. There are many Jātaka

stories, for instance, describing how he sacrificed his life for others, even the lives of his enemies; when they acted spitefully towards him, he did not seek revenge but rather was able to win them over through goodness. One can similarly reflect on other examples of the cultivation by specific individuals of the perfections of renunciation and patience, in order to strengthen one's resolve and establish oneself in virtuous conduct. If by contemplating in this way, one's anger is still not appeased:

6. To consider the enormous length of time of the round of rebirth, in reference to which it is taught that it is difficult to find anyone who has not previously been one's mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, relative, or companion – those who have offered support and assistance in the past. One should reflect on how the person with whom one is angry has most likely been one's parent or child in the past. This incident arousing anger is simply a minor event – a single episode – in one's long shared history. One should refrain from fostering hatred and harbouring thoughts of ill-will towards each other. If by contemplating in this way one's anger still remains: {653}
7. To reflect on the blessings of lovingkindness; to consider the benefits of kindness, for example: one goes to sleep with joy; one wakes with joy; one does not have nightmares; and one is cherished by others. One should act kindly in order to reap these benefits. If by considering in this way, one's anger does not disappear:
8. To distinguish and analyze various elements (*dhātu*), in order to discern that in the context of getting worked up and angry, one is in fact dealing with conventional phenomena, that is, one simply assumes that this or that person exists as a separate entity. In truth, there is only the convergence of the thirty-two parts (e.g. hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin), of various elements, of the five aggregates, and of the twelve sense spheres. Wherever one's anger is directed, it has no purchase, no true foundation on which to rest. If by considering in this way, one is still not free from anger:

9. To make a physical gesture of offering a gift; to find something to give in order to show one's goodwill and to exchange gifts with the other person. Giving helps to soften people's hearts; it brings people together, enabling them to speak with one another with kindly words. It is thus an extremely effective instrument for quelling malice.

These are simple examples of methods of contemplation classified under the heading of 'reflection rousing wholesome qualities'. Some of these methods can be used in everyday circumstances, while others are used in relation to specific virtues. The important point here is that by understanding the general principles and methods of this form of reflection well, a person clever at skilful means will be able to devise additional detailed and effective models of this kind of reflection, which are suitable to cultivating specific virtues, consistent with and relevant to the ways of thinking of people in their specific time period. One can say that this rousing of wholesome qualities is the most conducive kind of reflection for developing and discovering supplementary methods of practice, as befitting different kinds of personal dispositions, and corresponding to the changing external conditions of time and place.

Here, it is important to reemphasize the role of mindfulness (*sati*), which constantly keeps one's thinking within the domain of wise reflection. Mindfulness prevents one's thinking from erring into unwise reflection and helps pull attention back, re-establishing it in wise reflection. A person who sustains wise reflection thus applies mindfulness continually.

It is possible to divide all kinds of wise reflection into two categories: wise reflection used for understanding the truth and wise reflection for cultivating wholesome qualities. The point of divergence between these two exists at the moment of establishing one's thoughts, and mindfulness can play an important role in deciding between these two kinds of wise reflection, in a similar way that it chooses wise over unwise reflection. For example, when one cognizes a sense object and mindfulness focuses attention in order to understand its true nature, this corresponds with wise reflection for understanding the truth. If mindfulness focuses on a specific virtue, however, or recollects a wholesome image in the mind,



this corresponds with wise reflection for cultivating wholesome qualities. Wise reflection for understanding the truth depends on truth, which exists according to its own nature, and thus this reflection is certain and unified. Wise reflection for cultivating wholesome qualities, however, is a matter connected to mental conceptions within the sphere of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), and it is thus capable of being diversified and taking many shapes. {654}

## **I. REFLECTION BY ABIDING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**

This ninth kind of reflection, of dwelling in the moment – or reflection with present phenomena as its focus of attention – is simply another aspect of other forms of reflection. One can say that it is combined with or encompasses the previous eight kinds of reflection. The reason for distinguishing it, however, is that it has a unique importance and has some attributes requiring special understanding.

The gist of this kind of reflection is contained and outlined in the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which will be discussed in the section on the seventh factor of the Eightfold Path – right mindfulness.<sup>55</sup> The reason for including this kind of reflection here is that there is a distinct focus in these two contexts. The description within the Four Foundations of Mindfulness focuses on the establishment of mindfulness, by bearing in mind and being fully awake to things as they arise and exist, to the process of cognition, and to one's present activities in every moment. In this context of wise reflection, however, the focus is on the application and content of thought, which is focused on by mindfulness.

The point requiring special attention in relation to this kind of reflection is the misunderstanding about the true meaning of abiding in the present moment. That is, some people believe that Buddhism teaches to only think about things existing in the immediate present; it dissuades people from thinking about the past or the future, or from planning for future events. Practitioners who have this misunderstanding will stray

<sup>55</sup>See chapter 18.

from Buddhist principles, and non-Buddhists who have this understanding will focus on the harmful consequences they believe Buddhism causes for its followers.

The important points to understand concerning the past, the present, and the future in relation to this ninth kind of wise reflection are as follows:<sup>56</sup>

In short, thinking that is not grounded in the present moment – thinking caught up in the past or drifting off into the future – follows the direction of and is subject to craving; it follows one's feelings, or in modern parlance it falls under the sway of one's emotions.<sup>57</sup> In this case one hankers after and longs for those things that have passed one by, because of an attachment to or a lingering over a mental image or memory, or one drifts off into abstract thoughts and fantasies of things that may or may not take place in the future, because one feels stifled, frustrated, and discontent with the conditions one faces and wants to escape from the present.

Thinking that remains in the present moment, on the other hand, follows the direction of knowledge or is subject to the power of wisdom. If one is able to think in this way, regardless of whether one's thoughts are of present, past, or future events, they are still classified as an abiding in the present. It is clear that in Buddhism wise consideration of the past, present, and future at every stage of practice is both vital and correct. This is true for the stage of everyday practice, like learning from lessons experienced in the past and being careful to prevent danger in the future, up to the stage of realizing the truth; and it is even an aspect of the Buddha's activities, in which he applied say the knowledge of the

<sup>56</sup> I wrote this chapter on wise reflection twice, because the original hand-written manuscript was lost and I therefore had to rewrite it. In the original manuscript I gave special emphasis to presenting a clear description on how to rectify this aforementioned misunderstanding. When rewriting this material, I could not remember exactly what I had written before, and thus have presented only a synopsis of the main points.

<sup>57</sup> The Thai word for 'emotion' here is *ahrom* (อารมณ์), which stems from the Pali word *ārammaṇa* (literally 'sense object'). Although the meaning here is of 'falling under the sway of emotions', on a deeper level one also falls under the sway of sense impressions in general.

recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), knowledge of the past (*atītaṃsa-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of the future (*anāgataṃsa-ñāṇa*). {655}

The true meanings of the terms ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ in the Buddhist teachings, in the context of spiritual training, are not the same as how people generally understand these terms. People’s general concept of the term ‘present’ encompasses a rather broad and indistinct period of time. In the context of Buddhist spiritual practice, however, the ‘present’ refers to a single immediate moment of time. On a deeper level, to dwell or to live in the present refers to being mindful, to remain fully attentive to that which one is experiencing or doing in each and every moment. If one cognizes something and either delight or aversion arises, one then gets stuck at and revolves around the mental image of that thing which one has created in one’s mind. One thus ‘falls’ into the past, does not keep abreast of things as they really are, and slips away from the present moment. Alternatively, if one falls away from the present and begins to fantasize about things that have not yet come to pass, based on an attachment to specific mental images, then one drifts off into the future. For this reason, the ‘past’ and the ‘future’ as defined in the Buddhist teachings may be a part of the general worldly understanding of the term ‘present’.

Here we see one important aspect of the way in which the ‘present’ is defined in the Buddhist teachings: the focus is not so much on events in the world or on external phenomena, but rather on those things with which one is immediately engaged. For this reason, those things that are considered to be the past or the future according to people’s general understanding may in the Buddhist context refer to the present, just as people’s general concepts of the present may in the Buddhist context refer to the past or future, as mentioned above. In Buddhism, the present pertains to one’s involvement and association with things, which requires an understanding and an engaged response, and which in a wider sense extends to one’s daily-life practice. In relation to thinking, the ‘present’ encompasses all events that are linked to one’s immediate experience and current considerations: to those things which one is engaged with, which require some form of active response, or which are connected to one’s spiritual practice. This is very different from muddled, incoherent,

aimless, or abstract thoughts connected to pleasing or displeasing sense objects, or from getting caught up in delight and aversion.

These descriptions of the past, present, and future are made clear in the following teachings by the Buddha. The teachings by the Buddha about neither dwelling in the past nor fantasizing about the future help to sever such errant thoughts by encouraging people to stay attentive to those things that truly exist while they are engaged in their activities, as is evident from the following canonical passages:

Let one not hanker after the past, nor build one's hopes on the future; for the past has been left behind and the future has not been reached. One who has insight into each presently arisen state, that which is certain and unshakable, knows clearly and acts accordingly.

Today the effort must be made; tomorrow death may come, who knows? There is no reprieve from the great commander-in-chief, the Lord of Death.

One who dwells thus ardently, not idle, by day and by night – such a person the Peaceful Sage has called one who prospers each and every day.<sup>58</sup> {656}

*Bhaddekaratta Sutta, M. III. 187-9.*

[Those who have realized the Dhamma] do not sorrow over the past, nor do they fantasize about the future. They maintain themselves with what is present: hence their complexion is so bright.

As for fools, by fantasizing about the future, by mourning over the past, they grow pale and dreary, like a fresh reed cut down and left in the sun.

*S. I. 5.*

<sup>58</sup> See also the subsequent sutta at M. III. 189-202. 'One who prospers each and every day' is a translation of *bhaddekaratta*, which literally means 'one who prospers for a single night'; it can also be translated as 'one for whom each night brings good fortune'.

Note the mental attitude in respect to time of someone who is not subject to craving as described in these preceding sutta passages, and compare this with a wise engagement with the future as described in the passages below. These include teachings on the everyday life of laypeople as well as on the duties of the bhikkhus. They include both personal and social responsibilities:

Doubt that which is doubtful;  
Prevent danger that has not yet come to pass.  
A wise person investigates both worlds,  
Because he considers future danger.

*J. III. 35, 399.*

One should never give up hope;  
A wise person should not become discouraged.  
I have clearly witnessed for myself that whatever I have wished for  
I have obtained to satisfaction.

*E.g.: J. I. 267; J. IV. 269; J. VI. 43.*

Complete your activities with heedfulness.<sup>59</sup>

*The Buddha's last words; D. II. 156.*

Here is an example of how the monks should take the future into account when performing their individual duties:

Monks, when a monk discerns the following five future dangers, he should indeed dwell with heedfulness, make effort, and dedicate himself resolutely, in order to attain the unattained, to accomplish the unaccomplished, to realize the unrealized. Which five?

Here, a monk considers in this way: 'I am now young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life. But there will come a time when old age assails this body. Now when one is old, overcome by old age, it is not easy to attend to the Buddhas' teachings, it is not easy to resort to remote lodgings in

<sup>59</sup>'Activities' = personal benefit and the benefit of others.

forests and jungle groves. Indeed, before this undesirable, unpleasant, and unsatisfactory condition comes upon me, may I hasten to rouse energy in order to attain the unattained.... When I have fulfilled [this task], I will dwell at ease even though I am old...’

Again, a monk reflects thus: ‘I am now seldom ill or afflicted; I possess an even metabolism and digestion that is neither too cool nor too hot but moderate and suitable for striving. But there will come a time when illness assails this body.... May I hasten to rouse energy.... I will dwell at ease even though I am ill....’

Again, a monk reflects thus: ‘Food is now plentiful and almsfood is abundant, so that one can easily subsist by going on almsround. But there will come a time of famine, a poor harvest, when almsfood is hard to obtain and one cannot easily subsist by going on almsround. {657} People will migrate from a place of famine to places where food is plentiful, and the monasteries there will be crowded and congested. When living conditions are crowded and congested, it is not easy to attend to the Buddhas’ teachings, it is not easy to resort to remote lodgings in forests and jungle groves. Indeed ... may I hasten to rouse energy.... I will dwell at ease even in a famine....’

Again, a monk reflects thus: ‘People are now dwelling in harmony, living together happily, without disputes, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with eyes of affection. But there will come a time of peril, of disturbance and revolt in the frontiers, when the people of the countryside, mounted on their vehicles, flee on all sides. In a time of peril, people migrate to places of safety, and living conditions there will be crowded and congested.... May I hasten to rouse energy.... I will dwell at ease even in times of peril....’

Again, a monk reflects thus: ‘The sangha is now dwelling at ease – in concord, harmoniously, without disputes, with a single Pāṭimokkha recitation. But there will come a time when there will be a schism in the sangha. Now when there is a schism in the sangha, it is not easy to attend to the Buddhas’ teachings, it is not easy to resort to remote lodgings in forests and jungle groves. Indeed ... may I hasten

to rouse energy.... I will dwell at ease even though there is a schism in the sangha.'

*A. III. 102-103.*

Another sutta passage contains a teaching for monks who live in the forest: by considering five potential dangers, they should live vigilantly, make effort, and dedicate themselves resolutely in order to fulfil the unfulfilled, attain the unattained, and realize the unrealized. They should consider the future thus: 'I live alone in the forest. I may be bitten by a snake or centipede, stung by a scorpion, or slip and fall. I may have food poisoning, a disturbance of bile or phlegm, or a severe case of sunstroke. I may encounter a fierce animal like a lion, tiger, or bear. I may meet a malevolent person or non-human being and thus come to harm. I may even be killed due to one of these causes. I should thus rouse energy to reach those states that I have not yet reached.'

There is a similar teaching by the Buddha on contemplations for safeguarding the future wellbeing of the community:

Monks, there are these five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them. What five?

1. In the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. They will give full ordination to others but will not be able to train them in higher morality, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These [pupils] too will be undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. They in turn will give full ordination to others but will not be able to train them in higher morality, higher mind, and higher wisdom. {658} These [pupils] too will be undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. Thus, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the Discipline, and from corruption of the Discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma.
2. Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. They will give

dependence<sup>60</sup> to others but will not be able to train them in higher morality, higher mind, and higher wisdom. These [pupils] too will be undeveloped.... Thus, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the Discipline, and from corruption of the Discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma.

3. Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. They will recite sermons on the higher doctrine and on catechetical discourses, stumbling into an incorrect Dhamma without being aware of it. Thus, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the Discipline, and from corruption of the Discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma.
4. Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. When those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata are being recited that are profound, deep in meaning, world-transcending, connected with emptiness, they will not listen attentively, will not lend an ear to them, or apply their minds to understand them; they will not think those teachings should be studied and learned. But when those discourses are being recited that are mere poetry composed by poets, beautiful in words and phrases, dealing with external matters, spoken by disciples, they will listen attentively, lend an ear to them, and apply their minds to understand them; they will think those teachings should be studied and learned. Thus, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the Discipline, and from corruption of the Discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma.
5. Again, in the future there will be monks who are undeveloped in body, virtuous conduct, mind, and wisdom. The elder bhikkhus ... will be greedy and lax, leaders in negligence, discarding the duty of solitude; they will not arouse energy for attaining the unattained, accomplishing the unaccomplished, or realizing the unrealized. Those in the next generation will



follow their example. They, too, will be greedy and lax, leaders in negligence, discarding the duty of solitude; they will not arouse energy.... Thus, through corruption of the Dhamma comes corruption of the Discipline, and from corruption of the Discipline comes corruption of the Dhamma.

These, monks, are the five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them.

*A. III. 105-106.*

The Buddha gave another teaching on the future dangers for the monastic community:

Monks, there are these five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them. What five? {659}

1. In the future there will be monks who desire fine robes. They will give up the practice of wearing rag robes, give up remote lodgings in forests and jungle groves, and having converged upon the villages, towns, and capital cities, will take up their residence there; and they will engage in many kinds of wrong and improper pursuits for the sake of a robe....
2. Again, in the future there will be monks who desire fine and delicious almsfood.... Having converged upon the villages, towns, and capital cities, will take up their residence there, seeking the finest delicacies with the tips of their tongues, and they will engage in many kinds of wrong and improper pursuits for the sake of almsfood....
3. Again, in the future there will be monks who desire beautiful and extravagant lodgings.... They will engage in many kinds of wrong and improper pursuits for the sake of lodgings....

<sup>60</sup>Trans.: act as mentors.

4. Again, in the future there will be monks who consort with bhikkhunis, female probationers, and novices. When they consort in this way, it can be expected that they will live the spiritual life dissatisfied or give up the training and revert to the household life...
5. Again, in the future there will be monks who fraternize with monastery stewards and novices. When they fraternize in this way, it can be expected that they will engage in the use of various kinds of stored-up goods and give gross hints in regard to the ground and vegetation.<sup>61</sup>

These, monks, are the five future dangers as yet unarisen that will arise in the future. You should recognize them and make an effort to prevent them.

A. III. 108-109.

These aforementioned explanations help to distinguish between thoughts of the past and future that are subject to craving – that are incoherent and fanciful, are a waste of time, and damage the quality of the mind – and those thoughts of the past and future based on wisdom, which are connected to present activities and are supportive to spiritual practice.

When one practises according to these principles, one is able to make effective preparations and plans for the future. This is made manifest in the important historical activities of the monastic sangha. The first recitation (*saṅgāyanā*), for example, came about because the monks gave consideration to the future, which was connected to their present responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> {660}

<sup>61</sup>Trans.: Bhikkhu Bodhi explains this passage: ‘Use of stored-up food is prohibited by Pācittiya 38. Regarding “giving a gross hint”, Mp says: “Here, digging the ground and ordering, ‘Dig!’ is called giving a gross hint in regard to the ground. Cutting and ordering ‘Cut!’ is called giving a gross hint with regard to vegetation.” The reference is to Pācittiyas 10 and 11.’ *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi; Wisdom Publications; © 2012, endnote 1090.

<sup>62</sup>The Saṅgīti Sutta in the Tipiṭaka resulted from the Buddha referring both to the past (i.e. to the breaking up into factions of the Nigaṇṭhā after the death of their

## J. REFLECTION CORRESPONDING TO ANALYTIC DISCUSSION (VIBHAJJA-VĀDA)

Analytic discussion (*vibhajja-vāda*) is not literally a method of reflection, but rather a method of speaking or a method of describing principles contained in specific teachings.

In any case, thinking and speaking are intimately connected actions. Before one speaks, one must first think; speech is always preceded by thought. There are Dhamma teachings designating applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*) as the conditions shaping speech (*vacī-saṅkhāra*).<sup>63</sup> Thus, it is possible to discuss analytic speech on the level of thought.

There are deeper meanings to the Pali word *vāda* ('speech'; 'discussion'), pointing to patterns of thought which are the source of entire systems of teachings, described as distinct doctrines, religions, or philosophical traditions. For this reason, the term *vāda* is a synonym for the term *diṭṭhi* ('view'). Therefore, the doctrine of extreme realism (*sabbatthika-vāda*), for example, is equivalent to *sabbatthika-diṭṭhi*, the doctrine of nihilism (*natthika-vāda*) is equivalent to *natthika-diṭṭhi*, the doctrine of eternalism (*sassata-vāda*) is equivalent to *sassata-diṭṭhi*, and the doctrine of annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*) is equivalent to *uccheda-diṭṭhi*.

The term *vibhajja-vāda* is an epithet for Buddhism. It is an important term, indicating a Buddhist way of thinking. This way of thinking encompasses many different kinds of reflection previously discussed in this chapter. Besides introducing some new aspects of wise reflection, a description of *vibhajja-vāda* also helps to understand the previous kinds of reflection more clearly.

The reason that the term *vibhajja-vāda* is used as an epithet for Buddhism, and is used to represent the Buddhist way of thinking, is most likely because the Buddha referred to himself as an 'analytic speaker'

teacher) and to the future (i.e. to compose the Dhammavinaya to prevent the future monastic sangha from breaking up into factions). A useful summary of these principles is the Buddha's definition for mindfulness (*sati*): 'An ability to recollect actions performed and words spoken, even those from long ago' (e.g.: D. III. 268; Vbh. 227).

<sup>63</sup>M. I. 301; S. IV. 293.

(a speaker of reason; *vibhajja-vāda* or *vibhajja-vādī*).<sup>64</sup> These two terms, *vibhajja-vāda* and *vibhajja-vādī*, as epithets of the Buddha or of Buddhism, have been cited throughout the history of Buddhism. For example, at the Third Recitation, the emperor Asoka asked Ven. Moggaliputta-Tissa Thera, the leader of the recitation, the question: ‘What is the doctrine of the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha?’ The venerable elder answered: ‘Your Majesty, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha is a speaker of reason (*vibhajja-vādī*).’<sup>65</sup>

In sum, one can say that *vibhajja-vāda* is a general term denoting the entire spectrum of Buddhist thought.

The term *vibhajja* means to ‘separate’, ‘divide’, ‘distinguish’, or ‘analyze’. *Vāda* means ‘declaration’, ‘speaking’, ‘presenting a teaching’, ‘system of teaching’, or ‘doctrine’. *Vibhajja-vāda* thus translates as ‘discerning speech’, ‘discriminative speech’, or an ‘analytic system of teaching’.

The distinctive attribute of this kind of thinking and speaking is to discern and to express the truth, by analyzing all aspects and features of specific phenomena. One does not grasp onto a single aspect or a limited number of aspects and then draw an imprecise, approximate conclusion, nor does one hastily judge the value or goodness of something by looking at a single perspective or at limited features. {661}

Speech that is the opposite to *vibhajja-vāda* is called *ekamsa-vāda*, which translates as ‘one-sided speech’. Here, one looks at only one aspect, side, or part of a phenomenon and then draws a conclusion about the object in its entirety, or one speaks based on stereotypes.

Analytic reflection (*vibhajja-vāda*) can be divided into different ways of thinking:

<sup>64</sup> E.g.: M. II. 197-8; A. V. 190-91. The gist of these teachings will be discussed below.

<sup>65</sup> VinA. I. 61; PañcA. 7; VismT.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭiccasamuppādakathāvaṇṇanā; cf.: Vism. 522, 710 (in the ‘Conclusion’); VbhA. 129; PañcA. 107; and see miscellaneous references at: VinT.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Tatiyaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Rūpakkhanda-kathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Paṭiccasamuppādakathāvaṇṇanā; VismT.: Maggāmaggañānadassanavisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Maggāmaggavavattthānakathāvaṇṇanā; AA. III. 405.

**K. REFLECTING ON PERSPECTIVES OF TRUTH**

This way of thinking can be subdivided into two factors:

1. To distinguish various aspects of an object as they truly are; to discern or describe the truth as it manifests in those aspects; to abstain from grasping onto limited features of an object and then drawing an incomplete assessment of it. For instance, when one describes another person as being good or bad, one points to specific facts, by saying: 'In such areas, aspects, and circumstances he is good or bad.' One refrains from making simple generalizations. If one judges the value of something, one determines which aspects to focus on; one then considers these aspects and makes a relative assessment. An example of this kind of analysis is found in the teaching on the ten kinds of householders, which will be discussed below.
2. To discern or describe the truth of an object based on all of its features. When one looks at or considers an object, one is not blinkered; one is not stuck at one aspect or part of it; nor does one judge something based on limited features; instead one looks at something from all angles. For example, when one judges something as good or bad, one says: 'It is good in these ways, these aspects, these situations; it is not good in these ways, aspects, or situations.' Although this second factor appears similar to the first, it is distinct; moreover, it reinforces and completes the first factor. Examples of this kind of analysis are the teaching on the ten kinds of householders and the teaching on praiseworthy and blameworthy monks, both forest monks and village monks.<sup>66</sup>

This way of thinking leads to an understanding of how various factors or attributes gather together into an integrated whole, thus giving rise to a particular phenomenon or event, and it leads to a broad discernment of things or events, by seeing how these things are composed of various factors.

<sup>66</sup>See the canonical passages below.

## L. REFLECTING ON COMPONENT FACTORS

Here, one analyzes an object in order to gain a thorough understanding of it, as something that exists as a collection of subsidiary factors. One is not stuck on external appearances, nor is one deceived by the overall image of an object. For example, one separates a person into body (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*), or into the five aggregates, and further analyzes each factor until one sees the characteristic of nonself. This is the path to fully comprehending the truth of conditioned phenomena.

This form of analytical thinking (*vibhajja-vāda*) is the same as the second kind of reflection (the method of analyzing component factors) described earlier in this chapter, so it is not necessary to expand on it here. The term *vibhajja-vāda* was not originally used to denote an analysis of component factors, but authors of later texts used it in this broader sense,<sup>67</sup> and thus I have included it in this discussion. {662}

## M. REFLECTING ON THE SEQUENCE OF MOMENTARY EVENTS

Here, one analyzes phenomena according to the succession of causes and conditions, by separating events into distinct ‘moments’ (*khana*), in order to see the actual causes and conditions leading to a specific phenomenon.

This way of thinking is one part of the reflection on component factors and of the reflection on the relationship between causes and conditions (see below), but it has some unique characteristics and application, and is therefore given a distinct classification. It is applied frequently in the study of the Abhidhamma.

Take for example the case of a thief breaking into a house and killing the owner. Generally, people will say that the thief murdered the person because of greed – because of a desire for the wealth in the house; the cause for the murder is greed.

<sup>67</sup>E.g.: VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Rūpakkhanda-kathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Paññābhūminiddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārapaccayāvinīṇānapa-davitthāra-kathāvaṇṇanā; VismṬ.: Dīṭṭhivisuddhiniddesavaṇṇanā, Nāmarūpapariggahakathāvaṇṇanā. The original term used in this context is *vibhaṅga*, for example: *dhātu-vibhaṅga*, *khandha-vibhaṅga*, etc.

This explanation is a simplified way of speaking. When one investigates the true dynamics at play in the thief's mind, one sees that this explanation is inaccurate. It is not possible for greed to be a cause for killing; anger, rather, is the cause for killing. By analyzing the sequence of momentary events, one sees that the thief covets the wealth, but the owner is an obstacle for obtaining it. Greed for the wealth is thus the cause for the thief to be angry at the owner. The murder is committed because of this anger.

The thief covets the wealth – he does not covet the owner of the wealth. Greed is not the real cause of the murder; it is simply a cause for stealing. And it is a condition giving rise to anger towards that which gets in its way or does not support its objectives.

In everyday parlance it is fine to say that the thief killed the person out of greed. But it is important to understand that according to the true sequence of momentary events, greed is simply a root cause or an initial agent in that situation. This analysis or investigation of momentary occurrences is the reason why Buddhism in later periods has been referred to as a 'doctrine of momentary events' ('doctrine of change'; *khaṇika-vāda*).

#### **N. REFLECTING ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF CAUSES AND CONDITIONS**

Here, one traces the various interrelated, connected causes and conditions of an object or phenomenon. This investigation gives rise to an understanding that things do not arise and exist at random; they do not exist independently from other things; they are not self-sufficient, but rather depend on causes and conditions. They cease to exist and are transient because their causes and conditions likewise cease.

This vital form of thinking corresponds to the first kind of reflection mentioned above, of investigating causes and conditions, or thinking in line with 'specific conditionality' (*idappaccayatā*). Besides having described this way of thinking earlier in this chapter, it was also explained at length in the chapter on Dependent Origination.

Thinking that lacks this awareness of the relative nature of things leads people to various forms of extreme views. For example, they hold

to an eternalist view, believing that there exists a true, eternal soul, or to an annihilationist view, believing that the ‘self’ exists temporarily but then is extinguished and disappears. When one neglects to see the interrelationship of causes and conditions, one sees things as absolute and in isolation, which results in extreme views.

Things, however, do not exist in an absolute sense as generally interpreted by people. All things are interrelated, interdependent, and interconnected on account of subsidiary factors. The existence or non-existence of a thing is not definite or absolute. The truth of the matter is somewhere in the middle, between the two aforementioned extremes. This way of reflection helps one to discern this truth. {663}

According to this way of thinking, the Buddha proclaimed an ‘objective’ or ‘middle’ teaching. He did not say, ‘This exists’ or ‘This does not exist’, but rather stated: ‘Because this exists that also exists; because this does not exist, that too does not exist’, or: ‘This exists when that too exists; this does not exist when that does not exist.’

This principle of truth is referred to as ‘specific conditionality’ (*idappaccayatā*) or ‘dependent origination’ (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the teaching of this truth is called the ‘middle teaching’ (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*). This way of thinking can thus be called reflection corresponding to the middle teaching or reflection in line with the ‘middle truth’ (*majjhena-dhamma*).

Besides preventing one from seeing things or problems in an isolated, absolute sense, and helping one to think in a smooth, unobstructed way, a reflection on the relationship between causes and conditions helps one to recognize and match causes and conditions with their respective results.

This subject matter is connected to three common areas of confusion for people:

First, people often mix up matters external to an event with those causes and conditions specifically related to it. For example, in the case that an immoral person reaps some kind of reward that is generally considered to be good, some people will raise the question why someone else who is virtuous, who has many good qualities, does not receive this good fortune. The truth of the matter is that the specific virtuous qualities



of this good person may not be of the kind that generates the aforementioned reward. This kind of reflection helps to distinguish unrelated matters or conditions from those causes and conditions directly pertaining to a specific circumstance. One accurately sees the relationship between results and their causes.

Second, people are often not aware of how different causes and conditions can lead to similar results, and how the same causes and conditions may not always lead to the same results. For example, the Buddha encouraged some monks to live alone in the forest, while for other monks he discouraged this. He reflected on the motive (the 'cause'), that is, the specific monk's intention.

The acquisition of wealth may result from diligence and hard work, from pleasing a wealthy donor, or from theft. A person may be praised because he acts virtuously in a society that honours virtue, or he may be praised even as a result of doing bad actions, if they satisfy someone else's desires.

In these situations it is necessary to recognize how these variant causes and conditions giving rise to similar results also generate other, distinct results which one may not have taken into account.

Similarly, two people may perform the same good actions. The first person is praised because he lives in a place where people honour goodness, or his actions are advantageous to those offering the praise. The second person, however, is not praised, because he lives in a place where such goodness is not esteemed, or his actions threaten the personal interests of others, or else he possesses some personal faults.

In these situations it is also important to realize that the causes and conditions being considered are not the sole causes and conditions giving rise to the specific results. The environment and other factors are also accompanying conditions, which determine the arising or non-arising of these results. {664}

Third, people often do not realize the special causes and conditions additional to those similar causes. This is connected to the second factor, above, that is, people generally only acknowledge those things that they

reckon will produce specific results. For example, when they see two people act in the same way, after which one person receives a desired result while the other person does not, they conclude that this action (this ‘cause and condition’) does not produce dependable, trustworthy results.

There may be a case when two people, who are both equally good at a job, are eligible for promotion. It is natural that only one of these two will be selected. If the selection is not made by casting lots, other conditions will come into play; one person may be healthier, have a better physical appearance, or be more intelligent, for instance.

The examples given here in reference to these three areas of confusion are connected to the law of kamma, to people’s volitional actions and their results, but other examples having to do with general laws of cause and effect would be equally applicable.

## O. REFLECTING ON PREREQUISITES AND QUALIFICATIONS

This commonly encountered form of analytical reflection refers to discerning or expressing the truth by considering accompanying prerequisites and qualifications. For example, in the case that these questions are posed: ‘Should one associate with these people or not?’ or ‘Should one frequent this place or not?’ – if the person who answers is a monk, he may answer in accord with the Pali Canon and say: ‘If by associating with such persons or places unwholesome states increase and wholesome states decrease, then one should avoid them, but if wholesome states increase and unwholesome states decrease, one should seek them out.’<sup>68</sup>

In answer to the question: ‘Should a monk observe the austere practices (*dhutaṅga*)?’ – someone who knows the Dhamma well will say: ‘If a monk’s meditation improves, then he should observe these practices; if it deteriorates, then he should not. If a monk’s meditation improves regardless of whether he observes these practices or not, and if he wishes to assist later generations, then he should observe them. If a monk’s meditation deteriorates regardless of whether he observes these practices

<sup>68</sup>See: M. III. 45-61; A. IV. 365-6; A. V. 100. Examples from the Pali Canon are presented below.

or not, he should observe them to establish a basis for his personal disposition.<sup>69</sup>

If someone were to ask whether the Buddha is a proponent of annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*), by answering according to the Buddha's own words, one would say: 'If you are using this term in this definition, then "yes," but if you are using it in this other definition, then "no".'<sup>70</sup> Similarly, if someone were to ask whether a monk who likes to live in solitude and to wander alone can be called one who practises correctly according to the Buddha's teachings, one would need to answer by stating certain qualifications.<sup>71</sup>

Taking an example from modern studies of education, the question comes up whether to allow children to encounter particular social influences, like news or shows broadcast by the media, without any supervision, or to what extent they should be supervised. If one answers with analytical reflection, one does not speak rashly or in an ill-considered way, but rather examines this matter by taking certain conditions into account, for example:

- Proclivities, skills, habits, and traits that a child has accumulated through his or her education and nurturing, as well as cultural influences present at that time. Technically speaking, this refers to wholesome and unwholesome 'volitional formations' (*saṅkhāra*): habitual ways of thinking. In short, this refers to the child's disposition. {665}
- To what extent is the child able to apply wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*)?
- Virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*): does the child have a person or other means of support for offering advice on important matters, for example by pointing out correct ways of examining things or by helping to generate wise reflection? These virtuous friends

<sup>69</sup>See: Vism. 81.

<sup>70</sup>See: Vin. I., *Verañjakaṇḍa*.

<sup>71</sup>See the passages cited below.

may exist in the child's family or community, or they may exert an influence by way of the media.

- To what extent are those things which the child is exposed to provocative, offensive, or seductive?

All four of these factors are variables, but in this case we may hold the fourth factor to be constant. The answers to the aforementioned questions are relative. For example, if the child applies wise reflection, or he or she has access to a truly capable virtuous friend (especially by way of the media itself), or his or her wholesome way of thinking instilled by family or culture is firmly established, even if the child is exposed to a great deal of stimulation and allurements, it will be difficult for these to cause problems and they may even generate positive results.

If, however, an inclination to think in wholesome ways has not been cultivated, the child has not been trained in wise reflection, and he or she has not been equipped with a virtuous friend, abandoning children to these influences causes problems for them and is tantamount to giving them mental poison.

#### **P. REFLECTING ON ALTERNATIVES AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES**

When trying to achieve something or to reach some goal, or when trying to understand the existence of some phenomenon, a person should be aware of the following things:

- There may be many ways to reach this goal, or there may be different possibilities for this phenomenon to exist.
- Of these different methods or possibilities, some of them may be better, more effective, or more decisive than others.
- Of these different methods, some of them, or one of them, may be more appropriate or effective for oneself, for other people, or for particular situations, than other methods.
- There may be one or several methods to achieve this goal, or one or several possibilities for something to exist, but it may be different

from the method that one currently practises, or different from the possibility one currently perceives.

This awareness has many benefits: it keeps one from getting stuck, turning in circles, and finding no way out in respect to fruitless, incorrect, or inappropriate ways of practice or thought patterns; and, when one acts or thinks in ways that are unsuccessful, it prevents one from giving up out of discouragement or a sense of helplessness.

Most importantly, it enables one to search for and discover methods or possibilities that are correct, appropriate, precise, practical and effective.

An example of this way of reflection can be seen in the life account of the Buddha. When he endeavoured as a bodhisatta to practise the severe austerities, which were considered an ideal at that time era, with all his strength and to an extreme, he was unsuccessful. Instead of getting frustrated and despairing, he recognized that this is not the correct path for reaching the goal and then reflected further. {666}

At that time he had this thought:

By this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any super-human states, any distinction in knowledge and vision making for being a noble one. There must be another path to awakening.

M. I. 246.

After having this thought, he discovered the Middle Way, which he practised until reaching the knowledge of awakening (*bodhi-ñāṇa*).

#### **Q. DETAILED ANALYSIS AS A RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS**

Detailed analysis (*vibhajja-vāda*) appears frequently in the scriptures as a response to questions, and is classified as one of the four responses to questions. Applying detailed analysis to answer a question is given the special term *vibhajja-vyākaraṇa*: ‘analytical explanation’.

Here are the four ways of answering a question (*pañhā-vyākaraṇa*):

1. *Ekam̐sa-vyākaraṇa*: to answer from a ‘single perspective’; to answer in a decisive, categorical sense.
2. *Vibhajja-vyākaraṇa*: to answer by detailed analysis.
3. *Paṭipucchā-vyākaraṇa*: to answer by posing a question in return.
4. *Ṭhapanā*: to refrain from answering; to desist; to dismiss the question.

These four kinds of answers correspond with four kinds of questions, which are listed here along with simple examples given in later texts:<sup>72</sup>

1. *Ekam̐savvyākaraṇīya-pañhā*: questions that should be answered decisively and categorically. For example, to the question: ‘Is the eye impermanent?’ – one should answer absolutely and directly: ‘Yes.’
2. *Vibhajjavvyākaraṇīya-pañhā*: questions that should be answered by way of analysis or categorization. For example, to the question: ‘That which is impermanent is the eye, correct?’ – one should answer: ‘Not only the eye; the ear, nose, etc. are also impermanent.’
3. *Paṭipucchāvyākaraṇīya-pañhā*: questions to be answered by questions. For example, to the question: ‘The eye is the same as the ear, correct?’ – one should ask in return: ‘Which aspect are you referring to? If you are referring to the faculty of seeing, then “No,” but if you are referring to the state of being impermanent, then “Yes”.’
4. *Ṭhapanīya-pañhā*: questions which should be dismissed and not answered. For example, to the question: ‘Is the physical body (*sarīra*) the same as the life principle (*jīva*)?’ – one should desist from answering.

<sup>72</sup>These four questions are found at: D. III. 229; A. I. 197; A. II. 46; they are cited at: NdA. I. 8. Explanatory examples are presented at: Miln. 144; DA. II. 567; AA. II. 308.

In respect to the first kind of question, it does not require an explanation, or it has no exceptions. It can thus be answered immediately and absolutely. Another example is the question: ‘Everyone has to die, correct?’ – here one can answer immediately, ‘Yes.’

The second kind of question has aspects that need to be explained by using the various kinds of detailed analysis described above.

In respect to the third kind of question, one should make inquiries in return, in order to seek clarity before answering. This method can be used in conjunction with the second kind of response, of answering by detailed analysis. {667}

In the Pali Canon the Buddha frequently uses this method of replying to a question with another question. By doing this, the questioner was gradually able to understand and answer his own question. The Buddha simply pointed out particular frames of reference or new perspectives, without needing to answer the question directly.

The fourth kind of question, to which one should desist from answering, refers to senseless, foolish, or absurd questions. Alternatively, it refers to those matters the questioner is not yet capable of understanding. Here, it is better to first instil a basic understanding of other matters. Later one may be able to speak about the original question, or else the person understands the matter by himself.

On a more subtle level are those questions incorrectly posed which stem from a misunderstanding and are incongruous with truth.<sup>73</sup> Examples from the Pali Canon include such questions as: ‘Who cognizes?’ ‘Whose cognition?’ ‘Who experiences sense objects?’ and ‘Whose feelings?’ One is unable to answer these questions in a way that the questioner desires, and thus it is better to dismiss these questions. One may explain the reasons for not answering,<sup>74</sup> or ask the questioner to reformulate the question so that it accords with reality.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup>The scriptures explain that the views and perceptions leading to such questions arise as a result of unwise reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) or incorrect instruction from others. See: A. V. 186-7; Miln.: Abhejjavaggo, Abyākaraṇīyapaṇḥo; AA. II. 308.

<sup>74</sup>E.g.: M. I. 428-32; S. IV. 374-403.

<sup>75</sup>E.g.: S. II. 13-14, 60-62.

Following are some passages from the Pali Canon describing ‘detailed analysis’ (*vibhajja-vāda*):

Sāriputta, forms cognizable by the eye are of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. With reference to what was this said? Such forms cognizable by the eye as cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish in one who cultivates them should not be cultivated. But such forms cognizable by the eye as cause unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase in one who cultivates them should be cultivated....

Sāriputta, sounds ... odours ... flavours ... tangibles ... mind-objects cognizable by the mind are of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated....<sup>76</sup>

*Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta: M. III. 45-60*

Monks, robes are of two kinds, I say: to be used and not to be used. With reference to what was this said? If a monk knows of a robe: ‘When I use this robe, unwholesome qualities increase in me and wholesome qualities decline’, he should not use such a robe. But if he knows of a robe: ‘When I use this robe, unwholesome qualities decline in me and wholesome qualities increase’, he should use such a robe.

Monks, almsfood ... dwellings are of two kinds, I say: to be used and not to be used....

Villages ... towns ... districts ... are of two kinds, I say: to be resorted to and not to be resorted to....

Persons are of two kinds, I say: to be associated with and not to be associated with....<sup>77</sup>

*A. V. 100.*

<sup>76</sup>This sutta refers to many other things which should either be cultivated or not, including the four requisites and association with various people.

<sup>77</sup>These same things are mentioned in the *Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta*, above. A similar and expanded version of this teaching is found at: *A. IV. 365* (quoted in the chapter on virtuous friends – *kalyāṇamitta*).



Here, monks, a monk lives in some forest. While he is living there his unestablished mindfulness does not become established, his unconcentrated mind does not become concentrated, his undestroyed taints do not come to destruction, he does not attain the unattained supreme security from bondage; and also the requisites of life that should be obtained by one gone forth – robes, almsfood, resting place, and medicinal requisites – are hard to come by. Considering this ... that monk should depart from that forest that very night or that very day; he should not continue living there. {668}

While he is living in that forest his unestablished mindfulness does not become established, his unconcentrated mind does not become concentrated, his undestroyed taints do not come to destruction, he does not attain the unattained supreme security from bondage; but the requisites of life ... are easy to come by. Considering this ... having reflected thus, that monk should depart from that forest; he should not continue living there.

While he is living in that forest his unestablished mindfulness becomes established, his unconcentrated mind becomes concentrated, his undestroyed taints come to destruction, he attains the unattained supreme security from bondage; but the requisites of life ... are hard to come by. That monk considers thus ... ‘I did not go forth from the home life into homelessness for the sake of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicinal requisites. Moreover, while I am living in this forest my unestablished mindfulness has become established, my unconcentrated mind has become concentrated.... Having reflected thus, that monk should remain in that forest; he should not depart.

While he is living in that forest his unestablished mindfulness becomes established, his unconcentrated mind becomes concentrated, his undestroyed taints come to destruction, he attains the unattained supreme security from bondage; and the requisites of life ... are easy to come by.... Having reflected thus, that monk should continue living in that forest for the rest of his life; he should not depart.<sup>78</sup>

*Vanapattha Sutta: M. I. 104-108.*

*Prince Abhaya:* Would you, venerable sir, utter such speech as would be unwelcome and disagreeable to others?

*The Buddha:* There is no one-sided answer to this question, prince.

[The Buddha then distinguishes that speech which he utters and that which he does not, the gist of which is as follows:]

1. Speech that is untrue, incorrect, unbeneficial, and is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others – he does not utter.
2. Speech that is true and correct, yet is unbeneficial, and is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others – he does not utter.
3. Speech that is true, correct, and beneficial, but is unwelcome and disagreeable to others – he is selective about uttering.
4. Speech that is untrue, incorrect, unbeneficial, yet is welcome and agreeable to others – he does not utter.
5. Speech that is true and correct, yet is unbeneficial, even if it is welcome and agreeable to others – he does not utter.
6. Speech that is true, correct, and beneficial, and is also welcome and agreeable to others – he is selective about uttering.

*M. I. 393-5.*

*Buddha:* ‘What do you think Ānanda? Does every sort of moral conduct, religious practice, arduous spiritual endeavour, religious life, and act of propitiation bear fruit?’

*Ven. Ānanda:* ‘There is no one-sided answer to this question, venerable sir.’

*Buddha:* ‘In that case, make a distinction.’

*Ānanda:* ‘If by engaging in a moral conduct, religious practice, arduous spiritual endeavour, religious life, or act of propitiation,

<sup>78</sup>This sutta similarly mentions living in a village, town, city, and country, and living in dependence on a certain person. The section on living in dependence on a person resembles the passage at A. IV. 365-6. This is an abridged translation.

unwholesome states increase and wholesome states diminish, that moral conduct ... act of propitiation is fruitless. {669}

‘If by engaging in a moral precept, religious practice, arduous spiritual endeavour, religious life, or act of propitiation, unwholesome states diminish and wholesome states increase, that moral precept ... act of propitiation is fruitful.’

So said the Venerable Ānanda and the Supreme Teacher agreed with him.<sup>79</sup>

A. I. 225.

*Religious Wanderers:* Is it true, householder, what they say – that the ascetic Gotama censures all asceticism and that he categorically condemns and reproves all ascetics who live a harsh and austere life?

*Householder Vajjiyamāhita:* No, venerable sirs, the Blessed One does not censure all asceticism, nor does he categorically condemn and reprove all ascetics who live a harsh and austere life. What is blameworthy, the Blessed One blames; what is praiseworthy, he praises. The Blessed One is a speaker of reason (*vibhajja-vādi*); he blames what is blameworthy and praises what is praiseworthy; he does not teach here in a one-sided way.<sup>80</sup>

A. V. 190-91.

<sup>79</sup>‘Engaging in religious practices’ is a translation of *jīvita*. ‘Act of propitiation’ is a translation of *upaṭṭhāna-sāra*. See also the definitions provided by the commentaries.

<sup>80</sup>‘In this matter he is not a one-sided speaker (*ekamsavādi*).’ Later, Vajjiyamāhita went and inquired about this matter from the Buddha, who described those ascetic practices which should be undertaken and those which should not, according to the increase and decrease of wholesome and unwholesome states, in a way similar to the teachings above.

*Brahmin Student Subha:* Master Gotama, the brahmins say this: ‘The householder is successfully developing wholesome states, which constitute the way to liberation. The one who goes forth [into homelessness] is not successfully developing wholesome states, which constitute the way to liberation.’ What does Master Gotama say about this?

*Buddha:* Here, student, I am one who speaks after making an analysis (*vibhajja-vāda*); I do not speak one-sidedly. I do not praise the wrong way of practice on the part either of a householder or one gone forth; for whether it be a householder or one gone forth, one who practises incorrectly, by reason of his wrong way of practice, is not successfully developing wholesome states, which constitute the way to liberation. I praise the right way of practice on the part either of a householder or one gone forth; for whether it be a householder or one gone forth, one who practises correctly, by reason of his right way of practice is successfully developing wholesome states, which constitute the way to liberation.

*Subha:* Master Gotama, the brahmins say this: ‘Since the work of the household life involves a great deal of activity, great deeds, great engagements, and great undertakings, it is of great fruit. Since the work of those gone forth involves a small amount of activity, small deeds, small engagements, and small undertakings, it is of small fruit.’ What does Master Gotama say about this?

*Buddha:* Here too, student, I am one who speaks after making an analysis; I do not speak one-sidedly. There is work involving a great deal of activity, great deeds, great engagements, and great undertakings, which, when it fails, is of small fruit. There is work involving a great deal of activity, great deeds, great engagements, and great undertakings, which when it succeeds is of great fruit. There is work involving a small amount of activity, small deeds, small engagements, and small undertakings, which, when it fails, is of small fruit. There is work involving a small amount of activity, small deeds, small engagements, and small undertakings, which, when it succeeds, is of great fruit.<sup>81</sup> {670}

*Religious Wanderer:* Friend Samiddhi, having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind, what does one feel?

*Ven. Samiddhi:* Having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind, one feels suffering, friend Potaliputta.

[The Buddha later heard about this conversation and said:]

Though the wanderer Potaliputta's question should have been analyzed before being answered, this misguided man Samiddhi answered it one-sidedly.... From the start the wanderer Potaliputta had asked about the three kinds of feeling. This misguided man Samiddhi would have answered the wanderer Potaliputta rightly if, when asked thus, he would have explained: 'Friend Potaliputta, having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind which acts as a basis for pleasant sensation one feels pleasure. Having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind which acts as a basis for painful sensation, one feels pain. Having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind which acts as a basis for neither-painful-nor-pleasant sensation, one feels neither-pain-nor-pleasure.'

*M. III. 208-209.*

Ven. Ānanda went on almsround and entered the house of the female lay disciple Migasālā, who said to him:

Venerable sir, Ānanda, just how should this teaching of the Blessed One be understood, where one who is celibate and one who is not celibate both have exactly the same destination in their future life?

My father Purāṇa was celibate, living apart, abstaining from sexual intercourse, the common person's practice. When he died, the Blessed One declared: 'He is a being who is a once-returner and has been reborn in the Tusita group of devas.'

<sup>81</sup>The Buddha goes on to explain and to provide examples for these four kinds of work. The work of a householder (*gharāvāsa-kammaṭṭhāna*) refers to various forms of occupations to earn a livelihood, like farming and agriculture. The work of a renunciant (*pabbajjā-kammaṭṭhāna*) refers to the duties of a renunciant.

My father's dear friend Isidatta was not celibate but lived contented with his wife. When he died, the Blessed One also declared: 'He is a being who is a once-returner and has been reborn in the Tusita group of devas.'

Ven. Ānanda acknowledged this question but he did not answer; instead he brought this matter to the Buddha. The Buddha explained that to understand this matter one must be able to distinguish between different kinds of people. (One must possess the knowledge that fathoms the superior and inferior qualities of different people – *purisapuggalapariya-nāṇa*). {671}

The Buddha went on to describe six types of people, organized into three pairs, (and in a second sutta he describes ten types of people, organized into five pairs). In regard to each one of these pairs, the individuals share certain attributes (especially those connected to interpersonal or social relationships), but in other areas they have distinctive attributes (especially personal qualities which correspond with beneficial results).

Those who are judgemental will conclude: 'These two people have similar attributes. Why is one person more successful than the other?' Such an assessment will lead to their harm.

By focusing on external attributes, Purāṇa appears to be superior to Isidatta, but their essential internal attributes are the same. They are both endowed with the same essential qualities in relation to virtuous conduct (*sīla*), and they are also endowed with the same level of wisdom.

A. III. 347-351; A. V. 137-8.

In a similar way, the Buddha divided householders – 'those who enjoy sensual pleasures' (*kāma-bhogī*) – into ten types, and he described the positive and negative aspects of each of these types:

**Group #1:** Those who seek wealth unrighteously:

1. Some people seek wealth unrighteously, and once they acquire wealth they do not make themselves happy, nor do they share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on three counts.

2. Some people seek wealth unrighteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, but they do not share their wealth nor do they do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on two counts, and praiseworthy on one count.
3. Some people seek wealth unrighteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, and they both share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on one count, and praiseworthy on two counts.

**Group #2:** Those who seek wealth both righteously and unrighteously:

4. Some people seek wealth both righteously and unrighteously, and once they acquire wealth they do not make themselves happy, nor do they share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on three counts, and praiseworthy on one count.
5. Some people seek wealth both righteously and unrighteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, but they do not share their wealth nor do they do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on two counts, and praiseworthy on two counts.
6. Some people seek wealth both righteously and unrighteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, and they both share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on one count, and praiseworthy on three counts.

**Group #3:** Those who seek wealth righteously:

7. Some people seek wealth righteously, but once they acquire wealth they do not make themselves happy, nor do they share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on two counts, and praiseworthy on one count.
8. Some people seek wealth righteously, and once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, but they do not share their wealth nor do they do meritorious deeds. They are blameworthy on one count, and praiseworthy on two counts.

9. Some people seek wealth righteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, and they both share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. But they are still attached to and caught up in the wealth; they use it without discerning its disadvantages, and they do not have the wisdom to free themselves and become masters over the wealth. They are praiseworthy on three counts, and blameworthy on one count. {672}

**Group #4:** Those who seek wealth righteously, use it with mindfulness and wisdom, and have a liberated mind:

10. Some people seek wealth righteously; once they acquire wealth they make themselves happy, and they both share their wealth and do meritorious deeds. They are not carried away by or caught up in their wealth; they use it by fully understanding its merits and disadvantages. They are freed by wisdom and are masters over their wealth. Such householders are excellent, distinguished, and supreme; they are praiseworthy on all four counts.<sup>82</sup>

This kind of analytic reflection (*vibhajja-vāda*) leads to clear and precise thinking and discrimination, which accords and is commensurate with truth, and prevents confusion.

A simple example from everyday life is the observation that someone speaks directly, bluntly, and outspokenly, and is unable to speak in a sweet-sounding way; it appears as if he covers up his bluntness and abrupt speech in the cloak of frankness. If one analyzes this situation more closely, one can conclude that his candidness and directness is a virtue, but the abruptness and outspokenness is a fault.

Someone endowed with such qualities should acknowledge the deficiency in not speaking agreeably, rather than using directness as a pretext. If one wishes to bring virtue to fulfilment, one should make adjustments in those areas that are still faulty.

<sup>82</sup>S. IV. 331-37; A. V. 177.



Similarly, someone who speaks in a pleasing, sweet-sounding way is endowed with such pleasant speech as a virtue, but it is another matter whether one speaks candidly. If one does, this is considered another virtue, but if one does not, then this is considered a fault.

In such a case, an additional factor which needs to be considered is whether this sweet-speaking person speaks with wholesome intentions or whether he speaks out of a wish to deceive, using a ruse. One should distinguish this factor with clarity, to avoid confusion.

In the case that one is looking to hire someone for a job, one chooses the candidate suitable to the job's requirements – whether one needs someone who speaks pleasantly or someone who speaks directly. If the job requires a person who speaks pleasantly, one selects someone with this quality (of course the employer will also try to find someone who is honest). An outspoken person here needs not allude to his directness as a way to get this job. Likewise, if the job requires a person who speaks directly, it is unimportant whether the candidate speaks pleasantly or not. The person not chosen for this job need not cite his soft-spoken, agreeable speech. Moreover, if one is making a psychological study, by looking at the relationship between directness and bluntness, or between sweet-sounding speech and deceit, one should be clear about those factors under investigation.

Analytic reflection (*vibhajja-vāda*) is precise and objective, corresponds with truth, and is aligned with natural laws. It is thus a model for those who wish to speak in a truly open and honest way.

Monks, there are these five kinds of forest dwellers. What five?

1. One who becomes a forest dweller because of ignorance and naivety;
2. one who becomes a forest dweller because he has lewd desires, because he is driven by desire;
3. one who becomes a forest dweller because he is mad and mentally deranged;

4. one who becomes a forest dweller, thinking: ‘It is praised by the Buddhas and the Buddhas’ disciples’;
5. and one who becomes a forest dweller for the sake of fewness of desires, for the sake of contentment, for the sake of eliminating [defilements], for the sake of solitude, for the sake of simplicity....

One who becomes a forest dweller for the sake of fewness of desires, for the sake of contentment, for the sake of eliminating [defilements], for the sake of solitude, for the sake of simplicity, is the foremost, the best, the preeminent, the supreme, and the finest of these five kind of forest dwellers.<sup>83</sup> {673}

A. III. 219-21.

*Buddha:* Does your family give gifts, householder?

*Dārukammika:* My family gives, venerable sir. And those gifts are given to bhikkhus who are arahants or on the path to arahantship, those who are forest dwellers, almsfood gatherers, and wearers of rag-robles.

*Buddha:* Since, householder, you are a layman ... it is difficult for you to know: ‘These are arahants or on the path to arahantship.’

If, householder, a monk who is a forest-dweller is restless, arrogant, fickle, garrulous, indiscreet in his talk, muddle-minded, lacking clear comprehension, unconcentrated, with an agitated mind, with unrestrained sense faculties, then in this respect he is blameworthy. But if a monk who is a forest-dweller is not restless, arrogant, and fickle, is not garrulous and indiscreet in his talk, but is vigilant, clearly comprehends, is concentrated, with a one-pointed mind, with restrained sense faculties, then in this respect he is praiseworthy.

If a monk who dwells on the outskirts of a village is restless, arrogant, fickle, garrulous, indiscreet in his talk, muddle-minded, lacking clear comprehension, unconcentrated, with an agitated mind, with unrestrained sense faculties, then in this respect he is blameworthy.

But if a monk who dwells on the outskirts of a village is not restless, arrogant, and fickle, is not garrulous and indiscreet in his talk, but is vigilant, clearly comprehends, is concentrated, with a one-pointed mind, with restrained sense faculties, then in this respect he is praiseworthy.

If a monk who is an almsfood gatherer ... who accepts meal invitations ... who wears rag-robes ... who wears robes given by householders ... then in this respect he is praiseworthy.

Come now, householder, give gifts to the sangha....

*A. III. 391-2.*

And how does an evil monk wander alone? Here, an evil monk lives by himself in the borderlands. Approaching families there, he obtains gains. It is in this way that an evil monk wanders alone.<sup>84</sup>

*A. III. 130.*

One who trains himself in solitude – who sits alone, lies down alone, and wanders alone, free from laziness – finds delight in the forest.

*Dh. verse 305.*

[Brahmins who practise various austerities] succumb to craving, bound to rules and observances, practising severe austerities for a hundred years, but their minds are not rightly liberated: those of low manner do not reach the far shore.

There is no self-discipline for one fond of conceit, nor is there sagehood for the unconcentrated: though dwelling alone in the forest, heedless, one cannot cross beyond the realm of Death.

Having abandoned conceit, well-concentrated, with lofty mind, released in every respect: while dwelling alone in the forest, diligent, one can cross beyond the realm of Death. {674}

*S. I. 29.*

<sup>83</sup>This sutta describes the same factors in reference to many other kinds of ascetic practices, including the wearing of rag-robes and dwelling at the foot of a tree.

<sup>84</sup>This is one of five passages on evil-minded monks.

There was a bhikkhu named Thera who lived alone and spoke in praise of the merits of living alone. He went to the village on alms alone, returned to his residence alone, sat in seclusion alone, and practised walking meditation alone. Many monks went to the Buddha to ask about this monk. The Buddha sent for Ven. Thera and conducted the following conversation:

*Buddha:* Is it true, Thera, that you are a lone dweller and speak in praise of dwelling alone?

*Ven. Thera:* Yes, venerable sir.

*Buddha:* But how, Thera, are you a lone dweller and how do you speak in praise of dwelling alone?

*Thera:* Here, venerable sir, I enter the village for alms alone, I return alone, I sit alone in seclusion, and I practise walking meditation alone. It is in such a way that I am a lone dweller and speak in praise of dwelling alone.

*Buddha:* That is a way of dwelling alone, Elder, I do not deny this. But as to how dwelling alone is fulfilled in detail, listen to that and attend closely, I will speak.... Here, what lies in the past has been abandoned, what lies in the future has been relinquished, and delight and attachment for present forms of individual existence has been thoroughly removed. It is in such a way that dwelling alone is fulfilled in detail.<sup>85</sup>

S. II. 282-3.

*Ven. Migajāla:* Venerable sir, it is said, ‘a lone dweller, a lone dweller.’ In what way is one a lone dweller, and in what way is one dwelling with a companion?

*Buddha:* There are, Migajāla, forms cognizable by the eye ... sounds cognizable by the ear ... odours cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tactile objects cognizable by the body ... mental phenomena cognizable by the mind that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a monk seeks delight in them, frets over them, and welcomes them,

delight (nandi) arises. When there is delight, there is infatuation. When there is infatuation, there is bondage (saṁyojana). Bound by delight and attachment, a monk is called one dwelling with a companion.

Even though a monk who dwells thus resorts to remote forest lodgings, where there are few sounds and little noise, desolate, hidden from people, appropriate for privacy and seclusion, he is still called one dwelling with a companion. For what reason? Because craving is his companion, and he has not abandoned it; therefore he is called one dwelling with a companion.

There are, Migajāla, forms cognizable by the eye ... sounds cognizable by the ear ... odours cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tactile objects cognizable by the body ... mental phenomena cognizable by the mind that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a monk does not seek delight in them, fret over them, and welcome them, delight ceases. When there is no delight, there is no infatuation. When there is no infatuation, there is no bondage. Released from delight and attachment, a monk is called a lone dweller.

Even though a monk who dwells thus lives in the vicinity of a village, associating with bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, with male and female lay followers, with kings and royal minsters, with sectarian teachers and their disciples, he is still called a lone dweller. For what reason? Because he has abandoned his companion of craving; therefore he is called a lone dweller.<sup>86</sup> {675}

S. IV. 35-7.

<sup>85</sup>‘Forms of individual existence’ is a translation of *attabhāva-paṭilābha*.

<sup>86</sup>*Nandi* = ‘delight’, ‘exuberance’; *saṁyojana* (or *saññojana*) = defilements that constrict the mind.

Monks, wanderers of other sects prescribe these three kinds of solitude.<sup>87</sup> What three? Solitude with respect to robes, solitude with respect to almsfood, and solitude with respect to lodgings.

This is what wanderers of other sects prescribe as solitude with respect to robes: they wear hemp robes, robes of hemp-mixed cloth, shroud robes, rag-robes; robes made from tree bark, tiger skins, tiger skins with claws attached; robes of kusa grass, woven jute, or sewn-together fruit; a blanket made of human head hair or of wool, a covering made of owls' wings....

This is what wanderers of other sects prescribe as solitude with respect to almsfood: they eat fermented vegetables, millet, Job's tears, rice-sweepings, resin, algae, rice bran, rice crust, gum benjamin, or cow dung. They subsist on forest roots and fruits; they feed on fallen fruits....

This is what wanderers of other sects prescribe as solitude with respect to lodgings: a forest, the foot of a tree, a charnel ground, woodland thickets, the open air, a haystack, a chaff-house....

In this Dhamma and Discipline, monks, there are these three kinds of solitude for a monk. What three?

1. A monk is virtuous; he has abandoned immorality and is thus secluded from it.
2. A monk holds right view; he has abandoned wrong view and is thus secluded from it.
3. A monk is one whose taints are destroyed; he has abandoned the taints and is thus secluded from them.... He is then called a monk who has attained the pinnacle, attained the core, one who is pure and established in the core.

A. I. 240-41.

Note that such excerpts from the Tipiṭaka demonstrating the Buddhist point of view in relation to analytic reflection can sometimes lead people

<sup>87</sup> *Paviveka* = solitude; seclusion from mental defilement.

to see only a limited and incomplete picture of Buddhism and to misunderstand it. For this reason, those people who attempt to describe the Buddhist teachings should cite scriptural passages with care. They should be able to distinguish between those teachings which express universal or general principles, and those which pertain to specific aspects or circumstances, or which have restrictions. They should provide a complete set of examples, or explain the relevant circumstances or qualifications, so that the reader or listener understands Buddhism correctly. {676}

## 15.6 PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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Following on from the preceding descriptions of the various kinds of wise reflection, there are some miscellaneous points here to review and reemphasize.

By examining how wise reflection operates, one sees that it functions during two stages: first, when one cognizes sense impressions or when one experiences things from outside, and second, when one contemplates sense impressions or when one examines matters that one has stored up internally.

One of the noteworthy characteristics of cognizing things wisely is to simply know them accurately, and to provide mindfulness with useful data to use in one's everyday life and activities.

In other words, one cognizes things for the benefit of mindfulness and wisdom. This differs from cognition that leads to misunderstanding, conflict, attachment, and mental corruption. One gains knowledge as a result of one's experiences, rather than allowing experiences or sense impressions to dominate or delude the mind. Otherwise, instead of gaining knowledge in order to solve problems and to eliminate suffering, one accumulates mental defilement and intensifies suffering. These same principles also apply to the act of thinking and they help to distinguish a life conducted with wisdom.

Some people may complain that this so-called life of wisdom appears emotionless, barren, and insipid. A response to this is that emotions

tend to dominate the lives of ordinary people almost continuously. Wise reflection simply eases peoples suffering and mitigates their problems. There is no worry that they will be void of emotions.

Someone who applies wise reflection successfully, to the extent of transcending the state of an ordinary person (*puthujjana*), develops the prominent, pure, and powerful emotion of true compassion, which augments a person's goodness and kindness. Instead of such emotions as frustration, sadness, stress, loneliness, and worry, one feels more refined emotions like joy, delight, happiness, mental clarity and spaciousness, peace, and inner freedom.

Note that the two preliminary stages of the Middle Way – advantageous instruction from others and wise reflection – comprise the link between people and the world. They emphasize one's external environment, before one enters upon the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of internal factors.<sup>88</sup>

Virtuous friendship (*kalyāṇamitta* = 'wholesome instruction from others') highlights the correct relationship between people and the world in respect to their community, and wise reflection highlights the correct relationship between people and the world from the perspective of the mind, that is, of the way in which one experiences sense impressions and the way in which one thinks. This latter factor refers to the way of wisdom, or of discerning things as they really are, as explained earlier.<sup>89</sup>

The different kinds of wise reflection described above follow the presentations in the Buddhist scriptures. It is important that students of Buddhism not get stuck on these conventional formats or on a set terminology, but rather focus on the essential meaning of these teachings.

<sup>88</sup> Note that the threefold training (*sikkhā*) is a system of training. Compared to the Noble Eightfold Path, the threefold training pertains primarily to an engagement with one's external environment. Having practised the threefold training, the skills that one hones become internal virtuous qualities, comprising the essence or content of the Eightfold Path. The *sīla* factors of the Path, for example, are personal qualities preventing a person from immoral or abusive physical and verbal actions. These virtues or character traits arise from effective training.

<sup>89</sup> This is the end of the newly written material, used to replace the missing manuscript. (At the time of writing this section I had no other manuscripts to use for comparison or inspection; please forgive any redundancy.)



Note also that the principles of wise reflection are intended to be used in a practical way, offering continuous benefit to one's life. They are not meant to be used only when one is faced with tricky matters for consideration or when one is in solitude. Rather they can be applied at all times. {677}

This process begins with one's general relationship to people and to the world, and with the course of one's thoughts and reflections when one experiences various things – of not creating suffering, generating problems, or causing harm. Instead, one's thoughts and actions promote happiness for oneself and others, increase wisdom and other wholesome qualities, cultivate virtuous habits and personal attributes, foster knowledge of the truth, and tie in with a spiritual training leading to liberation.

Take for an example a young boy from a wealthy family sitting in a car along with his parents. At one point he looks out the window and sees a group of poor children dressed in rags. The boy is fascinated because he recognizes the difference between himself and those other children. His parents notice his interest and say: 'Those are filthy children; don't pay attention to them.'

In such a circumstance the parents are equivalent to bad friends (*pāpamitta*), advising the child to think in an unwise manner and inducing unwholesome states like aversion and contempt. These negative feelings may develop into the boy's general viewpoint towards poor people, or even into a bias against all people.

In the same kind of circumstances, however, another set of parents may say: 'Those unfortunate children. Their parents are poor and therefore they do not have any decent clothes to wear. We should try and help them.'

In this case the parents act as virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), helping to establish the child in wise reflection and inducing wholesome qualities like lovingkindness, compassion, and renunciation. These positive feelings may develop into the child's outlook towards poor people and into his general perspective towards all people.

The same holds true in other situations. Take for example the way in which news is broadcast in the media, both in relation to good news and bad; the expressed attitudes and speech by adults is highly influential in shaping the thought patterns of children. If adults point out correct ways of thinking and a discernment that is aligned with truth and conducive to wholesome qualities, the spiritual growth of children will be greatly enhanced.

Food, clothing, textbooks, the road to school, and those people or events encountered on the way to school – all of these things can influence the thoughts and shape a wholesome or unwholesome response in children. Very important in this context, however, is the way in which the perspectives and values of children are moulded by the advice given to them by both virtuous and immoral companions, leading to either wise or unwise reflection.

As for adults, when they understand these principles they will be able to apply wise reflection to rectify negative attitudes and habits, even those which have been accumulated and compounded by unwise reflection for a long time.

Note also that in the same situation, where several people all apply wise reflection, the kinds and levels of wise reflection may differ.

Take an example connected to the two stages of tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). One man sees the face of a beautiful young woman, but instead of focusing on the beauty of her face he sees it as comprised of skin and facial hair, along with the unattractive elements of grease, sweat and dust, and with bones and flesh beneath. In this way, lust does not arise in him. The wise reflection applied here is considered an aspect of tranquillity meditation (reflection on the repulsive – *paṭikkūla-manasikāra*), because the experience is of the repulsive quelling lust, leading to a peaceful mind.

A second man sees the same beautiful woman, but he sees her as a young person who ought to be looked after and cared for. He generates the feeling of lovingkindness, considering her like a younger sister or

niece. The wise reflection applied here is also an aspect of tranquillity meditation (an expression of the divine abiding of lovingkindness), because it makes the mind peaceful and pure. {678}

A woman sees this beautiful woman and thinks: ‘Her face is more beautiful than mine.’ She begins to feel envy and dislike. This is a form of unwise reflection, because it generates unwholesome states and causes suffering and anguish.

A third man sees this woman and sees her face as comprised of various physical parts made up of different elements; as a whole they are conventionally referred to as the face of this woman with such-and-such a name. This woman’s face is nothing more than a physical thing – it is impermanent, unstable, subject to change, existing according to causes and conditions, morally neutral; ultimately, it is neither beautiful nor repulsive. This kind of reflection is in line with insight meditation, because the person sees the object as it really is or according to the truth.<sup>90</sup>

Wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is the principal factor initiating spiritual training, or it is the pillar of wisdom development, especially in systematic or formal study. It should thus be given great importance. One should help people seek knowledge themselves, rather than try to ‘educate’ people by telling them what to think or believe, which is often a misguided and fruitless effort.

To begin with one can develop educational methods and activities that encourage students to train in the two basic forms of wise reflection: the investigation of causes and conditions and the analysis of component factors.

<sup>90</sup>Cf.: Vism. 243. To avoid confusion, note that some forms of meditation which have one see people or things as unattractive, repulsive or impure are classified as the stage of tranquillity meditation (*samatha*). Here, one still sees things according to conventions and designations, but simply selects those conventional labels that help to dispel one’s defilements. In insight meditation, on the other hand, one sees things as they truly are, as they really exist, according to causes and conditions. At this level things are neither ‘beautiful’ nor ‘ugly’, neither ‘attractive’ nor ‘repulsive’.

When the students encounter situations requiring contemplation they can link these two kinds of reflection with the reflection in accord with the three universal characteristics and the reflection used to solve problems (reflection in accord with the Four Noble Truths). The other kinds of reflection then provide support as is suitable. With this guidance the students begin to apply wise reflection independently and progress in spiritual practice truly and correctly.

When teachers know how to incorporate wise reflection in their curriculum, even young children will develop a profound thinking and broad perspective. By looking at their notebooks and writing desks they will begin to see the interrelationship and interdependence between all things in the universe. They will discern that the arising and existence of one thing does not happen in isolation; it is inseparable from the existence of other things.

In answer to the questions, ‘How did this desk come to be?’ ‘What is required in order for this desk to come into existence?’ a child will trace back to the necessary causes and search for all the factors required in the creation of a desk, for example: wood, a saw, nails, a hammer, and human labourers. From these they will trace even further back, say from the wood to trees, and from trees to soil, water, rain, forests, climate and weather.

Besides giving rise to a clear understanding of subjects under consideration, and of all their related factors, a skill in wise reflection also leads to insight and realization which effectuates change even on the level of viewpoints and personality. For example, one realizes that to live well and experience true happiness one must respect other people and respect nature, and carefully protect and preserve natural resources. {679}

Those people skilled at wise reflection will look for and recognize those aspects of things that are beneficial, and apply them for wellbeing and prosperity in their lives at all times and in all circumstances.

Despite encountering poverty, illness, or misfortune, these people do not feel discouraged or helpless. Instead, these difficult and challenging experiences become the source of wisdom and other virtues. Indeed, one sometimes hears people say: ‘It was good luck that I was born poor’ or

‘It was good luck that I became so ill at that time.’ Similarly, there are stories in the scriptures of some people who hear the words of a madman and consequently realize the truth and are completely freed from mental impurity.

Conversely, some people, despite being born rich, physically beautiful, or with prestige, lack wise reflection. Instead of their apparent good luck acting as an asset or support for achieving true success with speed and convenience, it increases and intensifies craving, conceit and wrong view, along with fostering laziness, infatuation, and competitiveness. Their good luck is transformed into bad luck and they find no true fulfilment.

Most people have accumulated the habit over a long period of time of thinking in ways that satisfy craving, or thinking based on likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions. These different kinds of wise reflection help to train the mind to develop new habits.

Developing new habits may take a long time, because old habits have been accumulated for decades. But the effort is worthwhile, because wise reflection increases wisdom, solves problems, dispels delusion and suffering, and generates joy and luminosity.

Even if not perfected, wise reflection can still aid in fostering equilibrium and providing a way out when old habits lead one into trouble and to various forms of suffering; it helps one to turn towards safety and freedom.

Technically speaking, from the perspective of functionality, the various kinds of wise reflection can be classified into two types:

1. Reflection cultivating power of mind: this type of reflection aims for mobilizing virtuous, wholesome qualities; it emphasizes hindering or suppressing craving; it belongs to tranquillity meditation (*samatha*); its characteristic is generating the strength or degree of goodness to constrain or conceal the unwholesome; its results are temporary and dependent on time; it promotes spiritual preparedness and builds character; and it leads to mundane right view.

2. Reflection cultivating pure wisdom: this type of reflection aims for comprehensive knowledge of the truth or of reality; it emphasizes the eradication of ignorance; it belongs to insight meditation (*vipassanā*); its characteristic is illumination, of dispelling delusion or cleansing what is impure; its fruits are timeless or absolute; and it leads to transcendent right view. {680}

## 15.7 APPENDIX 1: REFLECTION IN ACCORD WITH THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND REFLECTION BASED ON SCIENCE

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The Buddhist teachings describe many methods of wise reflection, which can be applied separately for different situations or combined and applied together for one specific situation.

In contemporary society, wise reflection is often referred to as the scientific method. One can also refer to the scientific method as ‘analysis for solving problems’, which corresponds here with reflection in accord with the Four Noble Truths. Let us compare these two methods of reflection:

The Scientific Method has five stages:

1. Location of Problems
2. Setting up of an Hypothesis
3. Experimentation and Gathering of Data
4. Analysis of Data
5. Conclusion

This method includes the important function of investigating causes, which is intrinsic to the second stage. The hypothesis may be directly based on the conjecture of a specific cause, or a cause provides clear evidence for establishing an hypothesis. There are times, however, when the evidence does not clearly point to one distinct hypothesis, and therefore one must form many provisional hypotheses.

In the method of reflecting on and investigating the Four Noble Truths, the search for causes is designated as a separate stage. Moreover, the four truths are classified into two separate groups, as follows:

**A. Natural processes (in line with nature):** these stages are to be reached by knowledge – by reflecting on and knowing things according to the truth, which exists independently.

1. The stage of recognizing suffering (*dukkha*): to know the nature of suffering or the nature of one's problems; to know where suffering manifests and to know its extent or range = the location of problems.
2. The stage of investigating causes (*samudaya*): to discern the causes of suffering or of one's problems = (this stage is not distinguished in the scientific method).
3. The stage of drawing an inference to cessation (*nirodha*): to examine the potentiality of cessation and the manner by which problems may be truly solved = setting up of an hypothesis.

**B. Methodology (of human beings):** this stage needs to be practised and applied:

4. Following the Path (*magga*): this stage can be subdivided into three sub-stages:

*Path #1: Esanā* (or *gavesanā*, and including *vīmaṃsanā*): seeking verification; experimentation = experimentation and gathering of data.

*Path #2: Vīmaṃsā* (or *pavicāra*): inspection; separation; selecting those factors that are correct and valid = analysis of data.

*Path #3: Anubodha*: 'awakening'; isolating those factors that are incorrect; apprehending or choosing the true path, which leads to the solution to one's problems = conclusion.

Here are these four stages in greater detail:

1. Recognition of Suffering: human beings experience myriad kinds of suffering, affliction, and difficulty, both physical and mental, both internal and external. A basic form of suffering, however, refers to those things that are oppressive because they thwart, oppose, and conflict with people's desires and cherished ideas.

Human problems or suffering comes in many different forms, according to various locations and time periods, and thus one must apply those solutions appropriate and specific to these conditions. The basic form of suffering referred to above, however, is inherently connected to human life and to human nature, regardless of whether one lives alone or with others. This suffering follows people constantly; it manifests and issues effects irrespective of whether people have solved those problems owing to specific times and places. Addressing this basic form of suffering is a regular and constant responsibility for people. The degree by which one rectifies this basic suffering will have an effect on every other kind of suffering or difficulty – both their level of intensity and one's ability to deal with them. Addressing this basic suffering is thus the most fundamental and supreme benefit for human life. Other suffering and difficulties must be dealt with at another stage, as suits the circumstances. {686}

2. Investigation of Causes (in order to envision the solution to problems): this stage of investigation is directly linked to the third stage of inferring cessation, i.e. the way in which one draws an inference to cessation depends on how accurately one apprehends the causes to one's problems.

Methods (A), (B) and (C) – see stage #3 below: here, one grasps the cause of suffering incorrectly, say by believing that one is experiencing inadequate amounts of pleasure; alternatively, one neglects to investigate causes altogether.

Method (D): here, one understands that the cause of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*), or else one gains an even deeper insight into Dependent Origination (*paṭīccasamuppāda*), tracing the cause back to ignorance (*avijjā*).



3. Drawing an Inference to Cessation: one reckons that suffering ends by one of the following processes:

- A. By seeking sensual pleasure and indulging oneself to the maximum.
- B. By developing concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*), according to the ‘way of the yogis’ (*yoga-vidhi*).
- C. By developing extreme austerities and through self-mortification.
- D. By severing the cycle of Dependent Origination, dispelling ignorance, cutting off craving, being mindful, and conducting one’s life with wisdom.

4. Following the Path:

*Path #1: esanā* (‘searching’; ‘experimentation’): the Buddha practised and experimented with all four of the above methods of seeking the end of suffering. He also observed how people and societies live and exist when following each of these four methods.

*Path #2: vīmaṃsā* (‘inspection’; ‘analysis’): to analyze one’s observations and experimentation. The Buddha recognized (even before his great renunciation) that seeking sensual pleasures does not give true meaning to life or lead to what is essential; moreover, it leads to affliction. He saw that yogic practices lead only so far as various concentrative attainments, and that severe austerities create torment and affliction in vain. The path of wisdom, entailing the end of ignorance and craving, however, is able to eradicate the root of suffering and leads to true deliverance.

*Path #3: anubodha* (‘awakening’; ‘understanding’): one realizes that the way of sensuality and the way of severe asceticism are extremes (*anta*), while the way of the yogis results in getting stuck in the middle – by this latter way one does not yet reach the ‘Path’ (*magga*). The correct and true course is the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path, the way of wisdom – which begins with right view.

In Thailand, Dr. Saroj Buasri has already written about the comparison between the scientific method and the method in accord with the Four Noble Truths, for example in his book ‘*A Philosophy of Education for Thailand: the Confluence of Buddhism and Democracy*’.<sup>91</sup> This is praiseworthy work. However, because in the meantime there has been further examination and contemplation on this subject, I have introduced some different ideas.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter how the natural law of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) and the law of Dependent Origination are in fact the same law, but described from different angles. Impermanence and inconstancy produce pressure and conflict, and thus it is natural for there to be fluctuation (*aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāma-dhammaṃ*). Yet this process occurs according to causes and conditions. Reflecting in this way expands the study of wise reflection to include the method of dialectics (*vibhāsā-vidhi*). It would be useful, however, to try and interpret the method of dialectics by applying the mode of detailed analysis (*vibhajja-vidhi*). This matter can be reviewed and considered by scholars when there is an opportunity.

<sup>91</sup>Bangkok: Ministry of Education, 1970.

## 15.8 APPENDIX 2: DHAMMĀNUDHAMMA-PAṬIPATTI

Following are some definitions in the Pali Canon and the commentaries of the term *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*: to practise correctly, in an integrated fashion, without obstruction, and consistent with the goals of practice;<sup>92</sup> to undertake the initial stages of practice consistent with the nine supermundane states (*lokuttara-dhamma*);<sup>93</sup> to undertake the initial stages of practice, along with virtuous conduct (*sīla*), consistent with the nine supermundane states;<sup>94</sup> to undertake the initial stages of practice along with virtuous conduct (*sīla*) to arrive at the goal: the transcendent state;<sup>95</sup> to practise the factors of insight (*vipassanā-dhamma*), which are consistent with the noble truth (*ariya-dhamma*);<sup>96</sup> to practise the path of insight (*vipassanā-magga*), conforming to the noble truth;<sup>97</sup> to follow the righteous practice conforming to Nibbāna – the transcendent state;<sup>98</sup> to develop the subsidiary factor of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), conforming to the transcendent state;<sup>99</sup> the term *dhammānudhamma* refers to the Dhamma and all its minor parts (*anudhamma*);<sup>100</sup> *dhammānudhamma* refers to the parts of the Dhamma: those practices compatible with the Dhamma;<sup>101</sup> the nine supermundane states are called the Dhamma, qualities such as *vipassanā*, for instance, are called *anudhamma*, and the practice suitable to the Dhamma is called *anudhamma-paṭipadā*.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>92</sup>Nd. II. 46.

<sup>93</sup>DA. II. 578 ; DA. III. 1020; SA. II. 267; AA. IV. 57.

<sup>94</sup>AA. II. 203; AA. III. 6, 118, 164.

<sup>95</sup>AA. III. 290.

<sup>96</sup>DA. II. 555; SA. III. 254; UdA. 326.

<sup>97</sup>AA. IV. 151.

<sup>98</sup>SA. II. 34.

<sup>99</sup>SnA. I. 329.

<sup>100</sup>DA. III. 929.

<sup>101</sup>MA. III. 220.

<sup>102</sup>NdA. I. 65.



# SECTION VII.

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## PATH FACTORS

Chapter 16

*Path Factors of Wisdom*

Chapter 17

*Path Factors of Virtuous Conduct*

Chapter 18

*Path Factors of Concentration*

Chapter 19

*Four Noble Fruits*



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# CHAPTER 16

## PATH FACTORS OF WISDOM

### *Right View and Right Thought*

#### 16.1 THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN A WHOLESOME WAY OF LIFE

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Buddhist spiritual practice may be defined as the way in which laws of nature benefit human beings, or as the application of one's knowledge of such laws in order to benefit humanity. Correct or excellent spiritual conduct thus refers to living one's life in a way that optimizes how natural causal dynamics benefit oneself and others. One conducts one's life with insight into nature, acting to induce causes and conditions that generate favourable results for all people. This emphasis is particularly evident in the teachings on volitional actions (*karma/kamma*).

Technically speaking, one practises the Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*): one applies the Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*; the impartial teaching of truth) to benefit humanity and to reach the final goal of the Buddha's teachings.

Virtuous conduct (*cariya*) can thus be divided into three stages:

- First, to know the truth of nature, to have insight into nature, that all things exist according to causes and conditions.
- Second, to use this knowledge beneficially, to conduct oneself in harmony with the laws of nature and to act in way that generates favourable results.

- Third, when one acts in accord with causes and conditions, one allows them to generate results automatically and independently – one observes them with understanding, without grasping onto them and affixing a sense of self.

Knowledge is thus the mainstay of virtuous conduct; it is a vital factor from beginning to end. Virtuous conduct is equivalent to living with wisdom, and a virtuous person is thus referred to as a *pañña* – a wise person.

Because wisdom is required from the start, the Buddhist system of spiritual conduct (the Path – *magga*; the Middle Way) begins with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*; right understanding). {688}

## 16.2 RIGHT VIEW (SAMMĀ-DIṬṬHI)

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### A. IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT VIEW

Monks, just as the dawn's light is the harbinger and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, right view is the forerunner and precursor of awakening to the Four Noble Truths as they really are. It is to be expected that a monk with right view will understand as it really is: 'This is suffering ... this is the cause of suffering ... this is the cessation of suffering ... this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.'

S. V. 442.

Monks, of all the Path factors, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? [With right view] one understands wrong view as wrong view and right view as right view ... one understands wrong thought as wrong thought and right thought as right thought ... one understands wrong speech ... right speech ... wrong action ... right action ... wrong livelihood ... right livelihood as right livelihood.

M. III. 71-77.



And how is right view the leader? When one possesses right view, right thought comes into being; when one possesses right thought, right speech comes into being; when one possesses right speech, right action comes into being; when one possesses right action, right livelihood comes into being; when one possesses right livelihood, right effort comes into being; when one possesses right effort, right mindfulness comes into being; when one possesses right mindfulness, right concentration comes into being; when one possesses right concentration, right knowledge comes into being; when one possesses right knowledge, right deliverance comes into being. Thus the trainee who possesses eight factors becomes an arahant who possesses ten factors.<sup>1</sup>

*M. III. 76.*

That a monk with rightly grounded view, with a rightly grounded development of the Path, could pierce ignorance, arouse true knowledge, and realize Nibbāna: this is possible. For what reason? Because his view is rightly grounded.

*S. V. 10-11, 49.*

I see no other thing which is so conducive for the arising of non-arisen wholesome qualities, or for the increase and prosperity of arisen wholesome qualities, as right view. {689}

*A. I. 30-31.*

<sup>1</sup>Similar passages occur at: D. II. 216-17; A. V. 236-7. The expression ‘comes into being’ is a translation of the Pali term *pahoti*, which can also be translated as ‘suitable for application’ or ‘workable’. Passages at S. V. 1-2 and A. V. 214 present a deeper analysis, stating that although right view is the leader of all the Path factors, knowledge (*vijjā*) is the leader in the undertaking of all wholesome qualities and is the source of right view. (Similarly, ignorance – *avijjā* – is the leader for all unwholesome qualities and is the source of wrong view.)

## B. DEFINITIONS OF RIGHT VIEW

The most common definition for right view is a knowledge of the Four Noble Truths:

And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: this is called right view.

*E.g.: D. II. 311-12; M. I. 48-9, 62; S. V. 8-9; Vbh. 104, 235.*

Other definitions include:

To know both wholesome and unwholesome qualities, along with their root causes:

When a noble disciple understands the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has unwavering confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma.<sup>2</sup>

*M. I. 46-7.*

To discern the three characteristics:

A monk discerns as impermanent physical form ... feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness which is actually impermanent: this discernment of his is right view. Seeing rightly, he experiences disenchantment. With the end of delight comes the end of lust; with the end of lust comes the end of delight. With the end of delight and lust the heart is liberated and is said to be thoroughly liberated.

*S. III. 51.*

<sup>2</sup>The three unwholesome roots: greed, hatred, and delusion; the three wholesome roots: non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion.

A monk discerns as impermanent the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind ... physical form ... sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tactile objects ... mental objects which are actually impermanent: this discernment of his is right view.

*S. IV. 142.*

To discern Dependent Origination (for examples, see Chapter 4).<sup>3</sup>

The Buddha also defined two levels of right view: right view ‘connected to the taints’ (*sāsaṃsa*) and transcendent right view:

And what, monks, is right view? Right view, I say, is twofold: there is right view that is affected by taints, classified as meritorious, bearing fruit in respect to the five aggregates; and there is right view that is noble, taintless, transcendent, a factor of the Path.

And what is right view that is affected by the taints, classified as meritorious, and bearing fruit in respect to the five aggregates? ‘Gifts bear fruit, offerings bear fruit, acts of worship bear fruit; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are ascetics and brahmins faring and practising rightly who having realized this world and the other world for themselves by direct knowledge make them known to others. This is right view affected by the taints, classified as meritorious, and bearing fruit in respect to the five aggregates.

And what is right view that is noble, taintless, transcendent, a factor of the Path? Wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-Dhamma enlightenment factor, the Path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, transcendent, a factor of the Path. {690}

*M. III. 72.*

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g.: *S. II. 17*; *M. I. 47-55*. There are many such definitions.

### C. GENERAL POINTS

*Ditthi* is most often translated as ‘view’, but its meaning also includes ‘belief’, ‘ideology’, ‘opinion’, ‘rational knowledge’, ‘things conforming with personal understanding’, ‘principles deemed acceptable’, ‘agreeable notions’, ‘cherished opinions’, ‘preferences’, and ‘personal values’. The meaning of this term also includes a person’s ideals, worldview, outlook on life, and basic attitudes which result from such views, knowledge, and preferences.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, there are two levels or kinds of view: first, views and understanding connected to a sense of value, say of what is good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate; and second, views and understanding about the truth, say of what something is, how it exists, and from where it originates.

Views, personal understanding, and cherished beliefs exercise great influence and control over how people live their lives and over society as a whole. In the teaching on the ten courses of action (*kamma-patha*), *ditthi* is classified as mental kamma, which has more serious consequences than either physical kamma or verbal kamma.<sup>5</sup> This is because mental kamma is the underlying cause for physical and verbal actions. Views are able to lead individuals, society, or the whole human race to either prosperity and freedom or to decline and ruin.

This is apparent in the lives of individual people: views determine how one lives, both in terms of processing information and of outward expression: to how one looks at the world and to how one acts in relation to the world. This begins with how one interprets, evaluates, and judges new experiences. Views determine what things, or aspects of things, one

<sup>4</sup>In the Pali Canon there are two equivalent terms which often accompany *ditthi* to form the following group: *ditthi* (view), *khanti* (things conforming with personal understanding), and *ruci* (preferences or agreeable notions), e.g.: Vin. I. 69-70; Nd. I. 40; Ps. I. 176; Vbh. 245, 324-5. See also the section in chapter 2 on the different kinds and stages of knowledge. Although the term *ditthi* corresponds to the English word ‘attitude’, this latter word also corresponds in part to *saṅkappa* (thought; intention) – the second Path factor.

<sup>5</sup>*Ditthi* as mental kamma in the teaching on the courses of action (*kamma-patha*), e.g.: A. V. 264-8, 292. On the critical importance of *ditthi*, see: M. I. 373; A. V. 212.

seeks out and selects, and what things one favours or disfavours. They then influence the course of one's thoughts, speech and actions, the way one responds, reacts, and deals with things: how one speaks or behaves towards another person, an object, a surrounding, or a situation, along with how one creates justifications for such speech and action.

Technically speaking, views determine other mental factors, beginning with one's thoughts (*sāṅkappa*), making them either 'right' (*sammā*) or 'wrong' (*micchā*), accordingly.

The importance of views in spiritual practice is obvious. For example, if someone likes money, and sees material wealth as life's goal, as the yardstick for success and as the sign of self-importance, he will strive to gain such wealth. Both this person's education and work will be undertaken for this purpose, and he will measure, appraise, and honour others by using wealth as the criteria. If such a person is morally deficient, he will seek wealth indiscriminately, without considering if his actions are righteous, and he will look upon those poor people who are morally virtuous as foolish, old-fashioned, or worthless.

If a child believes that having power is good he will incline towards asserting power, enjoying domineering and bullying others. {691}

If a person does not believe in merit (*puñña*) and evil (*pāpa*), and views these terms as empty threats, he will pay no attention to teachings on wholesome behaviour or refrain from things considered unskilful.

When one lacks a deep understanding of life and of the world, as being ultimately unstable and fleeting, one tends to cling to the body, to life, to possessions, and to people. One is generally anxious and frightened, and one gives expression to the suffering resulting from one's attachment and fear.

With all of these examples, the opposite is also true: wholesome views lead to a wholesome outcome.

Right view is called *sammā-diṭṭhi*, and wrong view is called *micchā-diṭṭhi*. The conditions for wrong view are a harmful influence by other people, a bad social environment, especially evil friends, and a lack of wise

reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*): an inability to contemplate or a tendency to think in incorrect ways.

The conditions for right view are a beneficial influence by other people – to be correctly moulded and instructed by a favourable social environment, especially through contact with virtuous friends and by associating with honest people – and wise reflection.

The main focus of this chapter is right view, with occasional references to wrong view.

Right view is divided into two kinds or two levels:

**Mundane right view (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*):** views connected to and dependent on the world; views, beliefs, and understanding about the world that correspond to principles of goodness, accord with the way of righteousness, or are in harmony with virtuous behaviour, as described in the sutta passages above.

Generally speaking, this kind of right view is a result of external teachings (*paratoghosa*) or of social factors, and it relies on faith as a link or as a guiding force.<sup>6</sup> In particular it results from the instruction one receives from society, say through teachings and training in ethics and by cultural transmission. It is related to wise reflection; the kind of wise reflection applied here generally encourages a person to engage in wholesome activities.

This kind of right view is associated with evaluation: what is good, bad, right, wrong, better, worse, what should and shouldn't be. And it also encompasses belief systems and teachings which preserve these values of goodness.

Because this kind of right view stems from social conditioning and external transmission, it manifests as teachings, rules, standards, and beliefs established or prescribed by human beings. As such, these views are superimposed on, or they are one step removed from, the laws of nature. They are therefore 'mundane': their details and particulars vary

<sup>6</sup>*Saddhāmūlikā ca sammādiṭṭhi* ('right view with faith as root cause'): DA. I. 231; MA. I. 132; AA. II. 109; ItA. II. 45.

according to time and place, and change subject to surrounding social developments.

Personal likes, preferences, and values are included in this classification of mundane views.

Although the details of this kind of view change according to different places and time periods, there is a general principle for determining what is right view, namely, the principle or law of kamma. This is because the law of kamma is a truth or a law of nature that confirms or validates the entirety of human behaviour. {692}

Mundane right view is confirmed by this law of nature and it is in harmony with this natural truth. For this reason, mundane right view is occasionally defined as *kammassakatā-ñāṇa*: the knowledge that people are the owners of their kamma, that they must be held accountable for their actions, and that they receive the fruits of their actions.<sup>7</sup> This knowledge is in accord with the law of kamma. In other words, it is the knowledge that all human behaviour and the results of such behaviour proceed according to the law of interrelated causes and conditions.

Mundane right view reflects the basic values of people, e.g.: a sense of responsibility for one's actions; the wish for results from one's actions, efforts, capabilities, and intelligence; the ability for self-reliance; and the endeavour for mutual assistance.

Note that knowledge of the law of kamma here is simply a basic understanding of how each individual is the owner of his or her intentional actions and must take responsibility for them. This knowledge accords with the law of kamma, but it is not yet a direct understanding of this law or a direct insight into the law of causality. This deeper knowledge or insight is classified as transcendent right view, which will be discussed below.

Moreover, there are other ways to measure mundane right view, for example: views which support and are conducive to a happy life and a

<sup>7</sup>E.g.: Vbh. 328.

thriving society; or views which help a person advance on the Path and engenders other Path factors, beginning with right thought.

Because mundane right view corresponds with truth, it can link up with and lead to transcendent right view.

**Transcendent right view (*lokuttara-sammādiṭṭhi*):** knowledge and understanding about life and about the world which accords with truth; an understanding of the nature of reality; an understanding of nature.

This kind of right view results from wise reflection, which is an internal factor. Beneficial teachings by other people or having virtuous friends can help only to the extent of encouraging people to apply wise reflection and to see for themselves. This kind of right view cannot arise by simply listening to others and believing them by way of faith. It requires investigating nature and understanding phenomena directly.

Therefore, transcendent right view is independent of teachings, rules, and beliefs created by people additional to and separate from the laws of nature. It is free from social influence and not subject to varying external factors. It is a true connection with nature, whose characteristics remain the same in every place and era. This kind of right view is ‘transcendent’: it is timeless, not restricted to a specific time era; it remains the same knowledge required for comprehensive wisdom and liberation in every time and place.

This second kind of right view, transcendent right view, refers specifically to clear knowledge relating to the stage of path and fruit, resulting in awakening. {693}

Having said this, right view connected to path and fruit is a consequence of the same kind of right view belonging to unawakened beings. Therefore, I suggest defining the right view in this second classification that still belongs to unawakened beings as ‘right view conforming to transcendence’.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The commentaries refer to this form of right view as ‘insight right view’ (*vipassanā-sammādiṭṭhi*); the original Pali term for it is ‘knowledge conforming to truth’ (*saccānulomika-ñāṇa*). (In the commentaries this latter term is specifically used in reference to the final stage of the nine kinds of insight knowledge – *vipassanā-ñāṇa*.)



The fruits of transcendent right view (or even right view conforming to transcendence) are much more profound than those of mundane right view, and they are able to utterly transform a person's personality, completely uprooting negative qualities in the mind.

Only this level of right view is able to eradicate the defilements (not merely suppress them), and is able to create true stability in regard to virtue. One is not swayed by the values and perceptions instilled by society because one has penetrated through the level of conventional truth and seen the underlying reality.

This subject has an important bearing on spiritual development: here, one needs to consider the proper relationship to both human society and to nature, to recognize how to properly benefit from these two sources.

As mentioned above, right view conforming to transcendence stems from wise reflection, which plays an essential role. Generally speaking, the behaviour of unawakened persons is dictated by values instilled by society, for example to abstain from specific kinds of bad deeds and to perform specific kinds of good deeds, according to model teachings, instructions, transmissions, edicts, etc. Whenever unawakened persons are not governed by such socially instilled values, they are prone to falling subject to craving (*taṇhā*), which in today's parlance may be referred to as 'negative emotions'.<sup>9</sup> Wise reflection helps to free people from the influence of social values and from the enslavement by mental defilement; it engenders a freedom of behaviour guided by wisdom.

In sum, at initial stages of spiritual practice, when one thinks or acts without the presence of wise reflection, one either succumbs to external social values or one falls under the power of one's own craving. When one possesses transcendent right view, however, one is truly liberated from the influence and power of society, and from personal craving.

Whenever 'view' (*diṭṭhi*) becomes right view, it is equivalent or synonymous to wisdom,<sup>10</sup> even though at beginning stages right view is

<sup>9</sup>Both negative values and negative emotions are a result of craving. The difference is that the former are a form of embellished or modified craving, while the latter are an expression of pure craving.

<sup>10</sup>E.g.: Nd. I. 44-5; Vbh. 237.

still just an opinion or a belief. This is because the opinion or belief corresponds with truth and is based on an understanding of reality, and begins to escape from the clutches of ignorance and craving.

Even though the views and beliefs later transform into clear knowledge (*ñāṇa*), this knowledge is still referred to as ‘right view’ in order to acknowledge a progressive and connected development of discernment.

The term ‘right view’ thus has a broad meaning, encompassing correct views and opinions as well as a direct knowledge of the truth. {694}

#### D. RIGHT VIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL STUDY

Some beginning spiritual practitioners who possess a degree of right view may believe that in keeping with the threefold training the starting point of spiritual practice is moral conduct (*sīla*), i.e. that spiritual development begins with good behaviour (*sucarita*).<sup>11</sup> This claim, however, misses the core of spiritual practice. The real purpose of spiritual practice at the level of morality – of forming a wholesome disposition and creating wholesome habits – is to enable people who are responsive to training (*veneyya*) to recognize the true value of moral conduct.<sup>12</sup>

Only when one develops a deep understanding of moral conduct, i.e. one develops right view, will one’s virtuous conduct be secure.<sup>13</sup> At this stage one’s spiritual practice has truly begun. In other words, the reason why the threefold training begins with moral conduct is in order to nurture the Path factors, starting with right view. When the Path factors, led by right view, arise in a person, he or she is said to have begun spiritual training.

From this point on the Path factors begin to perform their specific functions and to act in a coordinated way. Besides securing moral conduct,

<sup>11</sup>The term *sucarita* here refers to virtuous physical acts, speech, and livelihood; it does not include *mano-sucarita* (‘virtuous mental acts’), which encompasses right view.

<sup>12</sup>This is an example of how individual behaviour can shape values, in the same way as external social factors can shape values.

<sup>13</sup>In this case, values determine behaviour.

right view leads to sincerity and honesty, and it guarantees that one's behaviour accords with the heart and objective of moral principles. One's conduct does not err into an adherence to rules and practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) or into gullibility. When one possesses right view one can trust in one's virtuous conduct, but if one lacks right view such self-confidence is absent.

From another angle, by focusing on the conditions for right view, one can say that spiritual practice begins with an ability to reflect wisely (*yoniso-manasikāra*). This is true because when there is wise reflection right view naturally follows. Even on the level of moral conduct, when wise reflection helps to guide behaviour, one's actions will be correct and performed for useful ends. In addition, one gains understanding, confidence, and joy.

Take for example the act of dressing oneself properly: besides considering the value of covering oneself modestly and protecting oneself from the elements, wise reflection also assists in considering the benefits to others and to society. One thinks: 'I will dress in a clean and tidy way for the wellbeing of the community or of society. I won't dress in a distasteful or offensive way. I will dress in a dignified and pleasing way to support wholesome mind states in those whom I meet, to make them feel at ease.'

On the contrary, if one thinks of boasting about one's elegance or social status, of showing off, of intimidating, seducing, or tricking others, this reveals a lack of wise reflection. The mind will then be dominated by unwholesome qualities; it will be constricted and unhappy, and the act of wearing clothes will be immodest and misguided. {695}

When people hear the word 'study' they usually think of the learning required for a specific profession and for earning a livelihood, which in Buddhist practice is a matter of moral conduct (*sīla*).

Naturally, no righteous person would approve of a career education that gives no consideration to whether one's livelihood is right or wrong. But an education that aims only at establishing right livelihood, without focusing on establishing right view, is still not correct, and it is unlikely to fulfil one's wishes, even to the extent of creating right livelihood, because it has not reached the heart of spiritual study. It may lead to right

livelihood in name only, not true right livelihood, because it involves a training in moral conduct that does not generate the Path factors. It is still superficial and perfunctory; it is not rooted in the Eightfold Path.

The correct way is to establish right view as a foundation for right livelihood. It is inadequate to keep moral precepts without having a love for morality, or to perform good deeds without seeing the true importance of virtue.

Think of the seemingly implausible things that happen in societies in which there is widespread immoral conduct. Many people in such societies see any action that leads to success or wealth, despite it involving dishonesty, deception, and injury to others, as a sign of cleverness and skill. Although there is often material abundance in such societies, there is also much evil-doing and crime. In contrast, there are other societies which are relatively impoverished but in which there is little crime. Some of the poor people in such societies would rather beg for food than commit theft or other bad deeds (whereas beggars in dishonest societies may act unscrupulously even while begging).

In the context of formal teaching this subject matter reveals the important relationship between the Eightfold Path and the threefold training, which is evident with these two factors – right view and moral training – the first factors in these two teachings, respectively.

In terms of the interrelationship between moral conduct and right view, when people live together peacefully and in a well-disciplined fashion, there is an absence of fear and distrust. When one acts virtuously the mind is untroubled, calm, and concentrated. When the mind is calm and bright, one's thinking is nimble; one discerns things clearly and without bias, giving rise to understanding and wisdom. Wisdom's ability to discern the value of moral conduct is an expression of right view. With right view and right understanding, a person's thoughts, speech, and actions are naturally virtuous.

And as mentioned above, training in moral conduct is truly an aspect of spiritual practice only when it gives rise to right view, at least when one gains a deep appreciation for moral conduct and one sees its value.

There are two ways of training in moral conduct that bear fruit as right view:

1. Training in moral conduct relying on routine behaviour and faith: this way emphasizes a code of discipline, of setting up a framework to regulate behaviour and of establishing a specific system, say of a daily routine, in order to create good habits and a wholesome disposition. In addition, one develops faith by having virtuous friends or teachers point out the benefits and blessings of doing good and of following a moral code. Virtuous friends may also introduce one to honourable, successful, and happy persons (this may be the friends and teachers themselves) to act as a model for behaviour. {696}

In this way, a deep appreciation of goodness, a love of moral discipline, and an enthusiasm for virtuous conduct is generated. Even if one does not have a teacher to point out the benefits of doing good or to act as an example, if one is able to adhere to such a moral code, having it influence one's habits and disposition, and one sees the benefits of virtue, one will develop an interest in morality and apply reasoning in such a way that accords with virtuous behaviour.

When one goes beyond simply adhering to a moral code or to moral constraints and one sees the value of virtuous conduct, one reaches the stage of right view and one's spiritual practice truly begins. This is true despite the fact that one's right view may still be weak and unstable, and one's practice may contain a degree of attachment, naivety, and an adherence to rules and practices.

2. Training in moral conduct using wise reflection: this way emphasizes a thorough understanding of the objectives for actions and for practice; one practises with wise reflection, or one applies wise reflection to guide and direct behaviour, as described in the example of wearing clothes above.

Here, a teacher helps by first pointing out a way of contemplating and understanding the purpose of specific actions. When it comes to practical application, however, the students or practitioners must use wise reflection in each instance themselves.

Take as another example the act of paying respects to a monk or to an elder. The person paying respects may reflect on the wholesome and appropriate reasons for such an action, considering for example: ‘I pay respects in order to train myself to be humble and cooperative’; ‘I pay respects in order to honour good manners and for the wellbeing of the community’; ‘I pay respects as a sign of reverence for the Dhamma, which is embodied in this person’; ‘I pay respects to this person with thoughts of kindness and benevolence, to help remind him to preserve virtuous and suitable qualities’; or ‘I pay respects in order to practise the Dhamma in the most beautiful and correct fashion.’

On the part of the monks, the elders, or the teachers, who are the recipients of such gestures of respect, they may reflect: ‘This is an occasion to take stock whether I possess such virtuous qualities making me worthy of such respect’; ‘I am in a position to offer advice and teachings to this person; is he acting in a suitable way?’; ‘I rejoice in this highly virtuous person’s conduct; she loves the harmony of the community and venerates the Dhamma’; ‘I will follow these worldly conventions; I will do whatever is of benefit to the world.’

When one reflects wisely in such ways one gains confidence in one’s actions, and unwholesome qualities cease to dominate the mind. Those paying respects, for example, do not compare themselves to another through an impure attachment to self-identity, for instance by thinking: ‘What does he possess to make him worthy of respect? I am better than him – why pay respects?’ And the recipients of veneration need not become mistrustful, offended, or resentful, say by thinking: ‘Why does this person not show respect to me? Why does he not show respect in an agreeable way?’ They do not get carried away by thinking: ‘People come to bow and pay respects to me – I am so special and excellent.’ {697}

The examples here describe a wise reflection that induces wholesome qualities and gives rise to mundane right view. We can see, however, that this second way of training is more profound than the first way, as it is able to prevent the damage of unwholesome qualities taking hold of the mind. The first way of training in

moral conduct is unable to provide this prevention. The second way possesses the confidence of wisdom. It gradually increases the understanding of right view while training in moral conduct, and it defends against a naive and gullible moral conduct that is referred to as an ‘adherence to rules and practices’ (*śilabbata-parāmāsa*).

According to the outline of the Eightfold Path, the second way of training in moral conduct is the most correct. Linking this training with the first way described above is likely to lead to even better results, but solely applying the first way is considered inadequate for true spiritual practice. This is because in correct practice, in relation to one’s surroundings, one begins with training in moral conduct, but in relation to the mind, one must from the very start reflect on things in order to cultivate wisdom and develop right view. Doing this one incorporates wise reflection, which can be applied at all times in one’s life.

One does not hold back and only apply systematic reflection in times of formal contemplation or only apply it to the context of moral conduct – such reflection is equally important when developing concentration and wisdom. Right view and the other Path factors thus become increasingly proficient and complete.

Here, one sees the development of the Path factors that is linked to the practice of the threefold training. From an external perspective or by considering the major stages of practice, one sees the gradual development according to the threefold training, of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). But when one looks more closely at the details of a person’s spiritual efforts, one sees that the Path factors are busily engaged. The person continually walks along the Path.

In sum, for practice to be correct, from an external perspective there is an emphasis on the threefold training, while inwardly a person walks in line with the Path. This way the external systems of training and the internal development of spiritual factors are well integrated.

Taking these considerations into account, if one leaves people to develop spiritually on their own in accord with nature, without relying on any social factors for assistance, there will only be a few prodigies who

are able to apply wise reflection by themselves and reach the highest stage of realization.

Conversely, if one leaves people to develop solely by way of social influence and control, they will be unable to realize the highest good which is within their potential.

Therefore, the following two ways of spiritual development are considered extreme and incorrect:

1. Development left to unfold on its own, naturally and without interference.
2. Development following the control and sway of society.

Spiritual development left up to nature is inadequate; one must also foster an understanding of natural phenomena which leads to a proper relationship to nature.

Equally, spiritual development following the dictates of society is also inadequate; one must also gain a thorough knowledge which allows one to escape from the influencing power of society.

A complete development involves an interaction with and an understanding of both nature and society, because people are shaped and influenced both by natural and social forces. {698} Such development is nourished by society and by nature, bringing about prosperity and happiness.

If people are to live together in peace – even just two people – there must be boundaries and means to regulate behaviour. When many people live together there is a necessity for rules or agreements on behaviour, of what should be done and what should be avoided, in order to bring about harmony and safety for each individual. (Even an individual person has conflicting desires and requires self-discipline in order to live well.)

Take the example of numerous drivers arriving at a junction from different directions: each person is in a hurry and vies to pass first. They thus all get stuck and no one can advance, causing chaos and disputes. If they are willing to lay down a set of regulations, however, everyone can pass comfortably. Likewise, a community or society requires a set of rules.



Apart from rules, there is a collection of inherited social systems, customs, traditions, cultural practices, institutions, and a body of technical knowledge, which give shape to a particular society. These factors shaping society also shape individuals, instilling in them properties that conform with society. At the same time individuals influence the society. Individual people and the society as a whole are thus interdependent.

Nonetheless, when a society has a clearly defined shape and form, it tends to become rigid and inflexible, resulting in a one-sided exchange of people being shaped by society in order to meet society's needs and expectations.

People, however, do not exist solely to uphold society. Society exists to benefit individuals and on a fundamental level it was created for the increased wellbeing of people.

From this perspective, society is only one supportive factor in people's lives, and on its own it is unable to lead people to a truly virtuous life, because social institutions themselves were created simply to establish a sense of order and discipline. Once people live together in harmony, there is something besides maintaining social integrity which it is incumbent on them to realize. Besides social institutions, people need to pay attention to nature, and the most supreme blessing of life is obtained through an understanding of nature. This is because the truth of life is essentially grounded in nature.

Society is simply one supportive factor in people's lives, which can either help to foster an increased intimacy and knowledge of nature, or it can have the opposite effect and cause an alienation from nature. In any case, even though society may have a clear and strictly defined shape it is not the only factor influencing people.

If people are able to apply wise reflection, they can escape from the controlling power of society. Wise reflection enables a person to transcend or see through society and to realize the underlying timeless truth of nature. A person endowed with wise reflection is able to be free from the power of social conditioning, to attain higher levels of virtue, and to return in order to shape society in a fully attentive way. {699}

People require a code of conduct in order to live together in harmony. Society thus needs a moral code as well as a compatible set of rules for people to follow. It is true that this moral code can simply become a way to limit people's freedom or it can even be a way of enslaving people to a system of control, if it is simply a set of prohibitions and rules which people observe by blindly following one another. And it can lead to other ill effects if it is maintained through coercion or deception.

Similarly, actions which are alleged to be 'free' may only be expressions of a mind subject to defilement and suffering. In this case, it is simply a freedom to give expression to mental bondage, freedom to be a slave, or freedom to allow people to be enslaved. This form of freedom involves disenfranchising others in some way or other, directly or indirectly.

In contrast, people who are free from the power of mental defilement, and who are able to apply wisdom without the obscuring power of social conditioning, do not require prescribed moral standards. They are endowed with an inherent moral discipline, and, moreover, they are able to comply with any moral code that they recognize as benefiting other human beings.

The important link here is that a moral code is a good thing when it is set down and followed with a correct understanding of its objectives, that is, moral conduct must be accompanied by right view.

Therefore, when one is teaching children a moral discipline, one must also engender an understanding of the value and necessity of discipline.

When laying down rules, regulations, precepts, etc., it is important for participating members to understand their purpose and to give consent, which will prevent them from feeling coerced or ordered about, or from simple blind obedience. (See Note [16.1](#)) Even in terms of existing social systems, customs, traditions, and institutions it is important to teach each new generation the value of these things.

In addition, people should be taught to understand natural phenomena, to discern the world according to truth, which will help them to escape from the power of social conditioning and to reach higher levels of spiritual excellence which society is unable to provide.

## NOTE 16.1: LAYING DOWN THE VINAYA

Note that when laying down the Vinaya rules for the bhikkhu sangha the Buddha would gather the entire community and explain the purpose of each rule, obtaining everyone's acknowledgment and consent. Moreover, he did not use such terms as 'command', 'forbid', 'force', 'don't', or 'must'.

In reference to clauses resembling prohibitions he used the phrase: 'A monk who acts in such a way commits a transgression of such and such a degree.' In reference to unsuitable actions outside of the Pāṭimokkha at most he would say: 'You should not do that.'

As for clauses resembling orders or commandments he would use the term *anuññāta* ('permitted', 'allowed') or at most would say: 'You should do that.'

Most importantly, society should act as a 'virtuous friend' (*kalyāṇamitta*), or at least be a place in which one can discover such friends, in order to help people train in and develop wise reflection on the subjects just mentioned.

There is an important difference between nature and society which should be taught to people from the time they are children. Namely, nature follows general laws of nature (*dhamma-niyāma*), whereas human society follows the additional law of volitional action (*kamma-niyāma*).<sup>14</sup> {700}

When teaching children, they should be treated with lovingkindness. Besides directly showing them kindness in order to foster their wellbeing, say by making them feel at ease and by promoting longterm mental health, one should also aim to cultivate their faculty of wisdom, by leading them to an understanding of wholesome intentions, of goodwill, and of commitment to other human beings.

<sup>14</sup>This is a very general explanation, focusing on the main principles involved. In fact there are also physical laws, genetic laws, and psychic laws, but these are not relevant to the present discussion. (*Dhamma-niyāma*: general laws of nature, especially those of cause and effect; laws concerning the interrelationship of all things. *Kamma-niyāma* (kammic laws): laws concerning intention and human behaviour, i.e. the law of actions – *kamma* – and their results.)

This understanding arises by having children draw a comparison between people and nature. If they have skilled teachers, children will recognize that people are different from nature. Human beings are possessed of consciousness and intention; they are able to volitionally manage and steer their affairs. They are able to deliberately act well or to act badly. A mother, for instance, does not raise her child simply by natural instincts; she also possesses the human qualities of love, well-wishing, and kind deliberation. And if people treat each other well, this will lead to everyone's happiness and wellbeing.

This is distinct from nature, which is neutral, does not possess faculties of mind, and does not think in good or bad ways. Nature is sometimes gentle and favourable to people, giving them satisfaction and joy; at other times it is violent and destructive, causing pain and suffering. Whichever way it goes nature is not wilful – it does not act out of spite. Nature exists according to its own causes and conditions. In any case, human beings are dependent on nature. We should thus cherish nature and relate to it with an understanding of causality.

Moreover, human life is normally subject to a considerable amount of pain, due to the unintentional oppressive aspects of nature. We who are endowed with the ability to deliberately choose a course of action should not increase the level of suffering for others. Instead, we should use intention in order to assist others, alleviate their suffering, and show kindness and compassion.

When showing kindness to children one should beware that this kindness does not become an indulgence of their craving. For if one indulges their craving, children will not develop an appreciation of people's wholesome intention: they will not recognize how these kind actions are performed deliberately and intentionally. Moreover, they will fail to understand the contrasting neutrality of nature. Besides failing to nurture lovingkindness and a sense of personal responsibility, this indulgence causes further harm to children by allowing unwholesome mind states to breed, e.g.: selfishness, stubbornness, weakness of mind, greed, and envy.

The way to avoid such indulgence is to teach children how to know the distinction between kind and loving actions performed by human beings and the causal dynamics inherent in nature. This way one avoids mistaken expressions of lovingkindness, which obstruct or impair children's insight into the truth.

When educating children, one needs to possess all four of the 'divine abidings' (*brahmavihāra*). Besides being firmly grounded in lovingkindness (*mettā*): one shows compassion (*karuṇā*) when a child is suffering; one acknowledges or rejoices (*muditā*) in the child's happiness or when he or she does something good or acts with sound judgement; and one is equanimous (*upekkhā*) or looks on with objectivity when the child is acting responsibly and reasonably, or when the child needs to be accountable for the results of his or her actions. {701} This last factor of equanimity, in particular, ensures that lovingkindness does not hinder wisdom.

Surrounded by natural forces which are sometimes favourable and sometimes harmful, human life has no true stability. People must struggle to survive; they must find things to sustain life, and escape from and remove hostile elements. When one does not truly understand nature, one attaches and devotes oneself to those things one hopes will gratify desire; one sees the world as a place for pursuing sense pleasures, a place to fulfil all one's desires. One views oneself as ruling over the world, and one sees others as obstacles or competitors. This in turn leads to possessiveness, hostility, hatred, contempt, competition, and oppression between people. Moreover, when one does not get what one wants or things later change, this can give rise to intense suffering.

When one receives encouragement by a virtuous friend, someone who helps to see the value of lovingkindness, one's relationship towards other people and towards nature improves. This, however, is still right view on a mundane level.

If one wishes to develop a truly secure understanding, one must also cultivate transcendent right view. This is done by understanding the truth of life and of the world, namely: all things exist according to causes and conditions; all worldly phenomena (*loka-dhamma*) are uncertain and impermanent; they are inherently insubstantial – they are without an

essential ‘core’ which would make them independent from other phenomena; they cannot be truly controlled; and they cannot give essential meaning to life.

We human beings are without a ‘self’ which is able to truly control anything else; our lives are subject to the same laws of nature as other people; humans and other living creatures are all companions in birth, old age, sickness, and death – we all cherish happiness and are averse to suffering; moreover, all life is dependent on other life in order to exist.

This kind of understanding is fundamental, even for children, in order to know how to correctly relate to the world and to other people. It leads people to change how they give value to things, switching from using craving to using wisdom as the means of evaluation. They recognize what is truly valuable in life and worthy of aspiration, they know how to make their minds free and happy, and they become more skilled at alleviating suffering. This firmly established right view reduces greed, hatred and delusion, reduces competitiveness and oppression, and reduces moral problems.

When right view is established, a person advances towards the goal with the support of several other spiritual factors, as described in this sutta passage:

Monks, if it is aided by five factors, right view has liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom as its fruit and reward. These five factors are:

1. Virtuous conduct (*sīla*; behaviour free from oppression).
2. Learning (*suta*: knowledge gained by listening, study, reading, etc.).
3. Discussion (*sāṅgacchā*: conversing; debating; exchanging ideas; verifying one’s knowledge).
4. Calm (*samatha*: calming the mind; an absence of restlessness and distraction).

5. Insight (*vipassanā*: using wisdom in order discern things as they truly are).<sup>15</sup> {702}

A. III. 20-21.

To summarize, right view accords with reality: it refers to seeing things as they truly are. The development of right view requires continual systematic reflection, which prevents seeing things superficially or seeing only the end result of natural phenomena. Systematic reflection helps one inquire closely into things, by analyzing the various converging factors and the sequence of causes and conditions within natural processes. It prevents one from being deceived by things or from becoming a puppet that is propelled, convulsed, and manipulated by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and popular beliefs, leading to personal and social problems. Instead, one is mindful and fully aware, free, self-confident, and able to determine and act with wisdom.

<sup>15</sup> An abridged translation. Add to this the Buddha's teaching: *Listening well, inquiry, and investigation is the nutriment for wisdom* (A. V. 136).

### 16.3 RIGHT THOUGHT (SAMMĀ-SAÑKAPPA)

The general scriptural definition for the second factor of the Eightfold Path – right thought – is as follows:

Monks, what is right thought? The thought of renunciation, the thought of non-ill-will, the thought of non-cruelty: this is called right thought.<sup>16</sup>

*D. II. 311-12; M. III. 251; Vbh. 104, 235.*

Here is a definition which distinguishes between mundane and transcendent right thought:

Monks, what is right thought? I say there are two kinds of right thought: there is right thought that is affected by taints, classified as meritorious, bearing fruit in respect to the five aggregates; and there is right thought that is noble, taintless, transcendent, a factor of the Path.

Right thought that is affected by the taints ... is the thought of renunciation, the thought of non-ill-will, the thought of non-cruelty.

Right thought that is noble, taintless, transcendent, a factor of the Path is thinking (*takka*), reasoning (*vitakka*), intention (*saṅkappa*), concentrated thought (*appanā*), firmly established thought (*byappanā*), focused attention, and the prerequisites for speech (*vacī-saṅkhāra*) in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path.

*M. III. 73; Vbh. 110, 237.*

For the sake of brevity, here I will explain only the definition of right thought as a mundane factor. According to this definition, *sammā-saṅkappa* refers to right intention, or to thoughts that go in a correct

<sup>16</sup>Trans.: note that *sammā-saṅkappa* is sometimes translated as ‘right intention’, ‘right attitude’, ‘right motive’, or ‘right aspiration’.



direction. This is in contrast to ‘wrong thinking’ (*micchā-saṅkappa*) of which there are also three kinds:

1. Thoughts of sensuality (*kāma-saṅkappa*; *kāma-vitakka*): thoughts tied up with sensuality; thoughts that are part of the search for and preoccupation with gratifying sense objects or with things to satisfy craving and clinging; selfish thoughts. Such thoughts are marked by greed or lust.
2. Thoughts of ill-will (*byāpāda-saṅkappa*; *byāpāda-vitakka*): thoughts accompanied by anger and aversion, indignation, and displeasure; to see things in a negative light; to see others as adversaries; to see external things as the source of irritation. Such thoughts are marked by hatred in the sense of one being the victim of impingement (this is the opposite quality to friendliness – *mettā*). {703}
3. Thoughts of cruelty (*vihimsā-saṅkappa*; *vihimsā-vitakka*): thoughts of oppression, harm, injury, abuse, and destruction; the wish to disturb and violate others; the wish that others experience suffering and distress. Such thoughts are marked by hatred in the sense of actively instigating conflict (this quality is opposite to compassion – *karuṇā*).

Such thoughts and intentions are common among people. This is because when unawakened persons experience a sense impression, for instance by seeing a visual form or by hearing a sound, one of two feelings generally arise: if one likes the object, one is pleased and charmed, desirous of and attached to it, and defers to it; if one dislikes the object, one is displeased, annoyed, offended – one is averse to it and sets oneself in opposition to it. From here various thoughts occur in line with, or following the momentum of, these likes and dislikes.

For this reason the thoughts of unawakened persons are usually biased; they are obstructed and influenced by pleasure and displeasure, making it impossible to see things as they truly are.

Thoughts resulting from pleasure and gratification lead to attachment and entanglement – a gravitating towards certain objects – and

become thoughts of sensuality (*kāma-vitakka*). Thoughts resulting from displeasure and discontent lead to resentment, hostility, and antagonism – to see certain things in a negative light – and become thoughts of ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka*). When these latter thoughts erupt as thoughts of oppressing or injuring others, they become thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*). All of these wrong thoughts give rise to incorrect viewpoints and an incorrect course of intention.

Biased thoughts, distorted opinions, and obstructed viewpoints originate due to an initial lack of systematic reflection. One looks at things superficially, receiving sense impressions without mindfulness and clear awareness, and one then allows thoughts to flow according to feelings or according to reasoning driven by likes and dislikes. One does not analyze the various factors involved in various phenomena and investigate the participating causes and conditions, conforming to the principle of systematic reflection.

Wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), the failure to see things as they truly are, leads to *micchā-saṅkappa*: wrong thinking, wrong intention, and a distorted outlook on things. Conversely, wrong thinking leads to wrong view. These two factors support and reinforce each other.

To see things as they truly are requires systematic reflection. Thoughts must be free and independent, without the detrimental influence of preferences, attachments, and aversions. To enable this one must possess both right view and right thought, and these two factors must be mutually supportive, just as in the case of incorrect understanding and thinking.

Systematic reflection fosters right view. When one discerns things correctly, right thinking in regard to these things arises naturally, without bias, attachment or aversion.

When one is able to think objectively,<sup>17</sup> free from likes and dislikes, one sees things as they are: right view is enhanced. In this way these two factors continue to support one another. {704}

<sup>17</sup>When developed to a higher degree this perspective becomes equanimity (*upekkhā*), which is a vital factor for effective reasoning. This is not the same as complacency or indifference as commonly understood. This matter will be explained at more length below.

Right thinking (*sammā-saṅkappa*) – the opposite of wrong thinking – refers to the state of mind in which there is independent thought and analytic reflection, free from bias, either as attachment or aversion. There are three kinds of right thought:

1. Thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*; *nekkhamma-vitakka*): thoughts free from greed; thoughts free from sensuality, unpreoccupied with objects gratifying desire; nonselfish thoughts; thoughts of relinquishment; the entire range of wholesome thinking.<sup>18</sup> This form of thought is classified as thought free from lust (*rāga*) or greed (*lobha*).
2. Thoughts of non-ill-will (*abyāpāda-saṅkappa*; *abyāpāda-vitakka*): thoughts free from anger, hatred, aversion, and negativity; in particular, this refers to the opposite qualities to ill-will: to have thoughts of lovingkindness, well-wishing, and friendliness – the wish for others to be happy. This form of thought is classified as thought free from hatred (*dosa*).
3. Thoughts of non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*; *avihiṃsā-vitakka*): thoughts free from oppression – free from the intention to harm or injure; in particular, this refers to the opposite quality: to have compassion – the wish to help others be free from suffering. This form of thought is similarly classified as thought free from hatred (*dosa*).

In the context of Buddha-Dhamma, when referring to a wholesome or virtuous quality that stands in contrast to an unwholesome or negative quality, instead of using an opposite (i.e. positive) term, more often a negating term is used. This leads some people to think that Buddhism is a negative or passive teaching: it teaches that goodness is merely the abstention from bad actions and an abiding in a state of passivity. In the above context, ‘wrong thinking’ is defined as thoughts of ill-will, but

<sup>18</sup> *Nekkhamma* = *alobha* (‘non-greed’). The ‘property of renunciation’ (*nekkhamma-dhātu*) = all wholesome qualities; the ‘property of non-ill-will’ (*abyāpāda-dhātu*) = lovingkindness (*mettā*); the ‘property of non-cruelty’ (*avihiṃsā-dhātu*) = compassion (*karuṇā*): Vbh. 86; VbhA. 74; PsA. I. 68.

‘right thinking’, rather than being specifically defined as loving thoughts, is defined as thoughts of non-ill-will – a negation of wrong thinking.

I will address the misunderstanding that Buddhism is a negative or passive teaching at more length below,<sup>19</sup> but allow me to offer three short explanations here refuting these charges:

1. The Eightfold Path emphasizes wisdom; its goal is realization of the truth. It does not give sole importance to the stage of morality.

One should recognize that right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) is a Path factor of wisdom, not of morality. The principle of right thought, which encourages people to abstain from ill-will and to cultivate lovingkindness, does not aim merely at establishing virtuous conduct – of refraining from killing and persecution, or of mutual assistance. It aims primarily at generating non-biased thinking, not influenced for example by hatred, in order for the thinking process to be free and unobstructed, following in line with truth. In this way there arises correct and undistorted understanding.

The best way to explain right thought is thus through negation – as free from greed, ill-will, and cruelty. In the act of thinking or contemplating, if one is able to abstain from thoughts of covetousness and ill-will, or the wish to harm or injure others, the thought process will be pure and is likely to accord with truth.

2. According to Pali grammar, in some cases the negating prefix ‘a-’ has a comprehensive meaning, referring both to the specific opposite of the word in question and to anything that is distinct from the quality beings discussed (in the sense of ‘not this’ or an ‘absence of this’). In other cases it refers specifically to the opposite of the word in question. {705}

The term *akusala*, for example, does not mean ‘not wholesome’ (which could refer to indeterminate or neutral factors – neither good nor bad), but refers specifically to that which is unwholesome – the opposite to wholesome.

<sup>19</sup>See the appendix.

The term *amitta* does not refer to a neutral person – someone who is not a friend – but specifically to an enemy.

In the context of right thought, however, the negating prefix ‘a-’ is comprehensive, referring both to the opposite and to whatever is distinct from the quality in question. The term *abyāpāda-saṅkappa*, for example, refers both to lovingkindness, which is the opposite to ill-will, and to pure, non-biased thoughts free from ill-will. Whole-some qualities like lovingkindness are thus already inherent in this Path factor of right thought.

3. The meaning of the negating prefix ‘a-’, besides being comprehensive as mentioned above, is also more definite and categorical than the meaning of a term opposite to a quality in question. This prefix specifies the complete and thorough negation of an object, so that no trace of it remains.

The term *abyāpāda-saṅkappa*, for example, refers to thinking that is completely free from ill-will: it refers to unbounded, supreme kindness. This is different from the teachings on kindness and compassion found in some other doctrines, which limit these qualities, by stating that only specific groups of people or specific kinds of living creatures are worthy of such kindness. In truth, all beings are worthy of kindness.

Generally speaking, people engage in thinking in order to satisfy craving (*taṇhā*) in one way or another. Their thoughts may be subtly influenced by fixed view (*diṭṭhi*), e.g. personal values. Alternatively, they may think subject to raw craving arising in that moment, which can manifest in three ways: as desire referred to as direct or explicit craving (*taṇhā*); as conceit (*māna*) – self-aggrandizement, boosting the ego, protecting one’s status, etc.; or as an attachment to cherished views (*diṭṭhi*). The thinking of unawakened people is thus said to be accompanied by ‘I-making’ (*ahaṅkāra*), ‘my-making’ (*mamaṅkāra*), and an underlying tendency to conceit (*mānānusaya*); it is intertwined with fixed views (*diṭṭhi*), craving (*taṇhā*), and conceit (*māna*). In sum, one can say that their thinking functions to serve craving.

Thinking in order to satisfy craving can occur in both an affirmative and a negative fashion. As an affirmation it manifests as thoughts of sensuality: thoughts of acquisition, self-gratification, and self-indulgence. As a negation it manifests as thoughts of ill-will – thoughts of conflict, negativity, dissatisfaction, antagonism, rivalry (fearing that others will get in one's way), animosity, and hatred – or as thoughts of cruelty, wishing to oppress, prey on, or destroy others.

In any case, thinking that panders to craving can be eliminated by systematic reflection, which discerns things according to the truth.<sup>20</sup> Thinking accompanied by this form of systematic reflection is pure: it is not influenced by sensual desire, ill-will, or cruelty. It does not veer off or get stuck on one single aspect of an object and thus has an extensive range of engagement.

In this sense, one can define right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) as any form of thinking that does not involve selfish gratification, malevolent intent, or thoughts of persecution. This refers to right thought as a pure component of wisdom, which supports right view directly.

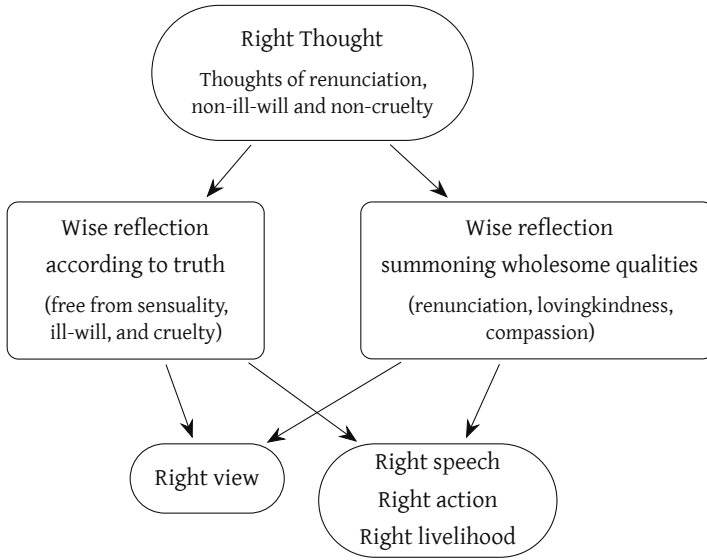
Alternatively, thinking in order to satisfy craving can be eliminated by systematic reflection which summons up wholesome qualities. Thinking accompanied by this form of systematic reflection uses thoughts that are opposite to sensuality, ill-will, and cruelty: i.e. thoughts of renunciation, lovingkindness, and compassion. It is a way of developing unique wholesome qualities. Although this form of right thought also supports right view, it is directly linked to virtuous conduct: it leads to right speech, right action, and right livelihood, as illustrated on Figure 16.1. {706}

Note that this division simply shows the chief results of distinct forms of practice; it does not imply that these practices are completely separate from one another.

Figure 16.2 is an illustration of how right thought is related to the two Path factors of virtuous conduct: right speech and right action. Right

<sup>20</sup>Cf.: VbhA. 91, 115; Vism. 515.

Figure 16.1: The Practice of Right Thought



thought here is given expression through the principles of the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*) and the four favourable qualities (*saṅgaha-vatthu*).

Figure 16.2: Right Thought and its Expressions

**Right Thought:**

Thoughts of renunciation,  
Thoughts of non-ill-will,  
Thoughts of non-cruelty

**Thoughts of renunciation →**

Equanimity →  
Balanced, equal behaviour →  
Right Action

**Thoughts of non-ill-will →**

Lovingkindness, Sympathetic joy →  
Generosity, Kindly speech, Acts of service →  
Right Speech and Right Action

**Thoughts of non-cruelty →**

Compassion, Sympathetic joy →  
Generosity, Kindly speech, Acts of service →  
Right Speech and Right Action

Equanimity here is equated with renunciation, in accord with the teaching that deliverance of the mind through equanimity (*upekkhā-cetovimutti*) is the release from lust (D. III. 248-9).

The connection between right thought and right view is especially evident in the context of the three root defilements (*akusala-mūla*): greed, hatred and delusion. Right view eradicates the most basic defilement of delusion (*moha*). Right thought on the other hand eradicates the affiliated defilements: thoughts of renunciation eradicate greed or lust,

and thoughts of non-ill-will and of non-cruelty eradicate hatred. In this way these two Path factors are thoroughly integrated and compatible.

Developing these two initial Path factors is considered an elementary stage of practice. At the beginning, wisdom has not yet reached the stage of completion. As with all Path factors, their full range and potential may not be realized immediately, but rather they must be developed gradually.

For this reason, in reference to the three kinds of right thought: ‘thoughts of renunciation’ sometimes refers to a basic stage, or to a symbolic gesture, of taking ordination as a monk or of removing oneself from the life of a householder; ‘thoughts of non-ill-will’ refers primarily to the practice of lovingkindness; and ‘thoughts of non-cruelty’ refers primarily to the practice of compassion.

Granted, the wisdom a person develops here may be an expression of right view, of seeing things according to the truth, but it is not yet pure and free – it is not yet a complete realization. Completion is reached at the stage of equanimity (*upekkhā*), which is based on concentration.

Moreover, even lovingkindness (*mettā*), a virtue one can develop at initial stages of spiritual practice, is not as simple as people may commonly think. What people normally refer to as ‘love’ in most cases is not true lovingkindness. {707}

Let us review some basic principles in relation to lovingkindness:

*Mettā* may be defined as ‘friendliness’, ‘love’, ‘well-wishing’, ‘sympathy’, ‘mutual understanding’, ‘a wish for others to be happy’, or ‘a desire to foster wellbeing for for all living creatures’.<sup>21</sup>

Lovingkindness is an impartial quality, both in terms of the person expressing the love and of the person who receives the love. Love should be mutual between subordinates and superiors, the rich and the poor, beggars and millionaires, high-class and low-class people, the laity and the ordained sangha. Lovingkindness is the first step in building healthy

<sup>21</sup>The definition for *mettā* at Nd. I. 488 is: *mettāti yā sattesu metti mettāyanā mettāyitattaṃ anudā anudāyanā anudāyitattaṃ hitesitā anukampā abyāpādo abyāpajjho adoso kusalamūlaṃ*; the definition at SnA. I. 128 is: *hitasukhūpanayanakāmātā mettā*.



relationships between people. It leads people to see one another in a positive light, to express care for one another, and to exchange ideas in a reasonable manner. People then do not base their actions on selfishness or aversion.

Lovingkindness (along with the other sublime states of mind – *brahma-vihāra*) is said to be an attribute of a superior person. Here the term *brahma* is defined as ‘one who is superior’. These states of mind thus belong to one who is excellent, whose heart is expansive, who is noble by way of virtue. This differs from how people generally judge a great person.

Buddhism teaches that all people should cultivate and possess the four sublime states, elevating and broadening their minds. Many people believe that these qualities are the preserve of leaders in the community. Although this is a limited understanding, one can say that it emphasizes responsibility: granted, everyone should develop the divine abidings, but leaders in particular, being role models, should excel in these qualities.

But if people hold on to the belief that it is only the responsibility of leaders or of ‘great people’ to develop these qualities, this will lead to a distorted understanding.

It is important to understand the advantages (*sampatti*) and disadvantages (*vipatti*) of lovingkindness. *Sampatti* here can also be defined as the ‘fulfilment’ or ‘benefit’ of lovingkindness, whereas *vipatti* can be defined as the ‘failure’ or ‘shortcoming’ of lovingkindness, or an ‘incorrect practice’ in relation to it.

According to the scriptures, the advantage of lovingkindness is that it is able to quell ill-will (*byāpādupasamo etissā sampatti*).<sup>22</sup> The disadvantage is that it may give rise to infatuation (*sinehasambhavo vipatti*).<sup>23</sup>

There are some special observations in regard to this disadvantage: the term *sineha* refers to love and affection for an individual – a personal form of fondness and attachment, e.g.: *putta-sineha* refers to love for one’s children, and *bharyā-sineha* refers to love for one’s wife.

<sup>22</sup>Vism. 318.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

Such affection is a cause for favouritism, and it may lead to inappropriate actions performed to help the person who is the object of affection. This bias is referred to as *chandāgati* ('bias due to love'). Examples for such affection are statements like: 'He has a unique love for me', and, 'He loves her exceedingly', which may express an absence of true lovingkindness. {708}

True love is impartial and preserves objectivity. It leads to altruism and fairness, to an absence of harmful thoughts, to friendliness and the wish to help everyone equally, and to reasoned judgements and actions, aiming for the true welfare of all beings. One does not act out of personal preference or in order to acquire something. True love is characterized as follows:

The Blessed One was even and impartial, towards the archer (who was hired to secretly assassinate the Buddha), towards Devadatta (who ordered the assassination), towards the bandit Aṅgulimāla, towards the elephant Dhanapāla (which was released in order to kill the Buddha), and towards Rāhula (the Buddha's son), without exception.<sup>24</sup>

*Ap. 47-8; DhA. I. 145.*

The benefits of lovingkindness are obvious during times of dispute and debate, when each party is able to consider the other side's reasoned arguments and even to realize the truth of these arguments.

An example is the story of a Jain follower who engaged the Buddha in a discussion and who used harsh words to criticize him. The Buddha responded using reasoned arguments until the Jain said:

This being so, I have confidence in Master Gotama. Truly, Master Gotama is developed in body and developed in mind....

It is wonderful, Master Gotama, it is unprecedented, how when Master Gotama is insulted by me, cross-examined by discourteous

<sup>24</sup>See also the examples of how the Buddha radiated lovingkindness, at: Vin. II. 195; [JA. 8/215].

speech, his complexion remains bright and the colour of his face radiant, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened.

*M. I. 239-40, 250.*

In the case that wrong thinking (*micchā-saṅkappa*) has arisen, it cannot be rectified by headstrong, fretful, or incoherent behaviour. Instead, one must use systematic reflection, investigating with reasoned discernment and reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of phenomena:

Monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened bodhisatta, it occurred to me: ‘Suppose that I divide my thoughts into two classes.’ Then I set on one side thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of cruelty, and I set on the other side thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill-will, and thoughts of non-cruelty.

As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me. I understood clearly thus: ‘This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others’ affliction, and to the affliction of both; it cuts off wisdom, is an obstruction, and is uncondusive to Nibbāna.’

When I considered: ‘This leads to my own affliction’, it subsided in me; when I considered: ‘This leads to other’s affliction’ ... ‘This leads to the affliction of both’, it subsided in me; when I considered: ‘This cuts off wisdom, is an obstruction, and is uncondusive to Nibbāna’, it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, diminished it, did away with it.

As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of ill-will arose in me ... a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understood clearly.... Whenever a thought of cruelty arose in me, I abandoned it, diminished it, did away with it. {709}

Monks, whatever a monk frequently thinks about and ponders over, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks about and ponders over thoughts of sensual desire, he abandons the

thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire.... If he frequently thinks about and ponders over thoughts of renunciation, he abandons the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation.

*M. I. 114-16.*

The initial stage of spiritual practice incorporating these two Path factors can be summarized as follows:

Monks, a monk possessed of four things is called one who follows an unerring way of practice and who begins to build the basis for the destruction of the taints. The four things are: the thought of renunciation, the thought of non-ill-will, the thought of non-cruelty, and right view.

*A. II. 76-7.*

## 16.4 APPENDIX: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL QUALITIES AND EXTERNAL ACTIONS

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The earlier illustration in the section titled ‘Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*)’ combines the dual teachings on the four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*) and on the four favourable qualities (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) with three of the Path factors: the divine abidings are included in the factor of right thought, and the four favourable qualities are included in the two factors of right speech and right action. The purpose for combining these is twofold:

1. To prevent confusion and to enable a correct distinction between fundamental mental qualities (behaviour on the level of thought) and qualities which are expressed outwards (behaviour on the level of external conduct). In particular, there tends to be confusion about the four divine abidings, which some people talk about or define as forms of outward practice and conduct.

In fact these abidings, say of lovingkindness, are inherent mental qualities; they exist on the level of thinking and are associated with right thought. The cultivation of these abidings is included in the section of concentration (*samādhi*) or in the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*). For this reason, the four divine abidings are classified as one group of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in the list of forty meditation techniques: they are connected with ‘mental cultivation’ (*citta-bhāvanā*).<sup>25</sup>

On the level of outward conduct, the four favourable qualities take over from the divine abidings and function as expressions of these abidings in a person’s social environment. If one wishes to describe lovingkindness in the context of outward expression, one must link it with an external action, for example by saying: ‘Physical actions accompanied by lovingkindness’, or: ‘Speech accompanied by lovingkindness.’ *Mettā* on its own is not an action on the level of outward conduct. In contrast, acts of generosity, kindly speech,

<sup>25</sup>See, e.g.: Vism. 295-325.

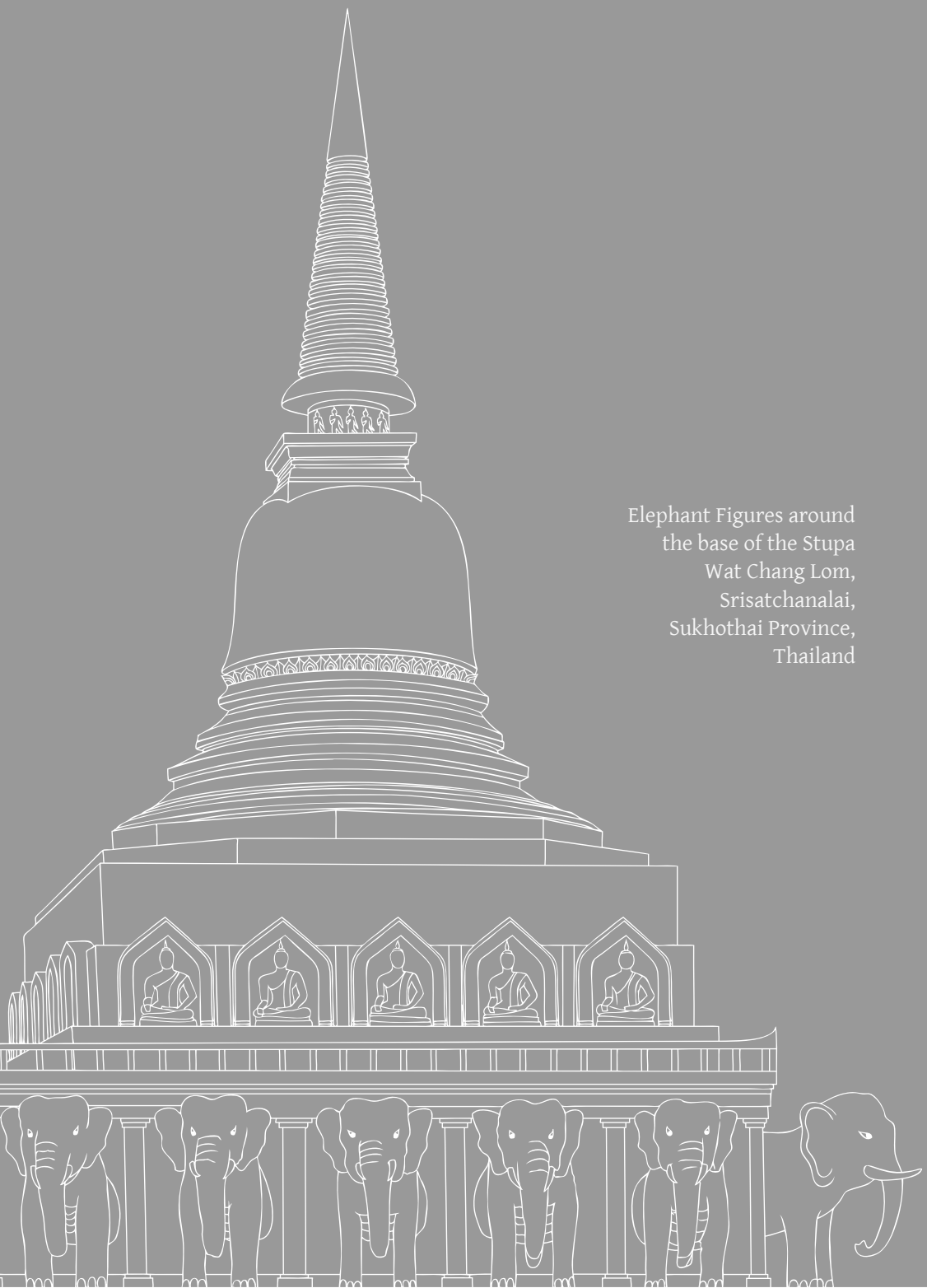
and acts of service, for example, which are part of virtuous conduct (*sīla*), are external, social actions.

An understanding of these principles enables Buddhists to practise these teachings in a more correct, clear, and definite way. Buddhists will also recognize the flaws in the accusations by other people, who claim that Buddhists have been taught to do good simply by idly sitting in their rooms and spreading lovingkindness.

2. To illustrate the relationship between internal, mental qualities and external practice in the context of society; to describe the complete, well-ordered system of Buddha-Dhamma, which addresses all levels of spiritual practice; to reveal how expressions of outward goodness – virtuous actions in relation to society – must be rooted in deep-seated mental qualities in order for them to be stable, lasting, pure, and true. Beneficial social actions, say of giving or acts of service, are only pure and genuine when they are based on a foundation of lovingkindness and compassion.



The Phimpha Philap *sīmā* stone (temple boundary marker)  
at Mueang Fa Daet Song Yang, Kamalasai, Kalasin Province  
Khon Kaen National Museum, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand



Elephant Figures around  
the base of the Stupa  
Wat Chang Lom,  
Srisatchanalai,  
Sukhothai Province,  
Thailand



# CHAPTER 17

## PATH FACTORS OF VIRTUOUS CONDUCT

### *Sīla and the Social Objectives of Moral Conduct*

#### 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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On a fundamental level, morality (*sīla*; virtuous conduct) is an objective truth. It is described by the three Path factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood: it refers to intentional speech, action, and livelihood that is free from evil, immoral conduct and from thoughts of harm and oppression, and it incorporates corresponding virtuous, upright behaviour.

From the outset, Buddhist practitioners should clearly discern the purpose and objectives of those moral practices that they uphold and undertake. They should understand how virtuous conduct fits into a wider system of spiritual training, recognizing that the deepening of virtue is related to mind development and wisdom development. Virtuous conduct supports concentration and leads to clear knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*). It leads to the end of suffering, to blessings, and to true wellbeing. And it is essential for happiness, both for an individual and for society.

The Noble Eightfold Path, comprising a complete set of spiritual factors, is divided into three groups: virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). These three main factors also

comprise the threefold training – the training in higher virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*) – which may be simply rendered as *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

The entire Buddhist practice, training, discipline, spiritual development, and path to Nibbāna is incorporated within this threefold training, derived from the Eightfold Path. True, genuine, and complete moral conduct refers to the three Path factors contained within the *sīla* group, i.e. right speech, right action, and right livelihood.

## 17.2 PATH FACTORS OF VIRTUOUS CONDUCT

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The section of the Eightfold Path on virtuous conduct (*sīla*) contains three factors: right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Here is an example of how these three factors are defined in the scriptures:

1. *And what, monks, is right speech? This is called right speech:*

- A. To abstain from false speech (*musāvādā veramaṇī*).
- B. To abstain from divisive speech (*pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī*).
- C. To abstain from harsh speech (*pharusā vācāya veramaṇī*).
- D. To abstain from idle chatter (*samphappalāpā veramaṇī*).

2. *And what, monks, is right action? This is called right action:*

- A. To abstain from killing living beings (*pāṇātīpātā veramaṇī*).
- B. To abstain from taking what is not freely given (*adinnādānā veramaṇī*).
- C. To abstain from sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī*).

3. *And what, monks, is right livelihood? This is called right livelihood: here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood,<sup>1</sup> earns his living by right livelihood.<sup>2</sup>*

There are also definitions for these three factors distinguishing between the mundane level and the transcendent. The definitions for the mundane level are the same as those above; the definitions for the transcendent are as follows:

1. *Transcendent right speech:* the refraining, the avoidance, the abstinence from, the intention to desist from the four kinds of verbal misconduct in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who has attained to the noble path, and is developing the noble path.
2. *Transcendent right action:* the refraining, the avoidance, the abstinence from, the intention to desist from the three kinds of physical misconduct in one whose mind is noble ... and is developing the noble path.
3. *Transcendent right livelihood:* the refraining, the avoidance, the abstinence from, the intention to desist from wrong livelihood in one whose mind is noble ... and is developing the noble path.<sup>3</sup> {711}

### 17.3 UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY

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The Buddhist teachings expand upon the essential principles of moral training – collectively referred to as the ‘training in higher virtue’ (*adhisīla-sikkhā*) – in a detailed and comprehensive way. Various precepts and moral standards are established for practical application in order to

<sup>1</sup>Wrong livelihood is to earn one’s living by ‘cheating (deception), currying favour, hinting, force, and intimidation, or by pursuing gain with gain’ (M. III. 75).

<sup>2</sup>D. II. 311-12; M. I. 62; M. III. 251; Vbh. 105, 235.

<sup>3</sup>M. III. 74-5; cf.: Vbh. 106-07, 237.

generate wholesome results for both an individual and for all of society. This practical outline of moral conduct begins with a teaching on behaviour – the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammapatha*) – corresponding to the three factors of the Noble Path mentioned above, and with a teaching on the most basic form of moral conduct: the five precepts.<sup>4</sup>

There is, however, no limit to the expansion and details of such a practical outline of moral conduct: teachings are presented in the texts according to specific individuals, time periods, locations, and other related circumstances. It is not possible here to compile all of these varied and detailed teachings on moral conduct.

It is sufficient to present the central principles of the Buddhist teachings on virtuous conduct, which are described in the scriptures in a clearly defined way. I will leave it up to the reader to find specific teachings that match their disposition, life circumstances, and aims.

Leaving aside teachings appropriate to specific individuals, time periods, places, and occasions, a key factor in determining practical teachings on virtuous conduct is a person's occupation or state of living. For this reason there are distinct codes of conduct, precepts, and systems of practice for householders and for renunciants.

A student of Buddhism must understand the principles, value, and most importantly the objectives of these distinct ethical codes, both in their variant details and in their ultimate unity and concordance, in order to possess a true understanding of this subject and to practise the Dhamma correctly.

A key example of distilling the essence of the Path factors related to virtuous conduct and presenting practical principles of conduct is the teaching on the ten wholesome ways of conduct (*kusala-kammapatha*). This teaching matches the Path factors directly; it only differs in so far as it arranges physical action (corresponding to 'right action') before verbal action (corresponding to 'right speech'). This teaching is known by other

<sup>4</sup>On classifying the ten wholesome courses of action into the three trainings (*tisso sikkhā*) or into the Eightfold Path, see Appendix 4.

## NOTE 17.1: SUPERSTITIOUS RITES

Such unyielding adherence to moral precepts and religious practices (*silabbataparāmāsa*) has been widespread in India from the Buddha's time to the present day without abating. Abolishing this form of blind belief was one of the Buddha's primary intentions in his teaching and activities, along with abolishing the caste system and drawing people away from metaphysical speculations towards a consideration of more pertinent and valid questions.

An increasing adherence to this blind belief and to superstitious rites and ceremonies accompanied the demise of Buddhism in India, and was indeed a crucial factor for its demise. It is fair to say that such blind belief shapes the state of Indian society today. Wherever such blind belief in religious precepts and practices increases, an upholding of the true Buddhist teachings will fall into decline.

In the history of human civilizations, such a firm adherence to rites and ceremonies (even to ones that are more rational than those mentioned above) have led to violent social revolution and even to the end of these civilizations.

names, including: 'upright conduct' (*sucarita*), 'purity by way of body, speech, (and mind)', and 'excellence of action'. Following is a passage from the Pali Canon describing this teaching:

At one time when the Buddha was staying at Pāvā in the mango grove of the silversmith Cunda, Cunda approached the Buddha and they conversed on 'acts of purification' (*soceyya-kamma*). Cunda said that he approves of the purifying rites prescribed by the brahmins of the western districts, who carry waterpots, wear garlands of waterweed, worship fire, and submerge themselves in water.

According to these rites, in the early morning on rising from one's bed a person must touch the earth. If he does not touch the earth, then he must touch fresh cow-dung, or green grass, or tend to a fire, or pay reverence to the sun, or else he must descend into water three times in the evening. (See Note 17.1) {712}

The Buddha answered that the self-purifying rites of these brahmins are different from the self-purification found in the noble discipline (*ariya-vinaya*). People who engage in the ten unwholesome courses of action

(killing living beings, stealing, etc. – the opposite factors to the ten wholesome courses of action) are impure in body, speech and mind. Regardless of whether they touch the earth, touch cowdung, worship fire, honour the sun, or refrain from these actions they remain impure, because these unwholesome ways of action are inherently impure and lead to impurity.

The Buddha then described the ten ways of wholesome action, which lead to self-purification (*soceyya*):

**A.** Three kinds of purification by way of the body:

1. A person abandons the killing of living beings (*pāṇātipāta*), abstains from taking life; with rod and weapon laid aside, conscientious and kind, he abides compassionate and eager to help all living beings.
2. A person abandons from taking what is not freely given (*adin-nādāna*) and abstains therefrom; he does not take with thievish intent the property of another, situated at home or in the forest.
3. A person abandons sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācāra*) and abstains therefrom; he does not violate women who are protected by their mother, father, brother, sister, or relatives, who are protected by the Dhamma (e.g. by legal guardianship), who have a husband, women who are off limits, even those who are engaged.

**B.** Four kinds of purification by way of speech:

4. A person abandons false speech (*musāvāda*), abstains from false speech; when summoned to a court, or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to an assembly, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus: 'So, good man, tell what you know', not knowing, he says, 'I do not know', or knowing, he says, 'I know'; not seeing, he says, 'I do not see', or seeing, he says, 'I see'; he does not in full awareness speak falsehood for his own ends, or for another's ends, or for some form of reward.
5. A person abandons divisive speech (*pisuṇā-vācā*), abstains from divisive speech; he does not repeat elsewhere what he has heard

here in order to divide those people from these, nor does he repeat to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide these people from those; thus he is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of solidarity, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, a speaker of words that promote concord.

6. A person abandons harsh speech (*pharusa-vācā*), abstains from harsh speech; he speaks such words as are unoffensive, pleasing to the ear and loveable, words that go to the heart, are courteous, agreeable to many and delightful to many.
7. A person abandons [unreflective] chatter (*samphappalāpa*), abstains from trivial talk; he speaks at the right time, speaks what is fact, speaks on what is good, speaks on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time he speaks such words as can be substantiated, are relevant, moderate, and beneficial.

**C. Three kinds of purification by way of mind:**

8. non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*),
9. non-ill-will (*abyāpāda*; the wish for all beings to abide in happiness), and
10. right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

These three factors are an extension of the first two factors of the Eightfold Path: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*): {713}

A person endowed with these ten wholesome courses of action, in the early morning on rising from his bed, if he touches the earth he is pure, if he does not touch the earth he is pure ... if he pays reverence to the sun he is pure, if he does not pay reverence to the

sun he is pure ... because these ten wholesome courses of action are inherently pure and they lead to purification.<sup>5</sup>

A. V. 263.

Earlier it was mentioned that the essential principles of virtuous conduct are expanded for practical purposes, suitable to particular circumstances. For example, in reference to someone who has been ordained as a monk, apart from the adjustment and addition of specific moral precepts, even those precepts that remain the same are sometimes interpreted in a new way. Compare these precepts on stealing and lying with the definitions presented above in the ten courses of wholesome action:

Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given; taking only what is given, expecting only what is given, by not stealing he abides in purity.

Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech; he speaks truth, upholds the truth, is trustworthy and reliable, one who is no deceiver of the world.

D. I. 4-5, 63-4, 100-101, etc.; M. I. 267-8, 345; A. V. 204-5.

The expanded definitions for the factors of the Eightfold Path related to virtuous conduct are usually divided into two parts. The first part describes the refraining from doing evil, and the latter part describes performing a wholesome activity, which opposes the unskilful action that the person is avoiding. The former part employs language of negation; the latter part employs language of promotion or affirmation.

This pairing of ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ instruction is a common attribute of the Buddhist teachings, in line with the principle: ‘refrain from evil, cultivate the good’.

Beginning with the refraining from evil, the cultivation of the good can be expanded on progressively, which is not limited to these factors of the Path. For example, in regard to theft (*adinnādāna*), although the teachings cited above are not expanded into a clear application of cultivating

<sup>5</sup>Similar explanations for these ten factors occur in numerous passages, e.g.: A. V. 283, 288-9, 292, 297-8, 301-02.



wholesome qualities, there are other, complementary teachings on the key Buddhist principle of generosity (*dāna*).

#### 17.4 THEISTIC MORALITY VS A DOCTRINE OF NATURAL TRUTH

Some Western scholars have criticized Buddhism for teaching in an exclusively negative way. They claim that Buddhism teaches people to solely refrain from evil, but it does not encourage people to exert themselves in a positive way by doing good; Buddhism does not advise people how to promote goodness once they have refrained from wrongdoing; Buddhism is merely a teaching of subjectivity, an ‘ethic of abstract thinking’, a teaching of resignation and passivity. They go on to say that Buddhist teachings lead Buddhists to be contented merely with avoiding evil, but they take no interest in helping other human beings find freedom from suffering and discover true happiness. {714}

These scholars claim that even though Buddhism teaches lovingkindness and compassion, these qualities are confined simply to mental activities. They draw upon passages in the Tipiṭaka to support their view that the Buddhist teachings are exclusively negative. For example, they cite the definition for right action (*sammā-kammanta*) presented by Ven. Sāriputta:

And what, friends, is right action? Abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from misconduct in sensual pleasures – this is called right action.<sup>6</sup>

*M. III. 251-2.*

Someone who recognizes the true practical application of these Path factors, as is outlined for example in the elaboration of moral conduct contained in the ten wholesome courses of action, will see that these scholars who offer criticism (much of which is well-intentioned) surely

<sup>6</sup>This is the same condensed definition of right action as presented earlier; it does not expand this Path factor as is found say in the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṭṭha*). For more on the view that Buddhism is a pessimistic religion see Appendix 10.

have garnered only an incomplete knowledge and do not understand Buddha-Dhamma in its entirety. It is clear that the system of virtuous conduct based on these factors of the Path is not restricted to being ‘negative’, ‘passive’, ‘subjective’, or merely an ‘ethic of abstract thinking’.

In any case, when one encounters such criticisms, one should take the opportunity to clarify these matters within oneself and expand one’s understanding. The explanations of the moral factors of the Path refer to basic behaviour linked with intention. They are initially defined through a terminology of negation (i.e. the definitions emphasize the refraining from evil) for the following reasons:

- In Buddhism, moral precepts and codes of conduct are not divine edicts or commandments etched in stone, which through God’s will stipulate how people should behave, often through blind faith, without needing to understand the justifications for moral behaviour. {715}

In Buddha-Dhamma, moral precepts are determined according to laws of nature, and collectively they constitute the beginning stage of spiritual development. Someone who upholds these precepts ought to discern the relationship to these natural laws. Although one may not yet possess a clear understanding and may only act at the level of faith, this faith should be ‘well-grounded’ (*ākāravatī-saddhā*) – it should at least be based on a rudimentary understanding of cause and effect, enough to give rise to increasing degrees of wisdom.

- In the gradual development of Dhamma practice or of spiritual training, one must prepare a stable and even foundation. One begins with refraining from or eliminating unwholesome actions, before one cultivates goodness and eventually reaches purity and liberation. This is similar to growing a fruit tree: one must first prepare the soil by removing harmful elements; then one is ready to plant the seed, nurture the plant, and harvest one’s desired fruit.

In Buddha-Dhamma, virtuous conduct (*sīla*) is the first stage of practice, in which the emphasis is on refraining from unskillful actions. At first there is a repeated focus on those things that need

to be eliminated, after which the boundaries of spiritual practice can be expanded, by gradually including the elevated stages of concentration and wisdom.

- Within the system of the threefold training, moral conduct in itself is not a practice leading to the highest goal. Rather, it prepares the general foundation of one's life and makes one ready to cultivate the essential factor of mental development, which is referred to in brief as 'concentration' (*samādhi*). This next stage of development follows on from and reaps the benefits of moral conduct.

The spiritual value of moral conduct is tremendous: the intention to refrain from evil or the absence of any thoughts of wrongdoing purifies and steadies the mind; a person is thus not disturbed by confusion, distress, or anxiety. The mind becomes tranquil and concentrated.

When the mind is peaceful and concentrated, one develops clarity and proficiency in wisdom – one uses reasoned discernment and seeks ways to further cultivate goodness and to reach higher stages of spiritual accomplishment.

- Being endowed with a strong, virtuous, and joyous mind is of vital importance. In Buddhist ethics there must be a constant link and integration between one's state of mind and one's external physical and verbal actions. The mind is the source of all action, and therefore intention is the principal factor in determining the true sincerity of a person's virtuous deeds. Not deceiving others is an inadequate yardstick – there must also be an absence of self-deception. Developing a wholesome integration of factors uplifts the mind and prevents the problem of mental behaviour and external behaviour being at odds with one another.
- The Path factors related to moral conduct reveal that the most basic form of human responsibility is to take responsibility for one's own mind: to guard against all thoughts of harming or violating others. When a person has established this basic purity of mind, personal responsibility expands outwards to sustaining and cultivating spiritual qualities and performing virtuous deeds in order to

help others. In sum, there is the personal responsibility to refrain from evil and the social responsibility to act for others' wellbeing and happiness.

- To interpret *sīla* as the refraining from harm and wrongdoing is to define the principles of spiritual practice in a basic and uniform way. This interpretation emphasizes volition that is completely free from corruption and wickedness. When one has achieved such a basic discipline and freedom from affliction and turmoil, both internal and external, one can begin to expand on and cultivate aspects of wholesome and virtuous conduct. {716}

In regard to goodness, its details and methods of practice are limitless and vary according to time and place. Unskilful actions, on the other hand, can be strictly defined and determined. For example, both monks and laypeople should refrain from telling lies, but the opportunities and methods for undertaking wholesome activities based on honest speech may vary. The all-inclusive principles of behaviour thus specify the refraining from basic forms of wrongdoing. The details and methods of cultivating goodness are matters of practical application, depending on a person's life circumstances.

- To arrive at the goal of Buddhism it is necessary to develop every factor of the Eightfold Path. Therefore, each Path factor must be an all-inclusive principle which every person is able to follow and practise, not limited to a person's social standing, time period, location, or specific surrounding conditions.

This is clearly evident in the domain of moral conduct. For example, to abstain from taking what is not freely given is something that every person can do, but the offering of gifts depends on other factors, like having something to give, having a recipient, and having a worthy recipient. In the case that a person does not have the opportunity to give, intention that is free from any thoughts of stealing already purifies the mind and acts as a foundation for concentration. If one has the opportunity to give, however, this giving will increase one's virtue and prevent the mental stain of being uncaring or possessive.

It is for these reasons that the primary interpretations of these Path factors of morality exist in the form of negation: of abstaining from unskillful behaviour or of an absence of evil. The expanded interpretation of these Path factors which includes the positive acts of generating goodness is a matter of practical application as mentioned above.

- In Dhamma practice, practitioners are often consciously developing a specific spiritual quality or virtue. During this time the practitioner must be absorbed in and focused on that activity. In such circumstances one's responsibility concerning other areas of practice is simply to prevent harmful or unskillful conditions from arising. Here, the desired benefit from moral conduct is to help regulate other areas of activity: to prevent one from erring and committing an unskillful action, to be free from mental weakness and disturbance, and to prepare a firm foundation in order to develop the chosen virtuous quality completely and resolutely.

As mentioned above, the Buddhist system of spiritual training is threefold, comprising moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom; moreover, it is based on natural phenomena. Many of the critical scholars mentioned above, however, view morality from the perspective of a theistic tradition, and thus they can make neither head nor tail of the Buddhist system. It is important to distinguish between moral conduct as taught in Buddha-Dhamma and moral conduct as taught in theistic religions (this analysis should include those teachings on kamma and on good and evil). Here are some important points on this distinction:

- In the doctrine of natural truth (*sabhāva-niyāma*), i.e. Buddha-Dhamma, principles of moral behaviour are determined and defined according to causal laws of nature. In theistic religions moral principles are divine commandments laid down according to divine will.
- From the angle of 'negation' or restraint, moral conduct in Buddha-Dhamma is a principle of self-discipline and self-training, and therefore the prescribed precepts are referred to as 'training rules'

(*sikkhā-pada*). As for moral conduct in theistic religions, it is comprised of prohibitions – of commandments laid down from a power above. {717}

- In Buddha-Dhamma a vital factor for moral conduct is ‘well-grounded faith’ (*ākāravatī-saddhā*): a trust in natural laws and a basic understanding that volitional actions and their results proceed in accord with causes and conditions. A vital factor for moral conduct in theistic religions is devotional faith (*bhatti*): a belief in, acceptance of, and obedience to those things prescribed by God, and a complete entrusting oneself to these prescriptions without needing to question their validity.
- In Buddha-Dhamma a correct upholding of moral precepts entails self-discipline, beginning with the intention to refrain from all vices and followed by the development of virtues which are diametrically opposed to such vices. In theistic religions the upholding of moral precepts entails strict obedience to divine commandments.
- In Buddha-Dhamma, practice on the level of moral conduct has the specific objective of acting as a foundation for concentration. It is part of a system of training designed to prepare and enable a person to harness the power of the mind in the greatest way possible, eventually giving rise to wisdom and leading in the end to perfect mental freedom. As for say, going to heaven, this is merely a natural consequence of causes and conditions. In theistic religions, however, upholding the commandments leads to divine favour; it is conduct that accords with God’s will and results in the reward of being born in heaven.
- In Buddha-Dhamma, the good and bad results of moral or immoral behaviour occur automatically according to a natural order; they stem from the impartial, objective functioning of a natural law, referred to as the law of kamma. These effects first manifest in the mind and then manifest further in a person’s personality and way of life, in this lifetime and in future lifetimes. In theistic religions the good and bad results of keeping or transgressing divine commandments are a matter of reward or retribution. The reward for

obedience is going to heaven; the punishment for transgression is going to hell. The reward or punishment is determined solely by divine judgement.

- In regard to good and evil, Buddha-Dhamma teaches that moral virtue protects, enhances, purifies and elevates the mind, and it is thus referred to as *puñña* ('merit', 'meritorious'). Moral conduct promotes mental prosperity and mental health; it is a skilful action, it conforms to wisdom, and it leads to liberation; thus it is called *kusala* ('wholesome', 'skilful'). Wicked, immoral behaviour on the other hand impairs or decreases the quality of the mind, and thus it is called *pāpa* ('evil').<sup>7</sup> It damages a person's life, it is unskilful, and it is conducive neither to mental wellbeing nor to liberation; thus it is called *akusala* ('unskilful', 'unwholesome'). In theistic religions, good and evil is based primarily on faith and devotion: behaviour is measured by obedience and conformity to God's will and commands. Evil in particular is interpreted as behaviour opposing or transgressing the will of God (commonly called 'sin').
- In Buddha-Dhamma it is imperative that teachings on morality be based on reason, for Dhamma practitioners only conduct themselves correctly when they understand how the system of ethics is connected to the law of causality. The prevailing morality of theistic religions is based on divine proclamations and divine decree which is comprised of disparate rules and precepts. Although these rules may be compiled into an ethical code, they are not part of an integrated system, because a follower of such a religion requires only enough understanding to determine what rules have been laid down. {718} It is not necessary to understand the entire system or the relationship to other factors because the larger design exists in God's all-knowing wisdom; followers ought not to doubt, but rather they should surrender themselves and follow obediently.

<sup>7</sup>Trans: the Oxford Dictionary of Etymology states that the word 'evil' probably stems from the Indo-European base *\*up-* (connected to the English words 'up' and 'over'; and see the Pali prefix *upa-*), the primary sense being 'exceeding due limits'.

- The Buddhist system of ethics is comprised of objective and universal principles; it is determined according to laws of nature. (Here ethics refers to the essence of *sīla*, as the aspects of truth dealing with good and evil; it is not referring to *sīla* as a prescribed code of discipline – *vinaya*, which involves forms of correction and punishment within a social setting.) In theistic religions, ethical principles tend to be determined according to divine will; the code of ethics resembles a prescribed code of discipline (*vinaya*) or a legal code, because God is both the enactor of these laws and the judge.

Buddha-Dhamma teaches that specific volitional actions have specific effects on a person's mind, behaviour, disposition, and personality. In this context, it is invalid to set limitations or qualifications on such effects of volitional action, for example by claiming that a particular group of people has an advantage, or to use personal approval as the criterion for truth. It is invalid to make the following claims: only members of this specific religion are compassionate and good, but members of other religions, although they may express compassion, are not truly good; killing people of this religion is a sin, but killing people of other religions is not a sin; only virtuous people of this religion can go to heaven, while people of other religions, regardless how they behave, are infidels and are destined for hell; killing animals is not a sin, because animals are intended as food for humans (are we not food for lions and tigers?).<sup>8</sup>

Having said this, it is valid, however, to distinguish between different kinds of volitional actions, for instance by observing how various degrees of unskilful behaviour effect the functioning of the mind.

- Because moral conduct is based on objective principles and determined according to natural laws, Buddhist practitioners require courage and honesty to acknowledge and face the truth. They are urged to accept the truth of conditions, that good and evil, right and

<sup>8</sup>A proper relationship to food involves an acceptance that while we are still walking on the Path and have not yet reached the goal we must occasionally do what is undesirable, as we have no alternative. The Buddha taught to consider food in a similar way to a mother and father who are forced to eat the flesh of their deceased child, who has died along a desert track (see: S. II. 98-9).



wrong, exist within themselves and within the world. Whether people practise accordingly or not, and to what extent they practise, is another matter. People need to acknowledge whether they are acting in conformity with these natural laws or not; they should not consider an evil deed as good simply because it accords with their desires. The validity of natural laws governing human behaviour does not depend on people's desires. If one is about to perform an action that results in falling into hell, it is better to acknowledge that this action is bad, but that one is still willing to suffer the consequences, than to delude oneself into thinking that one is doing nothing wrong.

Admittedly, there are some benefits or advantages to an ethics based on divine mandate:

- It cuts off the need to debate whether an action is correct or incorrect, true or false. Unquestioned belief and devotional faith often generate ardent effort and quick results in spiritual practice. But it also tends to create problems, e.g.: problems about what should be done in order to instil faith in people (especially in this age of reason); problems about how to live at peace with other people who do not share one's beliefs; the problem of how to sustain faith; and a diminished opportunity for people to exercise their wisdom faculty freely. (Some of these problems can be overlooked if one is content for human society to be split into divergent groups.)
- Ordinary people tend to find a moral system based on faith and devotion more accessible, and this kind of moral system does a good job at regulating ordinary people's behaviour. Even among many Buddhists the understanding of *sīla* in relation to good and evil harbours beliefs that resemble those of theistic religions, for example to view ethics as a set of prohibitions (but with only an obscure idea of who prohibits, as opposed to theistic doctrines which clearly state that God prohibits), and to view the results of good and evil as a form of reward or punishment. The problem with such a system, however, is that it relies primarily on faith. {719}

- It can provide people with moral loopholes. By determining unwholesome actions as innocent or innocuous, people may justify them in order to gain something for themselves. Take for example the notion that killing animals is not a sin, which assuages people's sense of guilt and makes them feel blameless. Although convincing oneself of one's innocence can be effective, it has adverse effects in other areas of one's life and it does not accord with the path of wisdom.

Buddha-Dhamma encourages people to have a clear awareness of the truth at every stage of spiritual practice, and to be able to determine and judge the truth for themselves. It teaches people to use methods of self-motivation and independent action which include a thorough understanding of the factors involved. These methods of self-motivation should be harmless and only be used as a support for generating other spiritual qualities.

### 17.5 BASIC MORAL CONDUCT

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It is important to recognize some general principles that assist in the proper practice of moral conduct at all levels and enable one to practise the Dhamma correctly (*dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*).

The Buddha's words above defining the Path factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood reveal the essence of *sīla*, and they describe the necessary guidelines of moral conduct required for a virtuous life. Teachers from ancient times later compiled the eight subsidiary factors of moral conduct (derived from these three Path factors), and called them by the name 'the set of eight precepts of which pure livelihood is the eighth' (*ājīvaṭṭhamaka-sīla*).<sup>9</sup> {720}

These are the essential factors of moral conduct. From here, the analysis of moral conduct branches out. For example, when one describes

<sup>9</sup>Trans.: *ājīvaṭṭhamaka-sīla*: factors 1-7 are identical to the first seven factors of the wholesome courses of action – *kusala-kamma* *patha*; the eighth factor is right livelihood – *sammā-ājīva*.

a training for a specific group of people with a distinctive way of life, with distinct objectives and course of development, one may distinguish various details of practice, as the moral conduct for monks, for nuns, for novices, for the laity, etc. Moreover, a clear system of communal management may be established, referred to as a moral discipline (*vinaya*), which includes measures for restraint, administration, the exacting of penalties on transgressors, etc.

The Buddha's words on the Path factors of moral conduct reveal that the Path is not intended only for the community of monks; otherwise, the definition for *sīla* would have to be the 227 precepts, the virtuous conduct for bhikkhus (*bhikkhu-sīla*), the morality of renunciants (*pabbajita-sīla*), or something along these lines. The Buddha taught the essence of moral conduct in a way that incorporates diverse and detailed moral principles and precepts. It was not necessary for him to bestow formal titles on some of these subsidiary guidelines for conduct; for example, he mentioned the five precepts, the eight precepts, and the ten precepts without giving them explicit names.

Because it is often forgotten, it should be emphasized that *sīla* does not refer only to virtuous physical and verbal actions, but also includes a pure and virtuous livelihood. The way one earns a living has an important bearing on virtuous conduct.

In the scriptural classification of moral precepts, normally only the main subjects are mentioned, e.g. to refrain from destroying living creatures or to refrain from stealing. By glancing at these main subjects, one may only see them in a negative, or negating, light. To gain a complete and clear understanding of these precepts, one needs to look at the Buddha's words elaborating on their meanings. In the teaching on the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kamma-patha*), for instance, one sees that almost every factor is divided into two parts. There is an aspect to be refrained from and an aspect to be performed; a negating quality is followed by a positive quality. The teaching begins with abstaining from an evil action (e.g. killing), and this is followed by an encouragement to perform a good action that opposes the unskilful action (e.g. compassionately assisting all living creatures).

The Path consists of moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom, which must be fully integrated in order for the fruits of the Path to be achieved. Although here the discussion focuses on moral conduct, one needs to be aware that this is merely one stage of an integrated process. When one advances on the Path, moral conduct must be linked with the other two factors in order to reach true success.

Technically speaking, the fulfilment and perfection resulting from the complete integration of the Path factors is called the ‘unity of spiritual qualities’ (*dhamma-sāmaggī*). Even at the highest level, of complete awakening, there must be this integration of factors. When one gains an appreciation of this integration of factors, although one may be focusing on the factors pertaining to moral conduct, one will be aware of the remaining factors and the role that they play.

The teaching on the ten wholesome courses of action expands the Path factors in a way that may be applied by all human beings (these ten factors are described as ‘factors leading to true humanity’ – *manussa-dhamma*). It is evident in this teaching that moral conduct is accompanied by mental and wisdom development. (The first seven factors pertain to moral conduct; factors eight and nine pertain to concentration; and the tenth factor pertains to wisdom).

The five precepts, however, which is considered the most basic form of acceptable moral conduct, encompasses only the stage of *sīla*, not of *samādhi* or *paññā*. This indicates that the five precepts alone are inadequate for truly advancing on the Buddhist path. When one is unable to develop the higher spiritual qualities, at the very least one should abstain from wickedness and try not to seriously harm others. {721}

Having said this, the five precepts are not excluded from the unity of spiritual factors (*dhamma-sāmaggī*). In those circumstances when it was appropriate to distinguish moral conduct as a distinct category, the Buddha would prepare a complementary teaching containing factors pertaining to the mind (*citta*) and wisdom (*paññā*). (Here, these three factors are not placed together in a single group as they are in the ten wholesome courses of action.) He would teach those laypeople who began their spiritual practice by upholding the five precepts to complete their

training by developing the mind and wisdom, so that they may become awakened disciples.

This alternative presentation of integrated spiritual factors is used as a teaching specifically for householders and it usually contains four factors: faith, virtuous conduct, generosity, and wisdom (occasionally the fifth factor of learning is added). This group of factors is mentioned very frequently in the Tipiṭaka; here is a concise summary of this teaching.<sup>10</sup>

After mentioning the means by which one gains victory in this world (by properly managing one's home, domestic help, financial earnings, etc., which are matters pertaining to immediate benefits – *diṭṭhadhammikatta*), the Buddha speaks about the means by which one gains victory in the world to come (pertaining to future benefits – *samparāyikattha*):

Possessing four qualities, Visākhā, a woman practises for victory in the next world and makes ready for the next world. What four?....

1. And how is a woman accomplished in faith (*saddhā*)?.... Here, a woman is endowed with faith. She has conviction in the awakening of the Tathāgata (*tathāgatabodhi-saddhā*) thus: 'The Blessed One is an arahant....'
2. And how is a woman accomplished in virtuous conduct (*sīla*)?.... Here, a woman abstains from the destruction of life ... from taking what is not given ... from sexual misconduct ... from false speech ... from spirits and intoxicants, the basis for heedlessness....
3. And how is a woman accomplished in generosity (*cāga*)?.... Here, a woman dwells at home with a heart devoid of the stain of miserliness, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in relinquishment, devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing....
4. And how is a woman accomplished in wisdom (*paññā*)?.... Here, a woman is wise; she possesses the wisdom that discerns

<sup>10</sup>This group is referred to as the factors of noble growth (*ariyā vaḍḍhi*); for more on these factors see chapter 7 on awakened beings.

arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering....

A. IV. 269-71.

The fifth factor, which is desirable but not imperative, is ‘learning’ (*suta*; learning by way of formal education, reading, listening, etc.), which refers to acquiring the raw data for knowledge. If one develops great learning (*bahussuta*), this is even more advantageous.

Many Buddhists are concerned only with moral conduct. They may be aware of other aspects of the teachings, but their knowledge is often confused and unsystematic, even though the Buddha clearly outlined a complete spiritual development, of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. He reiterated how householders should be endowed with faith (*saddhā*), moral conduct (*sīla*; specifically the five precepts), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). When one reaches this unity of spiritual factors at this level, the noble path (*ariya-magga*) is accessible for cultivation.

The Pali term *sīla* has a very broad scope of meaning; it can be used in very specific contexts or in a general sense. And as mentioned earlier, it is important to be able to distinguish this term from the term *vinaya*. {722}

Principles of Dhamma may be divided into the three factors of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Concentration and wisdom pertain exclusively to Dhamma, whereas moral conduct may be divided into a principle of Dhamma and also into a conventional disciplinary code (*vinaya*). *Vinaya* is one aspect of *sīla* (see the section ‘*Sīla* on the Level of Dhamma and *Sīla* on the Level of *Vinaya*’ below). {723}

Following are some teachings by the Buddha summarizing basic moral principles in relation to ordinary people and clarifying the meaning and essence of the term *sīla*.

## 17.6 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY

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Let us review the three Path factors pertaining to morality:

1. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*):

- (1) To relinquish wrong speech (*musā-vāda*); to abstain from telling lies; this factor includes speaking truthfully (*sacca-vācā*).
- (2) To relinquish divisive speech (*pisuṇā-vācā*); to abstain from malicious tale-bearing; this factor includes harmonizing, reconciliatory speech (*samaggakaraṇī-vācā*).
- (3) To relinquish harsh speech (*pharusa-vācā*); to abstain from offensive speech; this factor includes pleasant, polite speech (*saṇha-vācā*).
- (4) To relinquish unreflective chatter (*samphappalāpa*); to abstain from trivial talk; this factor includes useful, beneficial speech (*atthasaṇhitā-vācā*). (See Note 17.2)

2. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*):

- (1) To relinquish destruction of life (*pāṇātipāta*); to abstain from killing living creatures; this factor includes deeds of aid and support.
- (2) To relinquish taking what is not freely given (*adinnādāna*); to abstain from stealing; this factor is paired with right livelihood or with generosity (*dāna*).
- (3) To relinquish misconduct in relation to sensual pleasures (*kāmesu-micchācāra*); to abstain from sexual misconduct; this factor includes ‘contentment with one’s wife’ (*sadāra-santosa*).

3. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*): to relinquish wrong livelihood; to earn one’s living righteously; this factor includes a perseverance in maintaining an upright livelihood, for example by not leaving matters in arrears (i.e. not allowing work to pile up and be disorderly, not procrastinating, and not making half-hearted effort). (See Note 17.3)

The Buddha applied these essential guidelines of moral conduct to ordinary people, describing basic principles of behaviour, which are suitable for human beings to live together happily and to lead wholesome lives, free from excessive conflict. These principles are referred to in the Pali Canon as the five ‘training rules’ (*sikkhā-pada*), which were later commonly referred to as the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*). Let us review these precepts:<sup>11</sup> {724}

1. To abstain from killing living creatures (*pāṇātipātā*); essentially, this refers to conduct that is free from physical oppression of other beings.
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given (*adinnādāna*); to abstain from stealing; essentially, this refers to conduct that is free from transgressing others in the context of material property and possessions.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*); essentially, this refers to conduct that is free from harming others in the context of married partners and cherished individuals, from transgressing sexual mores and traditions, from adultery, and from sexual behaviour that damages a family’s reputation and lineage.<sup>12</sup>
4. To abstain from speaking falsehoods (*musā-vāda*); essentially, this refers to conduct that is free from transgressing others by telling lies or by speaking in order to take advantage or to cause harm.
5. To abstain from spirits, liquor, and intoxicants (*surāmerayamajja*), which are a basis for heedlessness; essentially, this refers to conduct that is free from recklessness and intoxication due to the use of addictive substances that impair mindfulness and clear comprehension.

<sup>11</sup>See Appendix 3; the commentaries occasionally refer to the five precepts as *nicca-sīla*: ‘regular conduct’ or ‘conduct to be maintained constantly’ (e.g.: SnA. I. 377, 379; Vism. 15).

<sup>12</sup>Trans.: ‘damaging a family’s lineage’ refers to the birth of a non-marital child, i.e. the case in which a married woman gives birth to a child whose biological father is not her husband.



## NOTE 17.2: VIRTUOUS SPEECH

At A. II. 141 there is a teaching by the Buddha on the four kinds of virtuous speech (*vacī-sucarita*):

1. honest speech (*sacca-vācā*);
2. non-divisive speech (*apisaṇṇā-vācā*);
3. pleasant speech (*saṇḥa-vācā*); and
4. reasoned speech (*mantā-bhāsā*).

The commentaries define *mantā-bhāsā* as wise speech (AA. III. 134); occasionally it is translated as ‘moderate speech’, which is essentially the same as ‘useful, beneficial speech’.

Standard definitions of the five precepts (along with similar moral precepts) have been handed down from scholars and commentators to later generations. To begin with, let us look at some teachings by the Buddha on this subject:

I will teach you, householders, a Dhamma exposition applicable to oneself....

Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die; I cherish happiness and am averse to suffering. Since I am one who wishes to live ... and am averse to suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to take the life of another – of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who cherishes happiness and is averse to suffering – that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from the destruction of life, exhorts others to abstain from the destruction of life, and speaks in praise of abstinence from the destruction of life. Thus this bodily conduct of his is purified in three respects.

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to take from me what I have not given, that is, to commit theft, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to take from another what he has not given, that is, to commit theft, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either....’

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to commit adultery with my wife, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to commit adultery with the wife of another, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either....’

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to damage my welfare with false speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to damage the welfare of another with false speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either....’ {375}

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to instigate a split between me and my friends by divisive speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to instigate a split between another and his friends by divisive speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either....’

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to address me with harsh speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to address another with harsh speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either....’

Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to address me with frivolous speech and idle chatter, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to address another with frivolous speech and idle chatter, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable

to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from idle chatter, exhorts others to abstain from idle chatter, and speaks in praise of abstinence from idle chatter. Thus this verbal conduct of his is purified in three respects.

S. V. 353-5.

‘Now what do you think, monks, have you ever seen or heard of the following: “This man has abandoned the taking of life, he is one who abstains from the taking of life; and kings seize him and execute him, imprison him, banish him, or impose a punishment on him for this reason”?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Good, monks. I too have never seen or heard of the following.... But if they announce some evil deed as this: “This man has caused the death of a woman or man”, then kings, because he has taken life, seize him and execute, imprison, banish, or impose a punishment on him – has such a thing been seen or heard of by you?’

‘Lord, this thing has been both seen and heard of by us, and we shall hear of it again.’

‘What do you think, monks, have you ever seen or heard of the following: “This man has abandoned the taking of what is not given, he is one who abstains from taking what is not given ... from sexual misconduct ... from false speech ... from spirits and intoxicants that are a basis for heedlessness; and kings seize him and execute him, imprison him, banish him, or impose a punishment on him for abstaining from taking what is not given ... from sexual misconduct ... from speaking falsely ... from [indulging in] spirits and intoxicants”?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘Good, monks. I too have never seen or heard of the following.... But if they announce some evil deed as this: “This man has stolen something from a village or a forest”.... “This man violated the wives and daughters of others”.... “This man has brought to ruin

a householder or a householder's son with false speech".... "This man is given over to drinking wines and spirits and has killed a woman or man".... "This man is given over to drinking wines and spirits and has stolen something from a village or a forest" ... "This man is given over to drinking wines and spirits and has violated the wives and daughters of others" ... "This man is given over to drinking wines and spirits and has brought to ruin a householder or a householder's son with false speech; then kings, because he has stolen ... he has committed sexual misconduct ... he has spoken falsely ... he has [indulged in] wines and spirits; kings seize him and execute, imprison, banish, or impose a punishment on him" – has such a thing been seen or heard of by you?" {726}

'Lord, this thing has been both seen and heard of by us, and we shall hear of it again.'

*A. III. 208-209.*

Almost all serious crime stems from a transgression of the five precepts. In societies containing widespread killing, mutual animosity, persecution, sexual misconduct, murder, theft, rape, deceit, abuse of intoxicants and addictive drugs, along with the resulting problems and casualties of drug and alcohol abuse, human life and people's possessions are not safe. Wherever people go they experience anxiety and fear. When people meet, instead of feeling relaxed and at ease, they become mistrustful of one another. People's mental health deteriorates and it is difficult for people to develop spiritual power and virtue.

Such a society is not a supportive environment for cultivating spiritual virtue because people are preoccupied with resolving social conflict and chaos, which often increases in intensity.

For this reason, an absence of an adherence to the five precepts is a measuring stick to determine the level of social decay. The keeping of the five precepts marks the behaviour and way of life that is opposite to the unwholesome actions listed above.

Keeping the five precepts is the most basic criterion for determining human moral conduct; to keep these precepts preserves a healthy social

## NOTE 17.3: TRADES OF WRONG LIVELIHOOD

At A. III. 209 there is a teaching by the Buddha on the five kinds of business a lay disciple should abstain from (*akaraṇīya-vaṇijjā*):

1. trade in arms ('instruments of death' – *sattha-vaṇijjā*);
2. trade in human beings (*satta-vaṇijjā*);
3. trade in the flesh of animals (*maṇsa-vaṇijjā*) – the commentaries say this refers to raising animals for slaughter;
4. trade in intoxicants (*majja-vaṇijjā*), including other addictive drugs besides alcohol that lead to heedlessness; and
5. trade in poisons (*visava-vaṇijjā*).

In the commentaries these five kinds of business are referred to as 'wrong business' (*micchā-vaṇijjā*) – DA. I. 235; MA. I. 136 – or as 'unrighteous business' (*adhamma-vaṇijjā*) – SnA. I. 379.

environment and acts as a foundation for a virtuous way of life and for greater spiritual development.

For convenience, the commentators compiled a list of criteria for determining what actions constitute a transgression of each of the five precepts, establishing the 'necessary conditions' (*sambhāra*) or 'factors' (*aṅga*) of transgression. One has transgressed (or 'broken') a precept when one fulfils all the necessary conditions, as follows:<sup>13</sup>

- Transgression of the first precept, killing living creatures, contains five factors: (1) the creature (person or animal) possesses life; (2) one knows that the creature is alive; (3) there is an intention to kill; (4) there is an effort to kill; (5) the creature dies as a consequence of that effort.

<sup>13</sup>Specifically the five precepts, see: ItA. II. 49-54. An explanation of the first four precepts and a further explanation of the remaining 'wholesome courses of action', see: MA. I. 200-201; Nd. I. 115-18; DhsA. 97-101; and cited in later texts, e.g.: Maṅgalatthadīpanī [1/210-19]. (I have limited the list of necessary conditions here to the five precepts; please see the above references for the factors related to divisive speech, etc.) As regards the fifth precept, today there are intoxicating substances that can be taken in other ways apart from drinking; the gist of this precept should be applied accordingly.

- Transgression of the second precept, stealing, contains five factors: (1) the object is considered a personal possession by someone else; (2) one knows that the other person considers the object a personal possession; (3) there is an intention to steal; (4) there is an effort to steal; (5) the theft is successful through that effort.
- Transgression of the third precept, sexual misconduct, contains four factors: (1) there is a man or a woman who should not be violated (*agamanīya-vatthu*);<sup>14</sup> (2) there is an intention to have sexual intercourse; (3) there is an effort to have intercourse; (4) ‘there is a way through’: there is contact of the sexual organs. {727}
- Transgression of the fourth precept, false speech, contains four factors: (1) the speech is untrue; (2) there is an intention to speak falsely; (3) there is an effort resulting from that intention; (4) another person comprehends that which has been spoken.
- Transgression of the fifth precept, consuming liquor, spirits, and intoxicants, contains four factors: (1) the substance is an intoxicant; (2) there is a desire to consume the substance; (3) there is an effort resulting from that desire; (4) the substance is swallowed and passes the person’s throat.

In regard to the first precept, although the scriptures focus primarily on not killing human beings (as in the quotes by the Buddha above), animals too cherish life, delight in happiness, are averse to pain, and are companions in this world of birth, old-age, sickness, and death, and they too should not be oppressed. The first precept thus includes animals in the definition of living creatures. Granted, the scriptures claim that, kammically,<sup>15</sup> killing animals is of a less serious consequence than killing human beings.

In regard to this matter, the commentaries offer principles for judging the severity of ill-effects resulting from transgressing the five precepts, based on various criteria.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Trans.: literally: ‘an object to which one ought not go’.

<sup>15</sup>Trans: ‘karmically’.

<sup>16</sup>For more on this subject see Appendix 5.

Later generations of Buddhist monastic scholars compiled a group of factors paired with the five precepts to be applied by Buddhist laypeople in tandem with the precepts. These factors are known as the ‘five virtues’ (*pañca-dhamma*) or the ‘five beautiful qualities’ (*pañcakalyāṇa-dhamma*).

In essence, they correspond to the factors of the ‘wholesome courses of action’ (*kusala-kammaṭṭhāna*), with some variation depending on the breadth of definition and application. {728}

These five factors follow the order of the five precepts as follows:

1. Lovingkindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*).
2. Right-livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*); some scholars substitute or include generosity (*dāna*).
3. Sense restraint (*kāma-saṁvara*): to possess self-control in regard to sense impressions and sense desires, and to not allow these to lead to immoral behaviour. (Some scholars substitute *sadāra-santosa*: ‘contentment with one’s spouse’.)
4. Honesty (*sacca*).
5. Mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*); some scholars substitute ‘heedfulness’ (*appamāda*), which has essentially the same meaning.

*Sadāra-santosa*, which stands in opposition to sexual misconduct, literally translates as ‘contentment with one’s wife’, but at heart it means ‘contentment with one’s spouse’. From a broad perspective, this factor is based on mutual agreement and consent, and also on conformity with social conventions and rules: to not mistreat or be unfaithful to one’s spouse, to not act against the consent of the other person involved, and to not violate someone who is ‘off limits’ – someone who is under the authority or care of someone else.

Although this factor does not firmly stipulate a single spouse in contrast to numerous spouses, the Buddhist texts favour and commend monogamy, for it leads to long-lasting mutual love and respect, and to a stable family in which the children feel secure and at ease.

The model couple in the suttas for such a monogamous relationship are the noble disciples Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā. They were both stream-enterers and are considered the foremost lay-disciples (*etadagga*) in respect to being in a close relationship to the Buddha. They had a deep love, devotion and loyalty to one another, and were equally matched in spiritual virtues, to the point that they expressed a wish to meet not only in this lifetime but in future lifetimes. Here are the recorded words of Nakulapitā:

Lord, ever since the young housewife Nakulamātā was brought home to me when I was still young, I have never been aware of acting unfaithfully towards her even in my thoughts, still less in my deeds. Lord, our wish is to be together so long as this life lasts and in the future life as well.

Nakulamātā uttered the same words.<sup>17</sup>

The texts classify contentment with one's spouse as a form of 'divine conduct' (*brahmacariya*), which shows how highly praised this quality is in the Buddhist teachings. The commentators state that such pure conduct is a cause for not dying young, as in this passage:

We are not unfaithful to our wives and our wives are not unfaithful to us. We practise chastity (*brahmacariya*) in regards to other women apart from our wives. Therefore, none of us has died while still young.<sup>18</sup> {729}

DA. I. 178; MA. II. 42; ItA. I. 108; SnA. I. 43.

To sum up, the following verses describe basic moral conduct in a nutshell:

A person who is composed in body, speech and mind, who does not perform any evil acts, who does not utter senseless, self-serving speech, such a one is called a virtuous person.

J. V. 146.

<sup>17</sup> A. II. 61-2.

<sup>18</sup> Referred to at J. IV. 53; explained at JA. IV. 53. Even Vessantara (the Bodhisatta) asked for the blessing of being one who is contented with his wife (see: J. VI. 572; JA. VI. 572).



Make yourself a refuge for all beings.<sup>19</sup>

M. I. 39.

## 17.7 VIRTUOUS CONDUCT FOR ENHANCING ONE'S LIFE AND SOCIETY

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The commentaries claim that the entire teaching by the Buddha in the *Singāḷaka Sutta* is intended as a layperson's discipline or as a general ethical code.<sup>20</sup> This teaching can be summarized as follows:

### FIRST SECTION: FREEDOM FROM THE FOURTEEN VICES

**A.** To abandon four vices of conduct (*kamma-kilesa*; defiling actions):

1. Killing living creatures.
2. Taking what is not freely offered.
3. Sexual misconduct.
4. False speech.

**B.** To refrain from the four causes of evil; to refrain from acting out of:

1. Bias due to desire (*chandāgati*).
2. Bias due to aversion (*dosāgati*).
3. Bias due to delusion (*mohāgati*).
4. Bias due to fear (*bhayāgati*).

<sup>19</sup>The commentaries define *khemā* as 'safety', 'assistance', and 'lovingkindness', and state that this passage refers to purity by way of the mind door (*mano-dvāra*) – MA. I. 178.

<sup>20</sup>D. III. 180-93; DA. III. 943.

**C.** To refrain from the six indulgences leading to ruin (*apāya-mukha*; ‘paths to ruin’, ‘ways of squandering wealth’):<sup>21</sup>

1. Addiction to alcoholic drinks and intoxicants.
2. Attachment to roaming the streets at unseemly hours.
3. Attachment to frequenting shows and entertainment.
4. Addiction to gambling.
5. Attachment to associating with bad friends.
6. Habitual idleness. {730}

## **SECOND SECTION: PREPARING TWO ASSETS FOR ONE’S LIFE**

**A.** To recognize true and false friends, who should be associated with or not:<sup>22</sup>

1. Four false friends:
  - A. Swindlers.
  - B. ‘Great talkers’.<sup>23</sup>
  - C. Flatterers.
  - D. Those who urge one to indulge in the paths of ruin.
2. Four true friends:
  - A. Supportive friends.
  - B. Friends who are loyal in both happy and unhappy times.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>In this sutta the Buddha also describes the harm of each of these ‘paths to ruin’ (*apāya-mukha*).

<sup>22</sup>See the section of chapter 13 on virtuous friendship.

<sup>23</sup>Trans.: as in ‘great talkers are little doers’.

<sup>24</sup>Trans.: unlike fair-weather friends.

- C. Friends who point out what is beneficial.
- D. Benevolent friends.

**B.** To gather and protect wealth. To be like industrious bees gathering nectar and building a hive or like ants building an anthill. One should then share one's wealth among oneself and one's friends by dividing it into four parts:

1. One part one uses to provide for one's daily needs, look after others, and perform meritorious actions.
2. Two parts one uses as capital to support one's work.
3. The fourth part one should set aside as reserve in times of need.

### **THIRD SECTION: TO PROTECT THE SIX DIRECTIONS**

A proper relationship to six kinds of people:

**1/A.** Sons and daughters minister to their parents, who are similar to the eastern (forward) direction, by considering:

1. 'Having been supported by them, I will support them in return.'
2. 'I will fulfil their duties and perform work for them.'
3. 'I will maintain the family lineage.'
4. 'I will be worthy of my heritage.'
5. 'After they have passed away I will offer gifts and dedicate merit to them.'

**1/B.** Parents assist their children in the following ways:

1. They restrain them from evil.
2. They train them in virtue.

3. They provide them with an education in the arts and sciences.
4. They help them find a suitable spouse.
5. They hand over an inheritance when the time comes. {731}

**2/A.** Pupils minister to their teachers who are similar to the southern (righthand) direction by:

1. Rising to greet them.
2. Seeking them out (e.g. seeking their advice).
3. Listening to them and being attentive.
4. Waiting on and serving them.
5. Learning the skills they teach with respect and earnestness; giving great importance to their studies.

**2/B.** Teachers assist their pupils in the following ways:

1. They counsel and train them in virtue.
2. They provide them with a clear understanding of the subjects of study.
3. They provide them with a complete education in the fields of study.
4. They recommend them to their friends and colleagues.
5. They provide them with security in all directions (instruct them on how to truly apply their knowledge and make a living).

**3/A.** Husbands minister to their wives who are similar to the western (posterior) direction by:

1. Honouring them in a suitable way.
2. Not disparaging them.

3. Not being unfaithful to them.
4. Giving them authority in the household.
5. Providing them with gifts of personal adornments.

**3/B.** Wives support their husbands in the following ways:

1. They keep domestic affairs in order.
2. They support the relatives and friends of both sides of the family.
3. They are not unfaithful.
4. They protect acquired wealth.
5. They are skilful and diligent in their work.

**4/A.** To minister to one's friends who are similar to the northern (lefthand) direction by:

1. Hospitality and generosity.
2. Kindly words.
3. Assistance and support.
4. Offering constant friendship; being a friend in good times and bad.
5. Being honest and sincere.

**4/B.** Friends and companions reciprocate in the following ways:

1. They protect one when one is careless.
2. They protect one's wealth and possessions when one is careless.
3. They are a refuge in times of danger.
4. They do not abandon one in times of difficulty.
5. They show consideration to one's relatives and other friends. {732}

**5/A.** Bosses minister to their servants and employees who are similar to the nadir by:

1. Organizing work according to their strength, gender, age, and capability.
2. Providing them with wages and bonuses appropriate to their work and living situation.
3. Providing forms of welfare and security, for example by helping with medical expenses in times of illness.
4. Sharing any privileges or extra profits.
5. Providing days off and holidays.

**5/B.** Servants and employees support their bosses in the following ways:

1. They begin work before them.
2. They finish work after them.
3. They take only what their bosses give them.
4. They do their work in a well-ordered way and seek to improve their work.
5. They praise their boss to others.

**6/A.** Householders minister to members of the monastic community who are similar to the zenith in these ways:

1. They act with lovingkindness.
2. They speak with lovingkindness.
3. They maintain thoughts of lovingkindness.
4. They receive them openly and willingly.
5. They support them with the four requisites.

**6/B.** Monks and nuns support the laypeople by:

1. Discouraging them from doing evil.
2. Encouraging them to do good.
3. Assisting them with benevolence.
4. Teaching them what they have not previously heard or known.
5. Explaining and clarifying what they have heard.
6. Pointing out to them the way to heaven (teaching them the way to conduct their lives in order to realize happiness).

To cultivate the four ‘favourable qualities’ (*saṅgaha-vatthu*) in order to build trust among people and to create social solidarity:

1. Generosity (*dāna*).
2. Kindly speech (*piya-vācā*).
3. Acts of service (*attha-cariyā*).
4. Behaving oneself in a balanced, impartial way (*samānattatā*). {733}

### 17.8 GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

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As mentioned earlier, right livelihood is an aspect of *sīla* that often gets overlooked. Although only a brief summary will be presented here, the teachings on right livelihood are very meaningful and deserve a thorough investigation. Following are some general principles on this subject:

Buddhism focuses on the basic requirements human beings have for existence, i.e. the main purpose of earning a livelihood is to ensure that every individual in society has an adequate amount of the four requisites to sustain life. The Buddhist teachings give precedence to human beings;

they do not emphasize an abundance of material wealth, which would be to give precedence to material possessions.

This principle of sufficiency is included in the Buddhist teachings on proper governance. One of the responsibilities of a king, for example, is to distribute wealth to the poor, to ensure that there are no impoverished, destitute people in the land.<sup>25</sup> The success of a ruler's work or of a government's economic policies should thus be measured not by a full treasury or abundant wealth but rather by the absence of poverty in society.

In the case that these basic requirements have been met, the scriptures do not pass judgement on how much wealth a person possesses or whether there is an equal distribution of wealth in society, because these matters are connected to other factors, for example:

It is not a goal in itself to possess an adequate amount of the four requisites to sustain life, or even to possess abundant material wealth, because the search for and acquisition of wealth is part of the stage of developing virtuous conduct (*sīla*): the acquisition of wealth is a means for reaching a higher goal. It is a foundation for developing the mind and cultivating wisdom in order to lead a wholesome life and to experience more refined forms of happiness.

People differ in disposition and aptitude. Some people are content with a minimum degree of material wealth required to sustain life and focus primarily on developing higher spiritual qualities. Other people, however, are not yet prepared for these higher stages and are more dependent on material things, which is acceptable if they are not involved in harming others.

Moreover, there are some people whose disposition and aptitude it is to assist others by sharing material wealth; their wealth is thus of benefit to others.

The meaning of the term 'right livelihood' is not restricted to the application of one's labour for producing goods or for acquiring the requisites

<sup>25</sup> *Adhanānaṃ dhanānupadānaṃ*; or in full: *ye ca te tāta vijite adhanā tesaṇca dhanāṃ anupadajjeyyāsi* (D. III. 61).



of life through righteous means. This term also includes a fulfilment of personal responsibilities: a proper conduct or way of life, which makes a person worthy of receiving these requisites. For example, the upholding by the bhikkhus of the ‘qualities of a monk’ (*samaṇa-dhamma*) and the consequent receiving of the four requisites offered by the lay community is right livelihood of a bhikkhu. Similarly, children behaving well and acting in a way worthy of the care bestowed on them by their parents can be considered the ‘right livelihood’ of a child.

Furthermore, in determining the value of labour, instead of focusing merely on the production of goods for gratifying people’s needs and desires – as it may be ambiguous whether these needs are governed by greed or are connected to true requirements for life – the way of Dhamma focuses on the fruits of labour that either support a person’s life and the wellbeing of society or else act in a detrimental way. {734}

From what has been said so far, there are two related matters for consideration:

**A.** In the Buddhist teachings, the relationship between a person’s profession (or work) and a person’s material income is twofold:

- For ordinary people, the exertion of labour is directly related to their profession: one works in order to receive some monetary or material gain to help support one’s life.
- For monks or renunciants (*samaṇa*), the exertion of labour is independent of employment in the general sense. The intention of a renunciant to put forth effort or to work is not to receive some material gain but rather to advance in the Dhamma or to uphold the Dhamma. If a monk diverts his efforts from his proper responsibilities in order to specifically seek out the four requisites, this is considered ‘wrong livelihood’ (*micchā-ājīva*). Likewise, if he acts in order to profit materially, by soliciting the requisites in a way that runs counter to the wishes of the donor, this is considered an impure livelihood.

Apart from obvious examples of wrong livelihood – of deception, flattery, hinting, intimidation, and pursuing gain with gain<sup>26</sup> – making a living by serving others, say by running errands, engaging in various arts like choosing auspicious occasions, making prophesies, and practising medicine, are also classified as ‘wrong livelihood’ for bhikkhus.<sup>27</sup>

If a monk who is not ill asks for food – fine food, hard food, or even boiled rice – for himself and eats it, this behaviour is faulty as regards the vocation of a monk.<sup>28</sup> To make the Dhamma into some form of commodity is wrong according to the renunciant’s code of ethics.<sup>29</sup> Giving a Dhamma talk with the thought that the listeners may be pleased and one may thus receive some form of reward is an ‘impure’ Dhamma talk.<sup>30</sup> Even an act of giving that resembles a payment or recompense is inappropriate, as is evident in the following occasion involving the Buddha:

At one time the Buddha was walking for alms and stopped at the edge of a field belonging to a brahmin. The brahmin said: ‘I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat.’ The Buddha replied: ‘I too, brahmin, plough and sow; and having ploughed and sown, I eat.’ The brahmin was perplexed and there followed a series of questions and answers spoken in verse; the Buddha concluded by saying that his ploughing and sowing bears the fruit of ‘immortality’ (*amata*: the ‘deathless’). The brahmin applauded this reply and with faith offered some food to the Buddha. The Buddha refused this food saying it would be inappropriate to eat food acquired through chanting verses.<sup>31</sup>

A pure and righteous acquisition of the four requisites for bhikkhus occurs when laypeople recognize the value of the Dhamma and see the necessity of assisting those individuals whose duty it is to uphold the Dhamma. The laypeople are made aware of the monks’ requirement for

<sup>26</sup> M. III. 75.

<sup>27</sup> E.g.: S. III. 240; Nd. I. 372, 495; Nd. II. 61; a fairly comprehensive list of activities deemed ‘wrong livelihood’ is found in the short, middle, and large sections on morality in the suttas, e.g.: D. I. 8, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Vin. V. 99.

<sup>29</sup> Ud. 66.

<sup>30</sup> S. II. 199.

<sup>31</sup> Sn. 13.

food when the monks walk in a composed manner on almsround; the laity then offer food from their own initiative. The effect of this generosity is that the donors purify, brighten, and elevate their minds, by reflecting on how they have performed a virtuous deed of supporting those individuals who practise the Dhamma and of participating themselves in upholding the Dhamma. In short, they make merit or receive blessings. {735}

The monks who receive these offerings are guided by the principles of conduct dealing with the four requisites which state that a monk should be contented with little and know moderation in regard to the requisites. This is in contrast to other responsibilities of a monk, for example teaching and advising, which should be performed as much as is possible with the sole aim of benefiting those who receive the teachings.

The principle of eating just enough to sustain the body while at the same time performing as much work as possible is compatible for a renunciant, for whom the exertion of effort is completely separate from the material gains of his or her livelihood. A monk cannot demand special rights or privileges by appealing to the amount of work he performs. When renunciants practise according to this principle, the external social system does not dictate their lives.

These principles mentioned above have the significant objective of creating a lifestyle that is free from all external social systems, or to create an independent community whose duty it is to realize and uphold the truth and whose members wish for the complete spiritual purification of all human beings.

**B.** An honest examination reveals that much of human labour in the area of economic production, both in terms of material goods and the service industry, does not truly benefit human life and society. Apart from obvious destructive activity, like producing weapons or narcotics, there are businesses that destroy the natural environment, demean human dignity, or damage the quality of people's minds, while others are dedicated solely to preventing and solving the consequences of harmful actions. In large part, these kinds of labour are a waste of effort and end up being destructive.

Growth in many of these industries requires people to devote a great deal of energy and capital in order to prevent and solve the destructive effects resulting from the production itself. In contrast, labour that truly benefits human beings and society does not necessarily need to be part of the ordinary market economy, as can be seen in an exemplary life in harmony with Dhamma, which promotes human virtue and wisdom.

Even from the perspective of output or yield, personal virtue is occasionally more valuable than the fruits of physical labour: for example, a monk may be meditating in a forest without making any explicit effort to protect the forest, but the forest rangers may say that he is more effective in preserving the forest than all of their projects or efforts combined.

In terms of true wellbeing and happiness of human beings, looking only at the value of production and consumption is not enough; it is necessary to also look at the value of not producing and not consuming.

From the perspective of Dhamma, a person who does not produce anything within the sphere of the market economy, yet consumes the world's resources in a prudent fashion and has a healthy relationship to the natural environment, is better than a person who produces things that are destructive and consumes the world's resources in a wasteful manner. It appears, however, that most economic ideologies praise the latter person who produces and consumes much (who is destructive) more than the former person who produces and consumes little (who is less destructive).

One should ask whether it is a fair assessment to refer only to the act of production without considering the amount of waste resulting from consumption or without reflecting on how production truly benefits human beings.

The field of economics is often only interested in statistics, numbers, and monetary growth. Although economics is considered a branch of science, many economic theories and ideologies are limited, inadequate, and incomplete when it comes to solving the economic problems of human beings, who exist above any particular branch of abstract scientific knowledge. {736} Indeed, admitting that mere numerical calculations and

tallies cannot suffice in solving human problems would act for the benefit and integrity of the field of economics.

As mentioned above, the Buddhist teachings are not really interested in how much wealth a person possesses, and the value of a person is not determined by how much money he or she has. Material wealth is viewed simply as a stepping stone to a higher goal rather than as a goal in itself, and the value of money is linked to the practice for reaching this higher goal.

The focus in Buddhism is on two stages: the methods by which wealth is acquired and the way that acquired wealth is subsequently used. Buddhism does not emphasize possessing wealth but rather emphasizes the search for and the spending of wealth. To merely accumulate money for no particular purpose is considered as reprehensible as acquiring money in immoral ways or spending money in harmful ways.

There are thus three basic vices in regard to material wealth: unrighteous acquisition of wealth, possession of wealth without using it for one's true advantage, and the spending of wealth in harmful ways.

Furthermore, although a person may acquire wealth righteously and spend money in beneficial ways, this behaviour does not yet count as complete in regard to a proper relationship to material wealth. This is because the Buddhist teachings emphasize wisdom and the quality of one's mind. A person's relationship towards material wealth must include 'liberating wisdom' (*nissaraṇa-paññā*).

This liberating wisdom implies that one truly understands the value, the benefits, and the limitations of wealth, and one recognizes how wealth has the potential to be either helpful or harmful. Rather than be enslaved by wealth, one should be the master of wealth, by recognizing that wealth should serve people and act as a means for developing goodness, reducing suffering, and increasing true happiness. Wealth should not be a cause for adding to personal distress, corrupting people's minds, damaging human dignity, or creating divisions among people.

The Buddha described ten different kinds of laypeople (*kāmaḥogī*; 'those who enjoy sensual pleasures'), the tenth of which he described as

supreme. Among the characteristics of these most excellent laypeople, one can see the way of dealing with money that accords with Dhamma, which can be summarized as follows:<sup>32</sup>

1. Acquisition: to seek wealth in righteous ways, without abusing or harming others.
2. Expenditure (this stage also includes both saving money and living in moderation):
  - A. To provide for one's happiness (along with the happiness of those for whom one is responsible).
  - B. To be charitable; to share one's wealth with others.
  - C. To use one's wealth for meritorious purposes (including for promulgating and promoting the Dhamma).
3. Liberating wisdom: to not be heedless with one's wealth; to apply wisdom when spending money; to know the advantages and dangers of wealth; to not be enslaved by money; to rely on money in order to find opportunities for spiritual development.

The Buddha gave the following teaching about people's relationship to wealth:

Monks, there are these three persons found existing in the world. What three?

The blind, the one-eyed, the two-eyed. {737}

And how is a person blind? Here some person does not possess the eye that helps to acquire unacquired wealth or make acquired wealth increase, and he does not possess the eye that helps to distinguish between skilful and unskilful things ... between harmful and harmless things ... between base and refined things ... between things comparable to either bright or dark objects. This person is called 'blind'.

<sup>32</sup>A. V. 181-2.

And how is a person one-eyed? Here some person possesses the eye that helps to acquire unacquired wealth or make acquired wealth increase, but he does not possess the eye that helps to distinguish between skilful and unskilful things ... between harmful and harmless things ... between base and refined things ... between things comparable to either bright or dark objects. This person is called 'one-eyed'.

And how is a person two-eyed? Here some person possesses the eye that helps to acquire unacquired wealth or make acquired wealth increase, and he also possesses the eye that helps to distinguish between skilful and unskilful things ... between harmful and harmless things ... between base and refined things ... between things comparable to either bright or dark objects. This person is called 'two-eyed'.

The blind man, with eyes impaired, experiences twofold misfortune: he possesses no such wealth, nor does he perform good deeds.

Another, who is called 'one-eyed', searches merely for wealth through righteous or unrighteous means, even through theft, trickery, and deceit.

He takes pleasure in sensuality, clever at accumulating wealth; but departing here the 'one-eyed' experiences torment in hell.

Best of all is the person called 'two-eyed'; he distributes his hard-earned wealth rightly won, is generous, with noble intent, unwavering; he reaches a favourable destination, free from sorrow.

One should steer clear from the blind and the one-eyed, and associate only with the noble, two-eyed person.

*A. I. 128-9.*

The Buddha criticized the hoarding of material wealth without it being used for any beneficial purposes. For instance, on one occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala visited the Buddha. The Buddha asked why the king was out during the day. King Pasenadi told the Buddha that a householder who was a millionaire had recently died in the capital city and because this

man had no heir the king had gone to collect his treasure and transport it to the palace.

The king went on to say that amongst this treasure there were eight million gold coins, not to mention the amount of silver. And yet when this man was alive he ate only grits with sour gruel, wore a three-piece rough garment, and went about in a dilapidated little cart with a leaf awning. The Buddha replied:

So it is, great king! When an inferior man gains abundant wealth, he does not make himself happy and pleased, nor does he make his mother and father ... his wife and children ... his servants, workers, and employees ... his friends and colleagues happy and pleased; nor does he establish an offering for ascetics and brahmins, one bearing noble fruit, generating virtuous states of mind, resulting in happiness, conducive to heaven. {738}

Because his wealth is not being used properly, kings confiscate it, or thieves steal it, or fire consumes it, or water carries it away, or displeasing heirs take it. Such being the case, that wealth, not being used properly, goes to waste, not to utilization. This is similar to a lotus pond in a place uninhabited by human beings – although it has clear, cool, fresh, and clean water, with good fords, delightful; but no people would take that water, or drink it, or bathe in it, or use it for any purpose.

But when a superior man gains abundant wealth, he makes himself happy and pleased, he makes his mother and father ... his wife and children ... his servants, workers, and employees ... his friends and colleagues happy and pleased; and he establishes an offering for ascetics and brahmins, one bearing noble fruit, generating virtuous states of mind, resulting in happiness, conducive to heaven.

Because his wealth is being used properly, kings do not confiscate it, thieves cannot steal it, fire does not consume it, water does not carry it away, and unloved heirs cannot take it. Such being the case, that wealth, being used properly, goes to utilization, not to waste. This is similar to a lotus pond in a place not far from a village or



a town, with clear, cool, fresh, and clean water, with good fords, delightful; and people would take that water, and drink it, and bathe in it, and use it for their purposes.

As cool water in a desolate place  
Is forsaken without being drunk,  
So when a scoundrel acquires wealth  
He neither enjoys it nor shares it.  
But when the wise man obtains wealth  
He utilizes it and does his duty.  
Having supported his kin, free from blame,  
That noble man goes to a heavenly state.<sup>33</sup>

S. I. 89-91.

And on a similar occasion:

So it is, great king! Few are those people in the world who, when they obtain great wealth, do not become intoxicated and negligent, captivated by sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings. Far more numerous are those people in the world who, when they obtain great wealth, become intoxicated and negligent, captivated by sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings.

S. I. 74.

A person who accumulates wealth but does not utilize or share it is compared to the *mayhaka* bird, which sits in a fig tree full of ripe fruit and cries, *mayham, mayham* (from the Pali meaning ‘mine, mine’). When flocks of other birds come to peck at the fruit and fly off again, the *mayhaka* bird remains babbling away.<sup>34</sup>

There are many stories in the scriptures criticizing stingy people who keep money to themselves and do not use it to help others. These stories often recount a change of mind for wealthy, miserly merchants. They

<sup>33</sup>‘Does his duty’: attends to his work and helps others.

<sup>34</sup>J. III. 301.

provide insightful teachings on the Buddhist view on proper ownership and the use of wealth.<sup>35</sup> {739}

## 17.9 MORAL RECTITUDE AND A HEALTHY ECONOMY

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### A. INTRODUCTION

There is a common custom in Thailand of the laity asking for and receiving the five precepts.<sup>36</sup> When the laypeople have undertaken and determined these precepts, the monk who gives them concludes by pointing out the blessings of moral conduct, chanting: *Sīlena sugatim yanti, sīlena bhogasam-padā, sīlena nibbutim....* This verse can be translated as: ‘By way of virtuous conduct, one goes to heaven, one achieves an abundance of wealth, one reaches Nibbāna....’

The pertinent clause here is that referring to an abundance of wealth: moral conduct leads to wealth and thus to a healthy economy. Although this verse was composed in later years and appears neither in the Tipiṭaka nor in the commentaries and sub-commentaries, because of its traditional importance, it is worthy of attention.

The chief principle of moral conduct (*sīla*) is that it establishes a stable basis and prepares a disciplined environment, in order that one may successfully engage in various essential activities.

In relation to the economy, when people are established in moral conduct, and there is an absence of crime and a reduction of danger to human life or personal possessions, people can move about safely. Consequently, when building factories, engaging in trade, and travelling about, either in the city or the country, during the day or at night, people feel secure and at ease. Bosses and their employees relate to one

<sup>35</sup>There is another story of appropriating the wealth of a deceased wealthy merchant at S. I. 89-91; this story is continued and expanded upon in the Mayhakasakuṇa Jātaka (JA. III. 298). See also: the Sudhābhajana Jātaka (JA. V. 382); the story of the wealthy merchant Macchariyakosiyā (DhA. I. 366); the Illisa Jātaka (JA. I. 345); and the story of the wealthy merchant Biḷārapādaka (DhA. III. 16).

<sup>36</sup>Trans.: of course this is true in all Theravada Buddhist countries.

another with kindness and sincerity. The state bureaucracy is honest, efficient, and trustworthy. Communication between people, both locally and internationally, is smooth and easy, and production and commerce proceeds unhindered. This is how moral conduct prepares a foundation for economic prosperity.

Once a nation is stable and its citizens feel secure, one can shift one's focus to individual people. Here, we need not examine the obvious harmful effects of immoral behaviour, for instance licentiousness, theft, deceit, and alcoholism. When people determine to earn their living in a virtuous, upright manner, and they are devoted to such an honest pursuit, they will no longer act or think in immoral, unscrupulous ways. They will not be detracted even by thoughts of unexpected windfalls, let alone by acquiring things through dishonest means.

When one's mind is truly intent on one's work, muddled or distracted thoughts cease. This is the beginning of concentration. When one is focused and committed to one's work and activities, one engages with such considerations as: 'How should I begin?' 'What should I do?' 'How should I proceed to achieve my goal?' 'What obstacles am I likely to face?' 'How should I solve these problems?' 'With whom should I associate?' 'Whom should I consult?' This is how moral conduct affects the mind; concentration and wisdom then take over as the guiding factors. The four paths to success (*iddhipāda*)<sup>37</sup> arise in turn and one can be assured of accomplishment and success.

Bear in mind that the function of moral conduct is to establish a stable foundation for people to confidently engage in further spiritual practice. If one lacks moral discipline, one will have a weak foundation and an unsupportive environment. Without moral integrity, one cannot truly begin on the spiritual path. If one tries to begin, one will be shaky and unsteady. On the contrary, when people's surroundings are favourable and their foundation stable, they are able to truly engage with their work; they will be endowed with concentration.

<sup>37</sup>Trans.: the four paths to success: wholesome desire (*chanda*; 'aspiration'), energy (*virīya*; 'effort'), focused attention (*citta*; 'dedication'), and 'investigation' (*vimāṇsā*).

At the beginning of a passage summarizing the teaching for householders, the Buddha uttered a verse acting as a constant principle in regard to this subject of moral conduct:

Diligent in one's work, heedful, clever at managing one's affairs.  
{740}

*Uṭṭhātā kammadheyyesu appamatto vidhānavā.*<sup>38</sup>

A. IV. 284, 289, 322, 324-5.

One may say that this verse epitomizes the Buddhist principle towards work. Work begins as a consequence of diligence (represented in Pali by the term *uṭṭhāna*, which may also be translated as 'rising to one's feet', 'non-complacency', 'increase of wealth', or 'increased prosperity'). When one is diligent and industrious, one's work advances, leading to completion and accomplishment.

The Buddha emphasized diligence not only as a factor leading to success, but also as a recollection for self-esteem and joy in regard to one's work. A frequent teaching he gave to householders in this context is: 'One has acquired wealth by perseverance, amassed by the strength of one's arms, earned by the sweat of one's brow, righteous wealth righteously gained.'<sup>39</sup>

Diligence also leads to self-development and to self-improvement, because an engagement with work compels one to grow in many areas of one's life, to pass beyond obstacles, and to reach success.

Diligence on its own, however, is insufficient; one must also be endowed with heedfulness (*appamāda*). If one is diligent and energetic, but one acts in an untimely, inopportune way, or if one acts out of place or out of step, putting forth effort where it is inappropriate, and desisting from effort where it is due, one is likely to fail. Heedfulness here refers to mindfulness (*sati*), which steps forward and functions in tandem with effort (*virīya*). One is vigilant and alert, abreast of circumstances as they

<sup>38</sup>In these four suttas, two of them were given to householders, while the remaining two were given to bhikkhus.

<sup>39</sup>This verse is a common idiomatic expression found in the Tipiṭaka, e.g.: A. II. 69; A. III. 45.

unfold and unperturbed by negative situations. One acts immediately when this is called for, and one is fully prepared to protect what is valuable and to deal with unfinished business. One does not miss a suitable opportunity when the time is ripe. One is not negligent; one keeps to the principle: ‘Prepare well for the future; do not allow unfinished business to cause distress in times of crisis.’<sup>40</sup>

When supported by heedfulness, effort (*virīya*) is fully equipped and functions in the following ways: (a) it prevents damage and loss; (2) it solves problems and eliminates negative or dangerous situations; (3) it enables and supports wholesome actions; and (4) it acts as a protective force, say by protecting one’s virtuous qualities, upholding one’s dignity, and enhancing one’s spiritual practice, culminating in spiritual perfection.

The third clause in the verse above – ‘clever at managing one’s affairs’ – refers to wisdom, which leads to a correct application of diligence and enables heedfulness to truly bear fruit. In sum, wisdom understands the principles involved in work. In particular, one is endowed with the seven qualities of a virtuous person (*sappurisa-dhamma*), which include such factors as: to know the origin and cause of things; to know the objective and results of things; to know oneself; to know moderation; to know the proper time; and to know other people, to know one’s community, and to know one’s society, e.g.: to be able to select the right people for a specific job, to know the needs and desires of specific groups of people, etc.<sup>41</sup>

The Buddha frequently emphasized this clever management of affairs, both in teachings to the monastic community (using the expression: *alam saṁvidhātum* – ‘able at managing one’s affairs’), and in particular to householders, who are responsible for activities within the wider society. In regard to looking after a household, the Buddha taught this principle: ‘A householder ... should be charitable and clever at managing his affairs (*vidhānavanta*).’<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>See: J. IV. 166.

<sup>41</sup>For more on the seven qualities of a virtuous person (*sappurisa-dhamma*), see chapter 13 on virtuous friendship.

<sup>42</sup>J. VI. 287.

In this context, there are many guiding principles in the scriptures for people who work in government service, for example:

One endowed with discriminative discernment (*vicāraṇa-paññā*), accomplished in awakened intelligence (*buddhi-paññā*), clever at managing his affairs, knowing the proper time and occasion, is suited to carry out government service. One diligent in his work, circumspect, with keen insight, skilled at managing his affairs, is suited to carry out government service.

*J. VI. 296-7.*

To sum up, moral conduct (*sīla*) encompasses those things that are connected to human activities and to human co-existence. One may say that moral conduct is a matter of preparing a suitable environment and society, in order that people can fully devote themselves to the cultivation of the mind and of wisdom. {741}

The following scriptural passages reveal Buddhist principles of right livelihood for laypeople, describing the acquisition of wealth, the spending of wealth, and the happiness that is derived from a just livelihood.

## **B. THE SEARCH FOR AND PROTECTION OF WEALTH**

At one time the brahmin Ujjaya visited the Buddha and said that he would soon be travelling on a long journey. He asked the Buddha to give a teaching that would be conducive to both present and future wellbeing. The Buddha replied:

These four things, brahmin, are conducive to present happiness and wellbeing: the fulfilment of perseverance (*uṭṭhāna-sampadā*), the fulfilment of protection (*ārakkha-sampadā*), association with virtuous people (*kalyāṇamittatā*), and balanced livelihood (*samajīvitā*).

What is the fulfilment of perseverance? Here a clansman earns his living with diligence, either in agriculture, or commerce, or tending livestock, or military service, or civil service, or some form of craft. He is industrious and skilled, not negligent, possessed of

investigative acumen, familiar with the procedures of that work, able to arrange and carry out that job. This is called fulfilment of perseverance.

And what is fulfilment of protection? Here a clansman possesses wealth acquired by hard work, collected by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, justly obtained in a rightful manner. He manages, protects, and watches over that wealth, thinking: 'Now how can I arrange it so that kings do not confiscate this wealth, that thieves do not steal it, that fire does not consume it, that water does not carry it away, and that displeasing heirs do not take it.' This is called the fulfilment of protection.

And what is association with virtuous people? Here, in whichever town or village a clansman dwells, he consorts, converses, and consults with householders, householders' sons, young men who act as dignitaries, and old men who act as elders, who are endowed with faith, moral conduct, generosity, and wisdom. He emulates the accomplishment of faith in those who are endowed with faith, he emulates the accomplishment of moral conduct in those who are endowed with moral conduct, he emulates the accomplishment of generosity in those who are endowed with generosity, and he emulates the accomplishment of wisdom in those who are endowed with wisdom. This is called association with virtuous people.

And what is balanced livelihood? Here, a clansman earns his living with moderation, living neither too extravagantly nor overly hard-pressed. He knows how wealth increases and how wealth shrinks, thinking: 'Acting in this way income will exceed my expenses, and expenses will not surpass my income' – just as a person who carries scales or whose apprentice knows on holding up the balance that this much [weight] is deficient and this much is excessive.... If this clansman earns a small income but lives lavishly, it will be rumoured of him: 'This clansman uses his wealth like a "fig-tree glutton".'<sup>43</sup> If this clansman earns a great income but lives hard up, it will be rumoured of him: 'This clansman will die like a pauper.'

But because this clansman earns his living with moderation ... this is called a balanced livelihood. {742}

Brahmin, righteously acquired wealth has these four pathways to decline (*apāya-mukha*): a person is a philanderer, a person is a heavy drinker, a person is a habitual gambler, a person associates and is intimate with evil-doers. Just as in the case of a great reservoir with four inlets and four outlets, if a person were to close the inlets and open the outlets, and if rain were not to fall according to the season, a decrease of that reservoir is to be expected, not an increase.

Brahmin, righteously acquired wealth has these four pathways to growth (*āya-mukha*): a person is not a philanderer, a person is not a heavy drinker, a person is not a habitual gambler, a person has friendship, companionship, and intimacy with the good. Just as in the case of a great reservoir with four inlets and four outlets, if a person were to open the inlets and close the outlets, and if rain were to fall according to the season, an increase of that reservoir is to be expected, not a decrease....

Brahmin, these four things lead to a clansman's happiness and wellbeing in the present.<sup>44</sup>

A. IV. 285-9.

From here the Buddha went on to reveal the four things conducive to future wellbeing (*samparāyikatthasaṁvattanika-dhamma*; *samparāyikattha* = 'future benefit', 'higher benefit'): the accomplishment of faith, the accomplishment of moral conduct, the accomplishment of generosity, and the accomplishment of wisdom.

<sup>43</sup>Trans.: E.M. Hare in 'The Book of Gradual Sayings' (Pali Text Society; © 1955; p. 189) states: 'The commentaries explain that when one shakes the fig-tree, wishing to eat the fruit thereof, much fruit falls, a large amount of which is wasted.'

<sup>44</sup>Similar passages at: A. IV. 281, 322, 323. For more on the four qualities leading to future welfare, see the section on stream-enterers in chapter 7 on awakened beings. These four qualities are part of the five factors pertaining to noble growth (*ariyā vaḍḍhi*).



### C. HAPPINESS FOR LAYPEOPLE

The following teaching by the Buddha given to Anāthapiṇḍaka includes the principle referred to simply as the ‘four kinds of happiness for laypeople’:

There are, householder, these four kinds of happiness which should be consistently achieved by a layperson who enjoys sensual pleasure, depending on time and occasion. What four? The happiness of possession (*atthi-sukha*), the happiness of consuming (*bhoga-sukha*), the happiness of debtlessness (*anaṇa-sukha*), and the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajja-sukha*).

And what is the happiness of possession? Here, a clansman possesses wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained. When he thinks, ‘I possess wealth acquired by energetic striving ... righteously gained’, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of possession.

And what is the happiness of consuming? Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained, a family man spends his wealth and does meritorious deeds. When he thinks, ‘With the wealth acquired by energetic striving ... righteously gained, I spend my wealth and do meritorious deeds’, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of consuming.

And what is the happiness of debtlessness? Here, a family man is not indebted to anyone to any degree, whether great or small. When he thinks, ‘I am not indebted to anyone to any degree, whether great or small’, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of debtlessness. {743}

And what is the happiness of blamelessness? Here, a noble disciple is endowed with blameless conduct of body, speech and mind. When he thinks, ‘I am endowed with blameless conduct of body,

speech and mind’, he experiences happiness and joy. This is called the happiness of blamelessness.

Aware of the bliss of debtlessness,  
One recalls the joy of possession;  
When using one’s wealth,  
One wisely discerns the joy of consuming.  
Discerning with wisdom, the wise one knows  
Dual corresponding shares of his happiness,

[And sees that] the first three kinds of happiness  
are not worth a sixteenth part  
Of the bliss that comes from blamelessness.<sup>45</sup>

A. II. 69.

#### D. SPENDING OF WEALTH

At one time the Buddha gave the following teaching to Anāthapiṇḍaka on the purpose of money and on the benefits of wealth:

Householder, there are these five benefits that should be obtained from wealth. What five?

Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained, a noble disciple makes himself joyful and pleased, and properly maintains himself in happiness; he makes his mother and father ... his wife and children ... his servants, workers, and employees joyful and pleased, and properly maintains them in happiness. This is the first benefit to be obtained from wealth.

<sup>45</sup>Trans.: AA: ‘He divides the types of happiness into two shares – the first three types make up one share, the happiness of blamelessness is a share on its own. Then he sees with wisdom and knows that the former three types of happiness combined are not worth a sixteenth part of the happiness of blamelessness.’ Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, translated by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi; Altamira Press; © 1999; p. 292.

Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving ... righteous wealth righteously gained, a noble disciple makes his friends and colleagues joyful and pleased, and properly maintains them in happiness. This is the second benefit to be obtained from wealth.

Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving ... righteous wealth righteously gained, a noble disciple protects his wealth from the dangers that may arise from fire and floods, kings and bandits and displeasing heirs; he makes himself secure. This is the third benefit to be obtained from wealth.

Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving ... wealth righteously gained, a noble disciple makes five kinds of offerings: aid for relatives (*ñāti-bali*), welcoming gifts to guests (*atithi-bali*), making of merit in honour of the departed (*pubbapeta-bali*), support to the government (*rāja-bali*), and offerings to devas (*devatā-bali*).<sup>46</sup> This is the fourth benefit to be obtained from wealth.

Here, with the wealth acquired by energetic striving ... wealth righteously gained, a noble disciple establishes an offering bearing noble fruit – generating virtuous states of mind, resulting in happiness, and conducive to heaven – for ascetics and brahmins who refrain from heedlessness and negligence, who are settled in patience and gentleness, who train themselves, calm themselves, and free themselves from the fires of defilement. This is the fifth benefit to be obtained from wealth. {744}

Householder, these are the five benefits that should be obtained from wealth. If, when a noble disciple obtains these five benefits that should be obtained from wealth, his wealth is depleted, he considers thus: ‘Whatever benefit should be obtained from wealth, I have obtained such benefit, yet my wealth is depleted.’ Thus that noble disciple is not distressed.

And if, when a noble disciple obtains these five benefits that should be obtained from wealth, his wealth increases, he considers thus: ‘Whatever benefit should be obtained from wealth, I have obtained

such benefit and my wealth has increased.’ Thus that noble disciple is not distressed. In both circumstances he experiences no distress.<sup>47</sup>

A. III. 45.

For wealthy householders, to be generous and to share one’s wealth with others is considered a vital principle and a practice consistent with the ‘path of the noble ones’, as confirmed by this teaching:

Having little, one should give a little; having a moderate amount, one should give moderately; having a lot, one should give a lot; not to give at all is unworthy.

Indeed, merchant of Kosiya, I say to you that you should use and share [your wealth]; you should enter the path of the noble ones; a person who eats alone experiences no joy.

J. V. 387.

Cultivating generosity can be done by undertaking regular practices and observances. For example, one may choose to donate a specific percentage of one’s income to assist others or to perform a special meritorious deed once a month or once a year. Some people may even determine to not eat a meal before they have given a gift to someone else, as is evidenced in the story of the recently converted wealthy merchant, who upheld this vow:

I will not drink even a drop of water,  
If I have not first given a gift.

J. V. 391, 397.

<sup>46</sup>Or: ‘support to one’s religion’.

<sup>47</sup>A similar passage exists at A. II. 67. This teaching was particularly suited to the social situation of the Buddha’s time; modern readers may distil the essence of this teaching.

**E. RETAINING FREEDOM WHEN ACQUIRING WEALTH**

Apart from developing awareness that material wealth is not a worthy goal in itself but is merely a means for enhancing one's own and others' lives, a person should also know the limitations of wealth and recognize the need to search for something of greater value, as described in the following passages:

Action, knowledge, righteousness,  
Moral conduct, an excellent life –  
By these are beings purified,  
Not by family lineage or wealth.<sup>48</sup>

*M. III. 262; S. I. 33-4, 55.*

I see wealthy men in the world  
Who through greed share not their wealth.  
They hoard away their riches  
Longing for heightened sensual pleasures. {745}

A king who has conquered the earth  
And rules over the land stretching to the ocean,  
Is yet unsated with the sea's near shore  
And hungers for its further shore as well.

Most other people too, not just kings,  
Meet death with craving unabated;  
Thus impaired they abandon their corpse;  
Satisfaction with sensuality is not found in the world.

Relatives lament and untie their hair,  
Crying, 'Ah me! Alas! Our beloved is dead!'  
They bear away the body wrapped in a shroud,  
To place it on a pyre and burn it there.

Clad in a single shroud, the deceased leaves his wealth behind;  
The undertaker prods him with stakes as he burns upon the pyre.  
And as he dies, no relatives or friends  
Can offer him shelter and refuge here.

While his heirs carry away his wealth, this being  
Must pass on according to his actions;  
And as he dies no riches can follow him;  
Not child nor wife nor wealth nor estate.

Longevity is not acquired with wealth,  
Nor can prosperity banish old age;  
Short is this life, as all the sages say,  
Eternity it knows not, only change.

The rich and poor alike experience contact of the senses,  
The fool and sage are equally affected;  
But while the fool lies stricken by his folly,  
No sage will ever tremble from impingement.

Better is wisdom here than any wealth,  
Since by wisdom one gains the final goal.

*M. II. 72-3; Thag. 776-84.*

A vital part of engaging in right livelihood is *sippa*: vocational knowledge, expertise, and skill.<sup>49</sup> The scriptures emphasize the study of arts, crafts, and sciences, and maintain that one duty of parents is to provide a practical education for their children.

Vocational knowledge on its own, however, is limited. The scriptures therefore also highlight ‘great learning’ (*bāhusacca*) – having heard much or studied extensively – so that one recognizes the greater application of practical knowledge, is able to assist others effectively, and develops comprehensive knowledge, especially knowledge leading to right view, which is the key factor for true study.

<sup>48</sup>The commentaries explain that action = right action; knowledge = right view and right intention; righteousness = the three factors comprising the section on *samādhi* (right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration; cultivating the quality of mind); moral conduct = right speech and right livelihood; and an excellent life = the Noble Eightfold Path or right livelihood (see other explanations at MA. V. 81; SA. I. 88; VismṬ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Nidānādikathāvaṇṇanā).

<sup>49</sup>Trans.: the Thai ‘*silapa-vitayah*’ (ศิลปวิทยา; ‘arts and sciences’) stems from the Sanskrit *śilpa-vidyā*.

The scriptures also encourage people to train in moral discipline – so that they apply their practical skills honestly and conduct themselves in a way that is beneficial to others and to society. Another skill that is encouraged is to know how to speak effectively. These other forms of knowledge complement vocational knowledge and increase a person's ability to help others.

This level of virtuous conduct accords with the following teaching by the Buddha:

Great learning, expertise, a highly-trained moral discipline, and well-spoken speech: these are supreme blessings.... Work not piled up and unattended to: this is a supreme blessing.... Blameless activity: this is a supreme blessing.<sup>50</sup>

*Kh. 2; Sn. 46.*

There are numerous passages in the Pali Canon encouraging the study of arts and sciences, for example: {746}

A person lacking knowledge of the arts and sciences earns a living with difficulty.

*J. IV. 177.*

Teach your child practical knowledge.

*J. IV. 429.*

Study that which is worthy of study.

*J. I. 421.*

Whatever is called knowledge of arts and sciences leads to good fortune.

*J. I. 420.*

<sup>50</sup>Blameless activity refers to virtuous, non-harmful acts, especially beneficial actions like offering one's service to others, establishing public parks, planting woodland, building bridges, and undertaking the observance day precepts (see: KhA. 141).

Every branch of knowledge worthy of study – whether lofty, low, or medial – should be analyzed and understood. One need not apply all this knowledge at once – someday the time will come when this knowledge comes to one’s aid.

*J. III. 218.*

On this subject of supreme blessings, proficiency in the area of formal or scholastic knowledge (*bāhusacca*) should be accompanied by practical skill (*sippa*): a person should possess both knowledge and practical expertise. If these two qualities are paired one can expect excellence from a person’s work.

Even greater success can be expected if a person is also well-disciplined and a skilled speaker – is able to use speech to induce understanding in others or to bring about cooperation and communal harmony.

When these factors are combined with well-organized, well-executed, and wholesome work, a person’s work will reach perfection.

Because some people may become overly absorbed in gaining knowledge and attending to work to the point of neglecting their family responsibilities, the Buddha included two additional blessings at the beginning of the passage, of looking after one’s parents and supporting one’s wife and children.

When noble disciples have fulfilled all personal responsibilities, the Buddha encouraged them to consider their responsibilities to other people: to further develop virtue and participate in upholding the righteousness of all human beings. The Buddha thus included three more blessings at the end of the passage: of supporting one’s relatives (*ñāti-saṅgaha*),<sup>51</sup> of widespread giving (*dāna*), and of righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*).

<sup>51</sup>Originally, support of one’s relatives is the final factor, but as this passage occurs in verse, the sequence of the factors need not be held too strictly; I have thus placed it next to support for wife and children. In the commentaries to this sutta (KhA. 141; SnA. I. 299) the term ‘relatives’ (*ñāti*) is given a very narrow definition, but the Nettivibhāvinī (p. 185 of the Burmese edition) defines *ñāti* to include friends and acquaintances (Nett. 108).



To conduct oneself in line with these principles is to earn one's livelihood with rectitude.

Buddhism admits to and confirms the necessity of material things, especially the four requisites of life, as is seen for example in the Buddha's frequent exhortation: 'All beings exist by way of food' (*sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*).<sup>52</sup> {747}

The true value of material things, however, is connected to moderation and determined by how they foster a healthy and natural physical state – of physical strength and ease, freedom from illness, and an absence of danger from either privation or excess – and by how they support a person's work and the cultivation of spiritual qualities.

The value of material things is also determined by social conditions and by personal factors: by one's level of wisdom and the ability to recognize the advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of material things, and by one's ability to experience forms of bliss more refined than the happiness derived from material objects.

For this reason Buddhism is not interested in compelling people to distribute material wealth equally, as this does not guarantee that people are virtuous and happy. Rather it emphasizes the minimum requirement that all people possess an adequate amount of the four requisites in order to survive without too much difficulty, and that possession of material objects not be a cause for oppressing oneself or others.

The Buddhist teachings also recognize that possession and consumption of material things is related to a person's spiritual maturity and development: a person less spiritually developed will desire material objects for gratification and depend on material things for happiness more than a person of greater spiritual development.

A spiritual decline occurs when people forget this proper relationship to material wealth: the need for material things becomes a misguided search for gratification and an addiction to sensual pleasures, until people forget that material wellbeing is a foundation for generating superior

<sup>52</sup>D. III. 211, 273; S. V. 64; A. V. 55-6; Ps. I. 5, 122.

spiritual qualities. As a consequence, people often abuse others out of selfishness.

Alternatively, an attachment and enslavement to material wealth may give rise to possessiveness and anxiety, until people are unwilling to spend it or use it for beneficial purposes, which harms both themselves and others and is another form of affliction.

Even more extreme behaviour occurs when disappointment and disillusionment about worldly objects turns into aversion and one sets oneself in opposition to the world. One thus creates deliberate hardship for oneself, by following an extreme degree of austerity or by getting caught up in practices of self-mortification in order to escape the power of material things. On the surface, these practices resemble living simply and keeping one's material needs to a minimum. It is incorrect, however, to consider these practices as ways leading to liberation or to undergo ascetic practices without applying a deep understanding. One should recognize that in the endeavour for liberation people must rely to a necessary degree on material things in order to live with wisdom and compassion.

A life that is free and not overly dependent on material things implies not being seduced, blindly absorbed, or spellbound by these things. This freedom relies on liberating wisdom (*nissaraṇa-paññā*) and on a thorough discernment of the disadvantages and failings of material things (*ādinava-dassāvī*).

A wise person sees the many disadvantages of pleasurable sense objects and of material things, e.g.: one can easily become enslaved by them; one may rely on them entirely for one's happiness; they do not necessarily lead to higher spiritual qualities like peace of mind; and when one is attached to them they even become an obstacle to realizing these higher states.

Moreover, by their very nature, these things are void of an inherent perfection which would be able to truly gratify our desires and to provide satisfaction. They are impermanent, unstable, and transient; they cannot be truly owned and are not truly subject to our control; and in the end they must break up and dissolve. {748}

To relate to these things with ignorance is to create grief and suffering. They were not born along with us and when we die they will not follow us. The purpose of seeking and owning these things is to use them for solving problems and alleviating suffering, and for developing true happiness, not to increase our suffering.

There is no merit to hoarding up wealth. The more one is enslaved to wealth, the greater is one's affliction.

When one recognizes the above truths, one derives the true value from material wealth, spends money to benefit oneself and others, and cultivates the four 'favourable qualities' (*saṅgaha-vatthu*),<sup>53</sup> for example by giving, by establishing a society that guards against wrongdoing, promotes virtue, and encourages spiritual development, and by supporting those people who uphold the truth. One does not possess wealth solely to increase wealth, nor does one generate wealth simply to consume more and to seek self-gratification.

Buddhism holds in high esteem those laypeople who work with diligence, obtain wealth through honest means, are charitable and take responsibility for others, and spend their money on wholesome causes; such people are referred to as 'victors in this world and the next'.<sup>54</sup>

Even more excellent are those people freed through wisdom from mental defilement, who do not fall victim to wealth or to personal possessions, who do not allow the acquisition of wealth to be a source of woe, who are able to live with a joyful heart, who come into contact with worldly things but are not stained by them,<sup>55</sup> and who are able to disengage from suffering when it arises in various circumstances. These are the true masters (*issara-jana*), the true liberated ones (*serī-puggala*).

Such laypeople may be awakened up to the stage of non-returner, yet they are fully attentive to and engaged in their work. The Buddha did not approve of laypeople being concerned only with immediate needs or

<sup>53</sup>See the above section 'Virtuous Conduct for Enhancing One's Life and Society'.

<sup>54</sup>E.g.: D. III. 181.

<sup>55</sup>Trans.: 'worldly things' here is used to cover two expressions used by the author: *loka-dhamma* and *loka-āmisā*.

desires without preparation for the future or by abandoning their duties, which can be a form of attachment to non-attachment.

#### F. DUAL FREEDOM OF THE SANGHA

The monastic community (*saṅgha*) acts as an exemplar to people for a life relying in the least degree on material things, or for a life with the greatest degree of freedom from material things. This life is connected to the wider society in the following ways: first, the monastic life provides an opportunity for monks<sup>56</sup> to live a life of simplicity; second, this life allows monks to fully devote their time and energy to Dhamma-related activities without needing to get caught up in seeking material possessions; third, this life urges monks to be easy to support, by recognizing that they do not earn a living by themselves and are dependent on the lay community; and fourth, the monastic community, by not seeking recompense for its labour in the usual sense of market exchange, is as free as possible from the control and influence by the mainstream social and political system in which it finds itself.

All monks, regardless of whether they are enlightened or not, are bound by the principle of living primarily for truth and keeping their material needs to a minimum.

The Buddha did not intend for laypeople to live monastic or austere lives, nor did he wish for everyone to be ordained as a monk. It is a natural, causal truth that at any one time, different people abide at different stages of spiritual development, and that they will have varying needs and desires. Even the majority of stream-enterers, or at least a large percentage of them, live at home with their families. {749}

The Buddha's intention in this respect was most likely to establish an independent community within the wider society, in order to act as a balance in the domain of righteousness and truth, to sustain the principles of truth within society, and to provide an escape from the controlling influence of society for those people who both desired and were prepared for such freedom.

<sup>56</sup>Trans: the author focuses here on the bhikkhu sangha. It is valid here to substitute 'monks and nuns' or 'monastics' for the term 'monks'.

This community exists both in physical form and as an ideal. The independent community as a physical entity is the bhikkhu sangha – sometimes referred to as the conventional sangha (*sammati-saṅgha*) – which exists alongside and is yet free from the wider lay community.<sup>57</sup> The independent community as an ideal is the ‘community of true disciples’ (*sāvaka-saṅgha*) – sometimes referred to as the ‘noble community’ (*ariya-saṅgha*) – which exists alongside yet apart from the wider community of unawakened beings.

The gist of this principle is that a model society is not one in which everyone is the same (such a society is impossible to accomplish), but rather is one in which all members, although they may differ in individual circumstances, are devoted to spiritual growth, live together in concord, and strive for the same goal. Such a model provides a wholesome alternative to those people who no longer wish to live within the confines of the wider society. (Even in the future era of Maitreya Buddha, during which time supposedly everyone is equal, there will be an independent community of monks.)

In regard to the bhikkhu sangha, for the monks to dwell in and to maintain such independence, they must have a way of life that relies little on material things. Moreover, they must possess the mental qualities that are favourable to such a way of life. An important quality the Buddha emphasized for the bhikkhus and for all renunciants is contentment (*santosa*), which enables one to live simply and to experience joy independent of material things.

The monks need not expend time, effort, and attention on acquiring material things. Instead, they can fully devote their time, determined effort, and attention to their spiritual practice in order to achieve wisdom and freedom of mind. The principles of contentment and delight in practice are embodied in the Buddha’s teaching of the fourfold traditional practice of the noble ones (*ariya-vamsa*; the four principles of the ‘noble lineage’ – see below).

<sup>57</sup>Trans: again, it is valid to include the bhikkhuni sangha within this classification of an independent community as a separate entity. For more on this subject of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs, see: ‘The Buddhist Discipline in Relation to Bhikkhunis’ by Ven. Phra Payutto; translated by Robin Moore © 2015.

The bhikkhus follow a simple lifestyle and do not engage in arts and sciences in order to earn a living. By relying on an ancient tradition, they subsist on the four requisites offered by the lay community. At the same time, they have no right to solicit food or the other requisites. For this reason they should make themselves easy to support and content with little, and conform to the four principles of the ‘noble lineage’ (*ariya-vamsa*):

1. Here, a monk in this teaching and training is content with any kind of robe, and he speaks in praise of contentment with any kind of robe; he does not engage in a wrong search, in what is improper, for the sake of a robe. If he does not get a robe he is not agitated, and if he gets one he uses it without being tied to it, infatuated with it, or obsessed with it; he sees the danger in it, understanding the escape. Yet, because of this, he does not extol himself or disparage others. Any monk who is skilled in this, energetic, not remiss, clearly comprehending and mindful, is said to be dwelling in an ancient, pristine, noble lineage.
2. Further, a monk is content with any kind of almsfood.... {750}
3. Further, a monk is content with any kind of lodging....
4. Further, a monk finds delight in the development of wholesome qualities, is delighted with the development of wholesome qualities, finds delight in the abandoning of unwholesome qualities, is delighted with the abandoning of unwholesome qualities. Yet, because of this, he does not extol himself or disparage others. Any monk who is skilled in this development (*bhāvanā*) and abandonment (*pahāna*), energetic, not remiss, clearly comprehending and mindful, is said to be dwelling in an ancient, pristine, noble lineage.<sup>58</sup>

Qualities like contentment correspond to the discipline and moral conduct of the bhikkhu sangha. The moral code for the bhikkhus was

<sup>58</sup>A. II. 27-8 (for the unwholesome qualities to be abandoned, compare with the first principle, i.e. to abandon infatuation, obsession, etc.). Similar passages are found at: D. III. 224-5; Nd. II. 59.

prescribed in order to foster contentment in the monks, and to support them in their dedication to cultivating wholesome qualities and abandoning unwholesome qualities.

The commentaries classify four aspects of moral conduct of the monastic sangha, which are collectively referred to as *pārisuddhi-sīla* ('moral conduct leading to purity' or 'pure behaviour designated as moral conduct'), as follows:<sup>59</sup>

1. *Pāṭimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*: morality as restraint in regard to the Pāṭimokkha: to abstain from forbidden conduct, to adhere to permissible forms of conduct, and to practise strictly in regard to the training rules. The commentators claim that this factor is accomplished by way of faith.
2. *Indriyasaṃvara-sīla*: morality as sense restraint: to be careful not to allow evil, unwholesome mind states, like desire, attachment, aversion, and indignation, to overpower the mind when receiving the six sense objects: when the eye sees forms, the ear hears sounds, the nose smells odours, the tongue savours tastes, the body experiences tactile sensations, and the mind cognizes mental objects. The commentators claim that this factor is accomplished by way of mindfulness (*sati*).
3. *Ājīvapārisuddhi-sīla*: morality as purity of livelihood: to earn one's living righteously and in a pure manner; to avoid seeking gain by incorrect means, e.g.: to not falsely claim supernormal states, like concentrative attainments or stages of enlightenment,<sup>60</sup> and to not verbally appeal for food for oneself if one is not ill; to abstain from deception (*kuhanā*), for example by affecting a severe manner or countenance in order to instil faith in laypeople and induce them to offer the four requisites; to abstain from flattery (*lapanā*) in order to gain food; to abstain from hinting in order to obtain the requisites;

<sup>59</sup>Vism. 15-46; Comp.: Kammaṭṭhānaparicchedo, Vipassanākammaṭṭhānaṃ, Visuddhibhedo. Note that in the Pali Canon *indriya-saṃvara* is classified under *samādhi* (e.g.: D. I. 207).

<sup>60</sup>Concentrative attainments: *samādhi*, *jhāna*, *vimokkha*, and *samāpatti*; stages of enlightenment: *magga*, *phala*, and *Nibbāna*.

to abstain from resorting to threats and disparagement so as to urge laypeople to offer the requisites; and to abstain from pursuing gain with gain, for example by giving someone a small gift with the hope that he will offer much in return. The commentators claim that this factor is accomplished by way of effort (*virīya*).

4. *Paccayasannissita-sīla*: morality connected to the four requisites: to use the four requisites with wise consideration (*paccaya-paccavekkhaṇa*), by understanding their true purpose and value; to refrain from using them out of greed. One eats food, for example, in order to nourish and strengthen the body, to live at ease, to be able to perform one's duties, and to advance in the threefold training. One does not eat for sense gratification, entertainment, or amusement. The commentators claim that this factor is accomplished by way of wisdom (*paññā*). {751}

### G. SUMMARY

In the context of the lay community, there are several forms of conduct that should be emphasized in relation to personal wealth:

**A.** In terms of the individual, the Buddha specifically praised those wealthy persons who acquire their wealth through diligent effort and by righteous means, and who spend their money for wholesome, meritorious purposes. He praised virtue and benevolence over wealth itself.

It is important to instil a sense of values in contemporary people so that they recognize that it is a source of pride to accumulate wealth through effort and honest means and to determine to use that wealth for doing good deeds.

Praising people simply because they are wealthy, by considering that they have accumulated merit from good deeds in the past (in previous lifetimes)<sup>61</sup> and by failing to consider the causes for that wealth in this lifetime, is incorrect from the perspective of Buddhism in two ways: first, it does not accord with the praise bestowed by the Buddha on those

<sup>61</sup>Trans.: colloquially referred to as 'good karma'.



wealthy persons as mentioned above. And second, it does not involve a wise and complete assessment of causes and conditions, especially the causes and conditions in the present life, which have the most direct relationship to the person's circumstances and should thus be given more importance.

Past kamma can only act as an initial foundation, say of providing physical attributes, mental aptitude, quickness of mind, and personal disposition, which supports actions in this lifetime.

Granted, past actions play an important role for being born in a wealthy family, but even here the Buddha did not mark such a fact as particularly praiseworthy, because a general principle of Buddhism is that of not glorifying or overly prizing a person's family or status of birth.

The Buddha praised wholesome actions, which are the causes for this individual to receive such a desirable result. Being born into a wealthy family is in itself a boon; there is no need to add to this by praise. According to Buddhism, such a birth is seen as starting capital, which gives such a person a good opportunity or even an advantage over other people in making progress in this life; the results from past actions have thus come to fruition and the person has reached a new starting point. The Buddha praised or criticized how such a person applies this starting capital.

In general, the Buddha's praise or criticism focuses on whether one generates wealth through honest, righteous means, or fails to do so, and on how one then conducts oneself in relation to such wealth. The Buddha did not praise or criticize wealth itself or rich people; rather he praised or criticized rich people's behaviour.

**B.** In terms of society, Buddhism teaches that material wealth is a support for life; it is not the goal of life. Wealth should thus facilitate and prepare people for living a virtuous life and for performing good deeds in order to realize higher levels of spiritual excellence. Wherever and to whomever riches arise, it should benefit all human beings and be conducive to their wellbeing. {752}

Following this principle, when an individual becomes wealthy, all people are enriched and the entire society prospers; when a good person

acquires wealth, his or her community also acquires wealth. Such a person is like a fertile field in which rice flourishes for the benefit of all.<sup>62</sup>

A wealthy person can feel satisfied and honoured to receive society's trust and to act as a delegate for society in the sharing of wealth to support and nourish fellow human beings and to provide them with an opportunity for true growth.<sup>63</sup>

On the contrary, if some individuals become more wealthy but society as a whole deteriorates and the suffering of other people increases, this indicates that there is an improper conduct in regard to material wealth. The generated wealth does not become a supportive factor, which is the true purpose of wealth. Before long there will be unrest in society. In the end either the status of those wealthy members of society or the structure of society as a whole will be unsustainable. Members of the wider community may remove the wealthy and influential individuals from their positions of power, and establish a new system along with new executives for the allocation of wealth, which may be an improvement or a worsening of the situation.

In any case, there exists this truth that if people conduct themselves incorrectly in relation to material wealth, which arises for the benefit of all, wealth ends up harming and destroying human nature, human beings, and human society.

**C.** In terms of a state or a nation, Buddhism recognizes these important aspects of material wealth: poverty is a form of suffering,<sup>64</sup> poverty and deprivation are crucial causes for crime and wrongdoing in society (as is

<sup>62</sup>The Buddha said that a righteous person arises in the world for the wellbeing of all (A. IV. 244-5). Similarly, when a righteous person gains wealth he or she is like a lotus pond in a sheltered location – everyone can make use of the water and be refreshed; but an unrighteous person who gains wealth is like a pond in a deserted area; although the water may be clear and clean, it is useless (S. I. 90-91).

<sup>63</sup>Compare this with the Buddhist teachings on the origin of power and on the origin of kings (e.g. in the *Aggañña Sutta* – D. III. 92-3). Some wealthy Buddhist merchants like *Anāthapiṇḍaka* adhered to this principle, relinquishing their wealth for the benefit of the monastic community and for the poor, until they themselves were left penniless, but without regret.

<sup>64</sup>A. III. 352.

the related factor of greed),<sup>65</sup> and it is the responsibility of the state or of political leaders to care for and allocate funds to the poor and to ensure that there are no destitute people in the country.<sup>66</sup>

To address these issues various measures are required which are often specific to the circumstances, e.g.: to provide citizens with opportunities for making an honest living; to create jobs; to allocate funds and other means of assistance, according to the teaching on the four virtues making for national integration (*rāja-saṅgahavatthu*);<sup>67</sup> and to prevent immoral or unrighteous activities, like exploitation. In this sense, the state should consider the reduction and absence of poverty as a better measurement for its success than the increase of wealthy individuals in that society. The absence of poverty is a result of social management that does not neglect the spiritual development of the people in society.

**D.** In terms of economics and politics, it is frequently asked what sort of economic system or government best conforms to the principles of Buddhism. Basically, this is not a question that Buddhism is required to answer; or at the risk of stating a tautology, one can respond that any system that is applied in harmony with Buddhist values and principles is valid. {753}

Economic or political systems should be analyzed according to how they are practised, an analysis which changes or is modified as a result of environmental conditions related to time and place. Here it should be reiterated that the purpose and true benefit of material wealth is that it acts as a support for human beings in coordinating their lives, to enable them to live together peacefully, to perform meritorious deeds, and to realize higher levels of spiritual excellence. Thus, when wealth manifests for an individual, society as a whole benefits and all people will prosper. Whichever economic or political system effectuates such a wholesome outcome is in harmony with Buddhism.

<sup>65</sup>D. III. 65-6, 70-71.

<sup>66</sup>E.g.: D. I. 135; D. III. 61. The teachings emphasize assistance along with promoting diligence, i.e. one should also prevent poverty resulting from indolence.

<sup>67</sup>E.g.: A. IV. 151; It. 22.

Obvious examples of how social systems are connected to specific temporal and regional factors are the following: when the Buddha established the monastic community with its distinct task and objective, he set down a discipline limiting the monks' personal possessions to the eight requisites;<sup>68</sup> other possessions belong to the community as a whole. In relation to the lay community, who at that time in India (Jambudīpa)<sup>69</sup> observed two forms of governance, the Buddha taught the 'conditions of prosperity' (*aparihāniya-dhamma*) for those republican states (or those states governed by a quorum), and he taught the 'imperial observances' (*cakkavatti-vatta*) for those states governed by a monarchy.

These accounts demonstrate how Buddha-Dhamma is not merely a philosophy or an abstract teaching, but rather it is a practical teaching, which is connected to people active within society and to real-life circumstances. The teachings need to be applicable, relevant, and beneficial to people's daily lives.

If one waits until one has completely finished establishing a so-called ideal political system (the superiority of which can never be conclusively proved) before people are able to experience happiness and wellbeing, how can one escape from hypothetical notions and credulity?

In the case where both republics and monarchies existed, the Buddha found ways to benefit those people living under these different political systems. In the case of a republic, the Buddha suggested ways to strengthen and secure the people's mutual endeavours; in the case of a monarchy, he encouraged the rulers to recognize that prestige and power should be tools for benefiting the people, not for self-gratification and self-indulgence.

In the period of King Asoka, when the system of monarchy reached its zenith, the King adhered to Buddhist principles of governance while ruling the country, as is confirmed by the dictum carved into one of the Asokan pillars:

<sup>68</sup>Trans.: an outer robe, an inner robe, an under robe, a bowl, a razor, a needle and thread, a belt, and a water-strainer.

<sup>69</sup>Trans.: 'land of the rose-apple trees'.

His Majesty the Supreme Emperor, he who looks with kindness on the world, loved by the gods, does not assign great value to [his own] honour and prestige, unless he desires these with this objective in mind: 'Both in the present and in the future may people listen to my instructions with devotion and practise in accord with the righteous way.'<sup>70</sup>

When people have understood the gist and objective of the Buddhist teachings related to economics and politics, the detailed task of determining which system truly conforms to Buddhism rests with scholars of these systems to debate.

Similarly, if people wish to think up new systems of governance, which improve upon pre-existing ones, that is even better, but these matters go beyond the preserve of this book.

### 17.10 VIRTUOUS CONDUCT AND MORAL CODES

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Moral codes are established to guide people's behaviour and speech. They deal with people's relationship to their external environment, especially the relationship to other human beings. And they maintain a way of life that is well-ordered and mutually beneficial for all members of society. Moral codes assist people within a particular society to increase virtuous activities so that they can realize the highest goal according to their belief system and to support them in spreading their beliefs, activities and virtues among other groups of people. In Buddhism, the teachings which address society directly and express the spirit of Buddhist social relationships are the teachings on *sīla* ('ethics', 'moral conduct', 'virtuous conduct').<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup>See the tenth inscription of the Asokan Stone Edicts.

<sup>71</sup>Academic books and other works by contemporary scholars (most of them Western scholars) who research Buddhism and its connection to society tend to overlook the Buddhist teachings on morality, especially the code of moral discipline (Vinaya) of the bhikkhu sangha. Their work is thus often incorrect or at least significantly lacking.

The most basic moral code is to not harm other people, either physically or verbally, and to not impair mindfulness and clear comprehension, which protect a person's moral integrity. In Buddha-Dhamma this basic moral code is most often described and embodied as the Five Precepts.

#### **A. IMPORTANT TERMS PERTAINING TO MORALITY: *SĪLA*, *VINAYA*, AND *SIKKHĀPADA***

Before looking at this subject of morality more closely, we should examine some of the relevant Pali terms.

Many Pali terms have various nuances of meaning, which leads to a degree of complexity. Some of these terms have been adopted into the Thai language, yet their meanings have occasionally deviated from the original meanings. Some of these terms have even taken on opposite meanings from those they originally had. These terms thus need to be constantly reviewed and reexamined.

There are three primary terms relevant to this subject of moral conduct: *sīla*, *vinaya*, and *sikkhāpada*. On the whole, in the original Pali, the meanings of these three terms are clearly distinguished. Occasionally, these terms are used in a broad or colloquial sense, and may be interchangeable. Technically speaking, however, their meanings are strictly defined and distinguished, in order to avoid confusion. {915}

Here are the basic meanings of these three terms:

*Sīla*: virtuous conduct and moral rectitude expressed by way of body and speech. Being a collective term, *sīla* is used in the singular (it is a 'mass noun'; it is not divided into subfactors).

*Vinaya*: an established code of behaviour and practice; a framework for living one's life, containing rules, precepts, laws, prescriptions, etc., for guiding and monitoring one's conduct in a harmonious and integrated way, leading to order, discipline, success, and fulfilment. This term too is a collective term and is used in the singular.

*Sikkhāpada*: rules of training and practice, especially those prescribed by the Buddha, stipulating an obligation to perform an action or to

refrain from an action, in order to bring about correct and righteous conduct. This term may be used either in the singular or in the plural.

Combined, all the training rules (*sikkhāpada*) comprise a code of discipline (*vinaya*). Practising in accord with the training rules and being established in the code of discipline (or conduct in harmony with the training rules and the code of discipline) is referred to as ‘moral conduct’ (*sīla*).

For example, the 227 training rules for monks are called the bhikkhu Vinaya. Those monks who uphold the Vinaya (those who follow the training rules correctly) are considered established in moral conduct. The same holds true for those bhikkhunis who uphold the bhikkhuni Vinaya comprising 311 training rules.

For Buddhist laypeople, there are the five training rules or five precepts (*pañca-sikkhāpada*), beginning with abstaining from killing living creatures. Laypeople who uphold these five precepts are considered established in morality (such moral conduct is occasionally referred to as *pañcasikkhāpada-sīla*).<sup>72</sup>

These are the strict definitions. As mentioned above, however, these three terms are sometimes used in a broad sense, in which case they may be used interchangeably. A common example of this is to refer to the five precepts (*pañca-sikkhāpada*) as the five moral observances (*pañca-sīla*). This term *pañca-sīla* is used only seldom in the Tipiṭaka; its use is probably for the sake of brevity, in particular in poetic verses. It is used frequently in the commentaries. Although the term *sikkhāpada* in this context in

<sup>72</sup>The five precepts have been upheld and practised since ancient times. They were acknowledged by and incorporated into Buddhism from the beginning. Generally speaking, there is not a large body of training rules for householders, and therefore the term ‘lay *vinaya*’ is not used (the five precepts are considered the code of discipline for the laity). Having said this, the commentaries occasionally classify specific principles or factors as a *vinaya* for householders, e.g.: the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī states that the Siṅgāḷaka Sutta is a ‘discipline for laity’ (*gihi-vinaya*) – [DA. 3/151]; and the Paramatthajotikā states that abstaining from the ten unwholesome ways of action (*akusala-kammaṭṭhāna*) is a ‘discipline for householders’ (*āgāriya-vinaya*) – [KhA. 117].

unfamiliar to some people, it is clearly evident in the formal verses for undertaking the precepts.

When the term *sīla* is used to replace *sikkhāpada*, it too can be used in the plural, comprising various training rules or precepts. Its meaning is thus expanded beyond the moral character of those who behave correctly according to a code of discipline or a set of precepts. {916}

In the original Pali, the term *vinaya* was a very important term with many nuances of meaning. For example, it represents a key system of conduct, paired with the term *dhamma* in the compound Dhammavinaya. Many of this term's nuances lie outside of the triad mentioned above, of *sīla*, *vinaya*, and *sikkhāpada*. At least in the Thai language (pronounced 'vinai' – วินัย), its meaning has become rather ambiguous and imprecise. And even in Buddhist circles the term *vinaya* is used in a vague and imprecise way.

In Thailand, the term *vinai* is frequently used in the context of business activities and other everyday enterprises. In this context, however, its meaning is greatly restricted, referring to self-control, disciplined constraint, an adherence to rules and regulations, etc., for example in the expression 'traffic discipline' ('vinai jarahjawn' – *vinaya carācara*). The term *vinai* has thus developed a meaning pertaining to a person's attributes, namely, to a steadfastness in self-control and an ability to follow specific rules and principles (here, its meaning begins to overlap with that of *sīla*).

A split appears to have occurred. In the monasteries, or in relation to religious matters, people use the term *sīla* (in Thai pronounced 'seen' – ซีล), while in relation to mundane matters people use the term *vinaya*. This is true even though both of these terms are vital to the Buddhist teachings.

When Buddhists (including the monks) become estranged from the essence of the Dhammavinaya, their understanding of relevant terms becomes obscured. Of the three terms mentioned above, *sīla*, which refers to the moral character of an individual, is the aim and purpose of the other two terms. Spiritual training in line with precepts and guided by a code of discipline is intended to generate moral integrity in people. Eventually,



the term *sīla* has been used to encompass the meanings of all three of these terms. The terms *vinaya* and *sikkhāpada* remain behind-the-scene, and the term *sīla*, becoming an umbrella term, has also become vague.

Moral conduct is the first factor in the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*), whereby one cultivates moral integrity (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), power of the mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*). This is a matter of individual spiritual training. For individual people, and indeed the entire world, to exist in a state of wellbeing, one must provide a suitable training for people, in order for them to be spiritually accomplished. This training begins with individuals, who are then actively engaged in society.

A closer look at this process of training, however, reveals that spiritual development requires an ability to relate to other people in society. Everyone is engaged in specific social activities, which may assist at all levels of spiritual development, from cultivating the sense bases to cultivating wisdom. People are also engaged in managing their physical environments, allocating the four requisites and other material things, eating, earning a livelihood, governance, etc. All of these activities pertain to the concept of *vinaya*.

Although *vinaya* is grouped alongside *sīla*, it has a distinct scope or boundary. These terms cannot be used interchangeably and should not be confused for one another.<sup>73</sup> {917}

These explanations are intended to act as a foundation for this discussion of moral conduct. A clear understanding of these relevant terms will assist in this matter and will help to avoid confusion.

<sup>73</sup>For more about the term *vinaya* in relation to society in general, see chapter 5 on kamma.

**B. SĪLA ON THE LEVEL OF DHAMMA AND SĪLA ON THE LEVEL OF VINAYA**

Broadly speaking, there are two levels of morality (*sīla*):

- First, is the universal level or the level of absolute truth (Dhamma).<sup>74</sup> This includes teachings or principles of conduct that are taught (*desita*) to show how people who perform good or bad actions, or who observe or violate moral precepts, will receive the fruits of these good and bad actions automatically and in accord with cause and effect, or in accord with the law of kamma.
- Second, is the conventional level, which refers to a specific code of ethics (*vinaya*) containing rules and regulations that have been laid down and prescribed (*paññatta*).<sup>75</sup> These formal codes are used to govern and direct individuals in a particular community or group, conforming to the group's aims and objectives. A person who transgresses the rules defined by a specific code of ethics is accountable to the authority of that particular group, and his or her transgression is distinct from the negative consequences of unwholesome intention that inevitably follow according to the natural law of kamma.<sup>76</sup>

From the perspective of the entire human race, people live under different conditions according to time and place: people are subject to varying social, economic, and political circumstances, determined by the localities and time periods in which they live. It is impossible to lay down a detailed, strictly-defined, and authoritative ethical code that will be constructive and advantageous to people in every time period and social environment.

<sup>74</sup>Trans.: note that I am translating Dhamma here as 'absolute truth', thus referring to *paramattha-sacca*, as a contrast to conventional truth (*sammati-sacca*). For more on the subject of *paramattha-sacca* (absolute truth) see chapter 2.

<sup>75</sup>On the revelation of truth ('teaching the Dhamma') and the prescription of moral codes ('laying down the Vinaya'), see Appendix 1.

<sup>76</sup>Trans: this corresponds to the Latin terms *malum in se* ('wrong or evil in itself'; inherently wrong by nature) and *malum prohibitum* ('wrong as or because prohibited'; conduct that constitutes an unlawful act only by virtue of a statute).

For the universal human community, Buddhism teaches or recommends the group of factors most often referred to as the ‘five precepts’ (*pañca-sīla*), as the most basic moral code or as the minimum level of moral behaviour. Beyond these, there are the moral precepts contained in the ‘ten wholesome courses of action’ (*kusala-kammaṣaṭṭha*; specifically, the first seven of the ten factors), and the moral components of the Eightfold Path – right speech, right action, and right livelihood<sup>77</sup> – which are comprehensive moral principles. {918}

The Buddha presented these moral principles as aspects of absolute truth: a person who observes these or fails to observe them will receive good or bad results according to the laws of nature. If a person decides to follow the teaching of the Buddha, he or she adopts these moral principles as conditions for spiritual practice.

In other words, the Buddhist teachings stipulate that one must accept as a minimum level of practice the acknowledgment and acceptance of the five precepts. As mentioned above, the five precepts are also referred to as the five *sikkhāpada*: the five ‘observances’ or the five ‘rules of training’.

This is the basic level of practice for Buddhist male and female lay disciples, but of course they may wish to adopt a more refined level of moral training, for example by keeping the eight precepts on the ‘observance days’. (See Note 17.4)

The Dhamma exists on the levels of virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Moral discipline (*vinaya*) is limited to the first level, of virtuous conduct. (Concentration and wisdom are classified exclusively as aspects of Dhamma.) In sum, virtuous conduct exists both on the level of Dhamma and the level of *vinaya*. {722}

<sup>77</sup>The commentaries refer to this group of moral principles as *ājīvaṭṭhamaka-sīla*: ‘morality with livelihood as the eighth factor’ or ‘eightfold morality including livelihood’. Eight factors: *sammā-vācā* = 4 kinds of virtuous speech (*vaci-sucarita*) + *sammā-kammanta* = 3 kinds of virtuous physical actions (*kāya-sucarita*) + (1) *sammā-ājīva*. See: Vism. 11-12.

## NOTE 17.4: OBSERVANCE DAYS

[Trans.: the observance days follow the lunar calendar and fall on the full-, new-, and half-moon days. These days were used as an occasion by pre-Buddhist spiritual communities to expound their teachings, a practice that was adopted by the Buddha. Other observances, for example the recitation of the Pāṭimokkha on the full- and new-moons, occur on these days.]

The terms *aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgata-uposatha* ('the observance consisting of eight factors') and *aṭṭhaṅgika-uposatha* ('the eightfold observance') are found at A. I. 212-2; A. IV. 248-63. The term *aṭṭha uposathaṅga* ('the eight observances') is found at Vin. V. 136-7, 213. These terms are the origin of the term 'eight precepts' (*aṭṭha-sīla*), which was coined later and is not found in the Tipiṭaka.

Let us explore this twofold division of *sīla*.<sup>78</sup>

1. Moral conduct as Dhamma. This refers to those principles of behaviour pertaining to moral conduct – to physical actions, speech, and livelihood – that are taught in connection to an ideal and natural state of human conduct. By acting in conformity with these principles, or by violating them, one reaps good or bad results directly, being accountable to natural laws. A related definition for *sīla* here is: 'moral conduct and moral discipline that becomes one's regular and normal way of behaviour or that becomes a personal attribute.'
2. Moral conduct as *vinaya*: a set of rules and regulations formulated as a social legislation for directing people's behaviour in accord with the specific aims of a community or society. This system of management and supervision also includes means of punishing those who transgress these rules. (This punishment is separate from the repercussions occurring as a consequence of the laws of nature.)  
Strictly speaking, *vinaya* is not yet *sīla*, but is rather linked to *sīla*. It refers to a social system and procedure for establishing people in moral conduct; it is a way of training people in virtue. *Sīla* is aided by *vinaya*, but as it is an aspect of absolute truth (Dhamma), it is not identical to *vinaya*.

<sup>78</sup>On the terms *sīla*, *vinaya*, and *sīla-dhamma*, see Appendix 2.

The way to distinguish between these two is that Dhamma is a matter of absolute, natural conditions, whereas moral discipline is dependent on a specific human society or on the ingenuity of human beings.

Having made this distinction, one can discuss the term *sīla* in a broad and flexible fashion, as various stages or aspects, as follows:

- *Sīla* refers to virtuous behaviour in relation to other people and to one's surroundings; this behaviour generates blessings for oneself and for others, including one's society and natural environment.
- *Sīla* refers to a moral code, laid down to foster a well-ordered, peaceful society whose members can live their lives at ease.
- *Sīla* refers to a means for governing people's behaviour, leading to disciplined and impeccable physical and verbal conduct.
- *Sīla* refers to a collection of training rules used for eliminating course defilements that manifest by way of body or speech, and for leading to greater spiritual refinement.
- *Sīla* refers to a set of rules for developing a person's physical actions, speech, and livelihood, in order to create a foundation for cultivating and empowering the mind on the level of concentration (*samādhi*) and for increasing the mind's capabilities.
- *Sīla* refers to the natural state of physical action, speech, and livelihood of a virtuous person – a person who has been well-trained, who has gained true knowledge, and who has reached an exalted spiritual realization.

The heart of moral conduct lies with intention: to be free from any thoughts of moral transgression. One aspect of moral transgression is to violate rules, regulations, precepts, and codes of discipline that have been specifically laid down. Another aspect of moral transgression is the violation of other people: the intention to harm others. *Sīla* can thus be interpreted in two ways: the intention to transgress an ethical code or the intention to violate and oppress other people. Put simply, the term *sīla* means non-transgression and non-harming.

Viewed from another angle, *sīla* refers to self-control and vigilance: the refraining from and prevention of evil actions. And in the most profound sense *sīla* can be defined as the state of mind of a person who is free from all thoughts of transgression and all thoughts of maltreatment.<sup>79</sup>

The general rules of training (*sikkhāpada*) in Buddhism are the link between morality on the level of Dhamma and morality on the level of discipline, because these rules are based on universal moral principles and compiled as a moral code (*vinaya*). Nevertheless, Buddhism does not establish a single ethical code that all people must invariably observe. An ethical code is a matter for members of a specific community to formulate by consensus as is suited to their circumstances and objectives, by choosing from various moral principles, and then to adhere to this code. For example, the commentators formulated the ‘householder’s discipline’ (*āgāriya-vinaya*) based on abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, they formulated the ‘layman’s discipline’ (*gihi-vinaya*) based on the Buddha’s teachings on conduct found in the *Siṅgālaka Sutta*, for example to abstain from the four biases (*agati*), to not indulge in the six ‘paths to ruin’ (*apāya-mukha*), and to uphold a proper relationship to the ‘six directions’.<sup>81</sup> (See Note 17.5)

Here is a review of the five precepts and the ten wholesome courses of action:

#### Five Precepts:

1. To abstain from killing living creatures (*pāṇātīpāta*).
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given (*adinnādāna*).
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*).
4. To abstain from speaking falsehoods (*musāvāda*).

<sup>79</sup>*Sīla* as volition, as a mental concomitant (*cetasika*), as restraint, and as non-transgression (*avītikkama*): Ps. I. 44-5; explained at Vism. 6-7. [Trans: the preceding paragraphs come from pp. 722-3 of *Buddhadhamma*.]

<sup>80</sup>KhA. 135; SnA. I. 299.

<sup>81</sup>DA. III. 943.

5. To abstain from spirits, liquor, and intoxicants which are a basis for heedlessness (*surāmerayamajja-pamādaṭṭhānā*).

Ten Wholesome Courses of Action:

1. To abstain from killing living creatures (*pāṇātīpāta veramaṇī*).
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given (*adinnādāna veramaṇī*).
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra veramaṇī*).
4. To abstain from false speech (*musāvāda veramaṇī*).
5. To abstain from divisive speech (*pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī*).
6. To abstain from harsh speech (*pharusā vācāya veramaṇī*).
7. To abstain from idle chatter (*samphappalāpā veramaṇī*).
8. Non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*).
9. Non-ill-will (*abyāpāda*).
10. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

In the older Pali texts, when referring to the general moral conduct of people, the Buddha uses the term ‘five virtues’ (*pañca-dhamma*) for the five precepts.<sup>82</sup> In reference to rules of training for lay Buddhists or to rules of conduct for lay ‘noble disciples’, the term ‘five rules of training’ (*pañca-sikkhāpada*) is used.<sup>83</sup> The term ‘five precepts’ (*pañca-sīla*) occurs once in the Vinaya-Piṭaka<sup>84</sup> and occasionally in verse passages in the secondary texts of the Tipiṭaka;<sup>85</sup> in the commentaries it is frequently used.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup>E.g.: S. IV. 245; A. III. 170-71, 203-4, 275-7; and see: A. V. 257-61.

<sup>83</sup>E.g.: D. III. 235; Pv. 591; Vbh. 285.

<sup>84</sup>Vin. II. 162.

<sup>85</sup>E.g.: Bu. 21.

<sup>86</sup>Trans: on the terminology of the five precepts and the ten wholesome courses of action see Appendix 3.

## NOTE 17.5: THE LAYMAN'S DISCIPLINE

This discipline is equivalent to the *āgāriya-vinaya*. The *Siṅgālaka Sutta* (or *Sigālovāda Sutta*) is found at D. III. 180-93 and includes:

1. abandoning the four defilements of action (*kamma-kilesa*),
2. abstaining from the four biases,
3. not indulging in the six paths to ruin,
4. paying homage to the six directions,
5. a teaching on true and false friendship,
6. the way to spend one's wealth,
7. and the four 'bases of social solidarity' (*saṅgaha-vatthu*).

This formulation in the commentaries may have originated from Buddhists at that time period having upheld these principles. Contemporary Buddhists should take this example by selecting teachings on moral conduct, both from this sutta and elsewhere (e.g. the five qualities of a lay disciple – *upāsaka-dhamma*), and establishing a discipline for themselves. Although this discipline would apply to their own personal community and not necessarily to all Buddhists, it would still be of benefit.

This form of specialized ethical code is found in every time period. Examples include the concepts of *kula-dhamma* (teachings on conduct specific to a family, ethnic group, caste, or profession – a code of ethics belonging to an occupation, guild, or institution) and *desa-dhamma* (an ethical code specific to a locality), which are considered 'traditional' forms of morality (Vism. 15; VismṬ.: *Sīlaniddesavaṇṇanā*, *Sīlappabhedakathāvaṇṇanā*).

The following question may be posed: between the five precepts and the ten wholesome courses of action, which should be given more emphasis in teaching? Alternatively, if one begins by teaching the five precepts, when should one include the teaching of the ten wholesome courses of action? This will be discussed below, but if one examines the contents of the *Tiṭṭhaka*, there are more passages related to the ten wholesome courses of action than to the five precepts.



### 17.11 THE BHIKKHU CODE OF DISCIPLINE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIETY

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What has been mentioned above refers primarily to ethics as it concerns the lay community. For the community of monks (*bhikkhu saṅgha*), the system of moral training can be laid down in a much more explicit way because the Buddha established this community himself according to predetermined principles and objectives, i.e. to support a practice that is most conducive for reaching the highest goal of Buddhism and to spread the goodness that results from this practice far and wide, for the welfare and happiness of all inhabitants of the world. The Buddha formulated a system of rules and regulations to help guide the life and behaviour of the bhikkhus, in order to give rise to positive results according to these principles and objectives. {919}

The members of this community – those individuals who are ordained as monks – enter voluntarily and thus they all accept to practise according to these rules. This moral code is the Vinaya of the bhikkhu saṅgha.<sup>87</sup>

The Vinaya is composed of numerous training rules, including rules on how monks should behave while alone, how they should behave amongst each other, how they should behave in relation to other people, e.g. the lay community, how they should behave in relation to nature and their environment, and how they should govern their community and conduct communal affairs. A similar code of discipline was laid down for the nuns' community (the bhikkhuni Vinaya).

Those candidates who for some reason are not fully prepared for higher ordination may be accepted as novices, having limited status and privileges in the monastic community. The Buddha laid down ten training rules for novices which are included in the Vinaya.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup>For a further examination on the meaning of the term *vinaya*, see: Appendix 6.

<sup>88</sup>Male novice: *sāmaṇera*; female novice: *sāmaṇerī*. Vin. I. 83-4; Vin. V. 138; Kh. 1. These ten training rules for novices are later referred to colloquially as the ten precepts. In the Vinaya Piṭaka a male or female novice is defined simply as 'one who maintains the ten training rules' (*dasasikkhā-padika* and *dasasikkhā-padikā*): V. IV. 122.

Virtuous conduct (*sīla*) in this context is the state of wellbeing or the wholesome behaviour that stems from not transgressing the training rules contained in the Vinaya: this is morality (*sīla*) on the level of formal discipline (*vinaya*).

There are two aspects to keeping moral precepts or to practising according to moral principles: self-discipline (in order to develop in virtuous qualities) and a consideration of the benefits to others or to society.

The former aspect is obvious throughout the Buddha's teachings (the suttas), while the latter aspect is strongly emphasized in the monks' discipline (the Vinaya).

In relation to society, in the case that a monk's actions were unskilful and warranted the enactment of a training rule, the Buddha would call the community of monks together, verify the truth from the instigator, and explain the harm of such an action: that it does not generate faith in the faithless nor does it increase faith in the faithful, but rather it prevents faith from arising in those without faith and it shakes the confidence of some of the faithful. Only then did he lay down the new training rule and describe its advantages.<sup>89</sup>

The concern here over people's faith is a concern for the wellbeing and happiness of the greater public. The wellbeing of society affects the wellbeing of both the monastic community and of Buddhism as a whole, because the stability of the monastic community and of the Buddhist religion is dependent on the faith of the laity.

The faith of lay Buddhists stems from *pasāda*: confidence, inspiration, joy, ease of heart, and a delight and enthusiasm for goodness. {920} This quality is conducive to happiness, supports concentration, and is favourable to wisdom, providing people with the necessary strength of heart to understand a subject under investigation.<sup>90</sup> This joy and confidence is a

<sup>89</sup>This is true for almost every training rule that the Buddha laid down: see volumes III and IV of the Vinaya Piṭaka, beginning at Vin. III. 20.

<sup>90</sup>For example: *Once there is joyful confidence a person either attains to the imperturbable now or else he is devoted to wisdom* (M. II. 262); *When a person recollects the Tathāgata,*

fundamental source of wellbeing, enabling people to progress in mental and wisdom development.

Before offering a teaching on the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha would gradually prepare the listener's state of mind and degree of understanding, until the person's mind was at ease, malleable, free from the hindrances, delighted, and bright.<sup>91</sup>

A monk should behave virtuously, not to seek personal gain from the resulting devotion of the lay supporters, which would be reprehensible, but rather for the wellbeing and happiness of the monastic community as well as the wider lay community.

Unawakened monks must practise both aspects of moral behaviour – combining assistance to others with self-discipline and self-training. Arahants, on the other hand, who are completely free from mental defilement and whose personal moral duties are thoroughly accomplished, keep moral principles or abide by a moral code purely for the wellbeing of the monastic community and of all human beings. This is consistent with the vital principle vis-à-vis the conduct and activity by the Buddha and his disciples: *To practise for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and humans*,<sup>92</sup> as well as the principle of being considerate of later generations, of setting a good example, and of promoting goodness in the world by honouring the Dhamma and the Vinaya.<sup>93</sup>

For this reason, awakened persons observe moral precepts strictly. It is not in their nature to claim that they are free from defilement, carefree and detached, and therefore do not need to keep particular training rules and can act in any manner they please.

*his mind is bright, delight arises, the mental impurities are abandoned* (A. I. 206-7). Cf.: D. I. 110; D. II. 142, 161; A. I. 8-9; A. III. 244-5, 256, 336-7, 392; It. 13-4; Sn. 75-6.

<sup>91</sup>See: Vin. I. 15-6, 18, 23, 36-7, 181, 225-6; Vin. II. 156-7; D. I. 109-10, 148; D. II. 41, 44-5; M. I. 379-80; M. II. 145; A. IV. 186-7, 209-10, 213-4; Ud. 49 (all of these passage are identical except for the names of the listeners).

<sup>92</sup>E.g.: D. II. 222, 331-2; A. I. 22. See chapter 7 on awakened beings. For further examples of this vital principle, see Appendix 7.

<sup>93</sup>See Appendix 8.

Arahants do not only keep moral precepts, but some also uphold numerous observances (*vatta*) associated with specific ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga vata*), which are not required by the Vinaya, in order to abide happily in the present and to assist later generations by acting as a good example.<sup>94</sup> {921}

When one investigates the mental fetter of ‘adherence to rules and religious practices’ (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) one should not overlook a person’s reasons and intentions that are connected to virtue and to benefitting the community. If a person observes moral precepts, duties, customs, and traditional ceremonies with an understanding and an intention of acting in a well-mannered and exemplary fashion, this action helps unite a community and elevates the Dhamma. If a person acts appropriate to the circumstances, in accord with good intentions, and not in a disingenuous way, one should not be in a hurry to criticize this behaviour.

Where the behaviour in regard to rules, observances, customs, ceremonies, and moral codes is incorrect, is by holding to them in a gullible way and simply imitating others, without recognizing their purpose, to the point that one mistakenly believes that purity or the final spiritual goal is reached by simply keeping precepts or observing customs and traditions. Such behaviour leads to a distortion of these precepts and practices, deviating from the Buddhist path.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, people may uphold moral precepts and religious practices with concealed craving and fixed views, by seeking a reward of material gain, fame, praise, delight, or rebirth in heaven, and by reinforcing a sense of self-identity, until the true purpose of moral conduct is obscured and the way to reaching the goal of Dhamma practice is obstructed; or people may keep moral precepts and follow various observances, customs, and ceremonies in an unworthy, corrupt way: they get carried away and overly impressed by their own good deeds, which become a source of pride and conceit. (See Note 17.6)

<sup>94</sup>For instance the practice of Ven. Mahākassapa (S. II. 203). On the difference between moral precepts (*sīla*) and religious practices (*vata*) see Appendix 11.

<sup>95</sup>On the subject of *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* see chapter 7 on awakened beings, including a description of the different stages of enlightenment.

A person who keeps moral precepts and follows the Vinaya should understand the objectives – the intended benefits – of the Vinaya, which the Buddha stated each time that he laid down a training rule. There are ten such benefits:

**A. Pertaining to communal wellbeing:**

1. For the goodness that comes from a harmonious sangha.
2. For the wellbeing of the sangha.
3. For the control of shameless individuals.

**B. Pertaining to individual wellbeing:**

4. For the comfort of virtuous bhikkhus. {922}

**C. Pertaining to growth in the Dhamma:**

5. For the prevention of danger and trouble in the present.
6. For the prevention of danger and trouble in the future.

**D. Pertaining to social wellbeing:**

7. To arouse faith in those who lack faith.
8. To increase faith in the faithful.

**E. Pertaining to the wellbeing of Buddhism:**

9. For the stability of the True Dhamma.
10. To promote discipline and to support the Vinaya.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup>Vin. III. 21; A. V. 70-71.

## NOTE 17.6: AN ‘UNTRUE MAN’

For example: a person may be of great learning (*bahussuta*), an expert in the disciplinary code, or a skilled Dhamma preacher, or he keeps the austere practices of living in the forest, wearing rag-robles, living at the foot of a tree, or eating only one meal a day, or he has attained *jhāna*, and as a result becomes proud and disparages others; the Buddha called such a person an ‘untrue man’ (*asappurisa*): M. III. 39-42; a person who is accomplished in moral conduct but becomes proud and boastful is called a heedless person (M. I. 193-4); a person possessing exceptional qualities or virtues should not allow them to be a cause for arrogance and disparagement of others (e.g.: M. I. 272-3; D. III. 224-5 = A. II. 27-8; Nd. II. 59).

The Aṅguttara Nikāya contains another list of objectives for the establishment of the training rules, which includes the following two factors:

1. For the benefit of the lay followers.
2. To sever relations with those factions of bhikkhus who are evilly disposed.<sup>97</sup>

These objectives reveal an emphasis on communal welfare and happiness. Similarly, the rules in the Vinaya dealing with the implementation of formal acts of the community (*saṅgha-kamma*) attest to the importance given to community affairs, by focusing on the cooperation and concerted efforts of the monks.

Formal acts of the sangha only proceed well, however, if the community is in harmony and undivided. This is a principal reason why the Buddha reiterated the significance of sangha harmony as opposed to sangha discord, by stating that the arising of harmony in the sangha is conducive to the welfare and happiness of all people, whereas schisms in the sangha have the opposite effect.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> A. I. 98-9; this list contains ten pairs of factors.

<sup>98</sup> It. 11-12; cf.: Vin. I. 358.

The various rules and regulations laid down by the Buddha in the Vinaya express a spirit of communal wellbeing and dignity which is applicable to all human relationships, an example of which is the common practice of monks paying respects to one another.

## 17.12 MEANS FOR EXTOLLING THE DHAMMA AND ENHANCING COMMUNAL WELFARE

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### A. BOWING AND PAYING RESPECTS

It is well known that in Buddhist communities the lay followers bow and pay respects to the bhikkhus. Within the community of monks itself, gestures of respect are made according to the number of years an individual has been ordained. A monk who has been ordained for fewer years pays respects to a monk who has been ordained longer.<sup>99</sup> {923}

In terms of internal spiritual qualities, a lay person who is a ‘noble being’ (*ariya-puggala*) and has attained to a level of awakening still bows to a monk who is unenlightened. (See Note 17.7) In the monastic community, a fully awakened monk – an arahant – still pays respects to an unawakened monk if the latter monk has been ordained for a longer period of time.

This distinctive way of paying respects in the sangha is not a matter of proving a person’s value based on prestige or external authority, or even on internal spiritual attributes. The policies and customs regarding bowing and the offering of respects exist for order and simplicity, and for the wellbeing and harmony of the community. Communal harmony and peace fall under the term Dhamma: virtue or righteousness (as an aspect of truth). By following these customs of paying respects, one acts for the wellbeing and integrity of the community; moreover, one cultivates goodness and venerates the Dhamma.

<sup>99</sup>[Trans.: this hierarchy is calculated by the day and time of one’s ordination or by the number of years – literally, ‘rainy seasons’ (*vassa*) – that one has been a monk.] For more information on the paying of respects according to seniority see Appendix 9.

## NOTE 17.7: ATTAINED LAYPEOPLE

It is possible for a layperson to attain arahantship, but according to the Milindapañhā such a person will only continue as a layperson for one day because he will either enter the monastic community as a bhikkhu or else pass away (*parinibbāna*) on that day (Miln.: Chātṭhavaggo, Gahārahattapañho tatiyo). The Milindapañhā explains the reason why it is appropriate for a layperson who is a stream-enterer to pay respects to a monk who is unenlightened, but it does not mention laypersons who have attained to a higher level of awakening.

In any case, there are examples in the Tipiṭaka, for example the story of the householder Citta, who was a non-returner and who paid respects to Ven. Sudhamma who was harbouring ill thoughts towards him (Vin. II. 16-17). The commentaries at SnA. I. 277 cite the Buddha's teaching: *Bhikkhus, if he is a layman, a non-returner should bow and pay respects to a novice monk, even though he was ordained that very day.* Although I have not found this passage in the Tipiṭaka, it accords in principle with the aforementioned teachings.

Awakened persons, especially arahants, have no attachment to a sense of self, which would lead them to take such customs of paying respects as a gauge for a person's value or as a means for self-aggrandizement. They follow these well-established customs, aiming for the wellbeing of the community, for the veneration and respect of the Dhamma and Vinaya, and even for the assistance of the person to whom they pay respects (see Note 17.8). If that person is morally inferior but still contains some goodness, this act of respect will remind him to be careful, to improve himself, and to strive for higher virtues.

And in the case that awakened persons refrain from paying respects in particular circumstances, they will do this for a reason, by aiming for the benefit of that person or of the community, not because of mental defilement and conceit. {924}

Awakened laypersons pay respects to monks – even those who are unenlightened – for reasons connected to the truth or as a way to venerate the truth, as can be summarized as follows:<sup>100</sup>

<sup>100</sup>Compare with the teaching at Miln.: Dutiyavaggo, Setṭhadhammapañho sattamo.



## NOTE 17.8: HONOURING THE DHAMMA

The Buddha said that to whomever he teaches the Dhamma, even to a beggar or a poor hunter, he teaches with respect for that person (with commitment, by giving that person importance, and by truly wishing for his or her welfare); this is because the Buddha venerates the Dhamma (see: A. III. 121-2). When, according to tradition or to a person's status, people are polite and respectful, they should consider these teachings on honouring the Dhamma in order to avoid problems from acting out of say arrogance or flattery. (An exaggerated, inappropriate, or insincere display of respect is equally a dishonour of the Dhamma, similar to not showing respect or showing no deference to tradition due to conceit.)

By honouring the Dhamma people in fact honour each other, by honouring each other's humanity, ability to be trained, and inherent virtues. Respectfulness and the showing of respect, however, are two separate factors: respectfulness is an internal attribute, while the showing of respect is an external, social action. The latter accompanies and supplements the former to help in a social context. The ways to show respect and honour are determined by a community or society in order to bring about mutual benefits, for example peace and orderliness. These means of showing respect are also a way to honour the Dhamma, by aiming for the establishment of truth in society. (In these circumstances, a person who receives gestures of respect should pay respect in return, by being considerate and attentive to the other person who shows respect.)

- Monks relinquish the householder's life, which is normally a life of seeking pleasure and sensual gratification. They voluntarily remove themselves from comfort and material abundance. They follow rules of training and keep a discipline which is difficult for unenlightened people to observe. Even the awakened laypeople are not compelled to practise at this level of austerity; they recognize that the monks do that which is difficult to do.
- Monks maintain a way of life that is considered by Buddhists to be a way of self-development and a way of bringing wellbeing and happiness to the world. This way of life should be honoured and praised.
- Monks are part of the monastic sangha: they are members of a community whose duties are directly related to the Dhamma. The monastic sangha is where virtuous people gather, where most of the

members are of a virtuous nature, and which is an optimal environment for cultivating goodness. It is a symbol of the Dhamma or of the stability of the Dhamma. Each individual bhikkhu represents the monastic sangha; when one pays respects to a monk in this sense (not to a specific personality), one is honouring the sangha and venerating the Dhamma.

- The bhikkhu sangha is a Buddhist assembly performing the duties of studying, practising, and propagating the Dhamma in an optimal and most effective way. It safeguards the Dhamma (the Buddhist teachings) and the Vinaya (the system of training), and it assists in the transmission of the Buddhist religion. Monks are considered the heirs of the Buddhist teachings. The paying of respects to monks as representatives of the sangha is equivalent to supporting the monastic community in order for it to provide blessings and happiness to the world.
- At the very least, awakened laypeople pay respects to monks with a mind of lovingkindness. They wish for the monks' welfare, happiness, and prosperity in the Dhamma, by helping them to remember and take into account their individual position and their responsibilities, which need to be attended to with diligent, sustained effort.<sup>101</sup>

A monk or novice who makes effort and trains himself, although he is still unenlightened, is still worthy of respectful salutations from laypeople even if they are awakened. In other words, if a monk or novice asks himself whether he possesses virtues worthy of the laypeople's veneration, this very self-awareness and self-inquiry is worthy of respect.

The paying of respects between monks according to seniority is separate from the formal acts of the monastic community (*saṅghakamma*),

<sup>101</sup>Even in the case when they do not pay respects, they do so with lovingkindness and after having considered that by abstaining from showing respect they will be benefitting the monk in question. Note however that in regard to the method of imposing a punishment (*brahma-daṇḍa*) by the bhikkhu sangha on an individual bhikkhu (Vin. II. 290) or the decision by the bhikkhuni sangha to abstain from paying respects to an individual bhikkhu (Vin. II. 262), these actions should only be done with the consensus of the respective communities.

## NOTE 17.9: ASTUTE AND ABLE MONKS

The ‘astute and able’ (*byatta paṭibala*) monk is given the position of chanting the formal announcement (*kamma-vācā*): he announces the matter at hand to the community, states the formal proposal (*ñatti*), asks for a consensus, and announces the consensus. (In an ordination ceremony there are two such senior monks, who are called *kamma-vācācariya*.)

Today, many people are unfamiliar with the meaning and importance of this position, because formal acts of the sangha have become more ceremonial and set by tradition. On various formal acts of the sangha, see for example: ordinations (Vin. I. 56-7; Vin. II. 273); observance days (Vin. I. 102); establishing a formal boundary (*simā*) – Vin. I. 106; the Pavāraṇā ceremony (Vin. I. 159); the Kāṭhina ceremony (Vin. I. 254); assigning monks to formal positions in the sangha (Vin. I. 283-5; Vin. II. 167, 176-7); imposing penalties (e.g.: Vin. II. 2, 7-8, 13, 18, 21, 125); settling disputes (Vin. II. 84, 87); and meeting for a formal recitation of the teachings (Vin. II. 285-6).

which are accomplished by a formal resolution among community members and conducted by an astute and able bhikkhu. (See Note 17.9) {925} For such formal acts, the monks should unanimously designate a leader who possesses trustworthy and admirable personal qualities (*pasādanīya-dhamma*).<sup>102</sup> A monk who has been ordained for a long time and has much experience is a more suitable candidate for this position than a monk who has been ordained more recently, because the elder monk has had more time to study, train, and develop himself, but seniority is not the decisive factor in this selection.

<sup>102</sup> M. III. 11; and see the Uruvela Sutta at A. II. 22. This original system of sangha administration relies on a basic system of training (the training and discipline that begins at ordination). During times when this basic system of training is faulty or lost, the authentic system of sangha administration cannot function and is replaced by some other system of governance. This is because the true system of sangha administration depends on all monks having received a genuine and effective training. Moreover, at times when the system of sangha administration has gone into decline and there are efforts to restore it, occasionally people merely make a perfunctory appeal for restoration without considering the true causes for it to prosper.

## B. THE PRESCRIPTION FORBIDDING MONKS FROM CLAIMING SUPERHUMAN STATES

Another rule in the Vinaya that demonstrates the spirit of fostering the collective good and emphasizes the importance of the community is the rule forbidding monks from claiming exceptional spiritual qualities or from claiming to have realized superhuman states (*uttarimanussa-dhamma*), like deep states of concentration, *jhāna*, concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*), or stages of enlightenment. If a person falsely claims to possess these qualities with the intention to deceive, he commits a *pārājika* offence and automatically falls away from the state of being a *bhikkhu*.<sup>103</sup> Even if he has realized one of these exceptional states, if he mentions this attainment to a layperson or to someone else who is not a *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*, he is still at fault and transgresses a less serious rule requiring expiation (*pācittiya*).<sup>104</sup>

The former rule originated during a time of famine, when a group of monks who were looking for ways to obtain food without difficulty decided to praise one another's personal qualities, sometimes based on fact and sometimes not, by saying, for example: 'This monk has attained *jhāna*', 'This monk is a stream-enterer', 'This monk is an arahant', 'This monk has attained the six higher psychic attainments.' As a result the devoted laypeople provided them with abundant food. When the Buddha was made aware of this he laid down the training rule, saying that it is undignified to boast about one's exceptional qualities for the sake of one's stomach, and he severely criticized those monks who made false claims, calling them the most contemptible thieves in the world.

A similar rule forbids monks from displaying psychic powers to laypeople. A monk who transgresses this rule commits an offence of wrongdoing (*dukkata*).<sup>105</sup> This rule originated when a wealthy merchant hung a sandalwood bowl from the end of a long bamboo pole and declared a challenge: he would give this bowl to anyone who is an arahant and possesses true psychic powers, but this person must levitate and collect

<sup>103</sup> Vin. III. 87-91.

<sup>104</sup> Vin. IV. 23-5.

<sup>105</sup> Vin. II. 110-12.

the bowl himself. Ven. Piṇḍola-Bhāradvāja heard of this challenge and wanting to preserve the honour of Buddhism rose in the air and collected the bowl, causing great excitement and wonder among the inhabitants of Rājagaha. {926} The Buddha then laid down a training rule, reproaching Piṇḍola-Bhāradvāja for displaying psychic powers in exchange for a relatively worthless bowl, comparing this action with a woman who exposes herself for a mere coin.

Before laying down these training rules, the Buddha mentioned that it is inappropriate to boast about one's merits, skills, and special abilities for the sake of material gain, veneration, or personal advantage. And when he laid down and defined the actual rule, he stated that it is a transgression to boast about or display one's merits and abilities for any reason, not limited to seeking personal profit and veneration.

There are deeper objectives behind the Buddha's conduct here. For example, the Buddha did not wish for people to become overly excited or captivated by things they believe to be beyond their own reach, or to entrust their hope to someone or something else to the point of abandoning their own efforts within the range of their ability.<sup>106</sup>

The objective to discuss here is connected to the monastic sangha. According to the Buddhist teachings, the survival of the Dhammavinaya is dependent on the monastic sangha as a whole. The transmission of the teachings and the protection of the Dhammavinaya relies on the stability of the monastic sangha. The Buddha entrusted the Dhammavinaya to the monastic sangha rather than to a specific individual; were the latter case true, the teachings would not have lasted long.

The Buddha wished for the laypeople to support and relate to the monks as a community, and to support individual monks in an impersonal way, as representatives of the monastic sangha. Although an individual monk or group of monks may have some exceptional proficiency or may have reached an outstanding spiritual realization, their relationship to the laity has a direct bearing on the entire monastic community, allowing other members of the monastic community to partake in their achievements.

<sup>106</sup>See chapter 9 on the supernatural and the divine.

This is easily discernible in the case where a monk possesses special virtues or abilities. The advantages an individual monk with special merits or abilities receives also extend to the entire community, which flourishes along with that individual. On the other hand, if that monk's merits or abilities are personalized, as belonging to a specific individual or associated with a particular group, only that individual or group will prosper while the greater sangha will be depreciated.

When a monk broadcasts his own exceptional qualities, laypeople tend to focus their attention and lavish their support on him. At the same time the monastic sangha as a whole declines in importance, receives less attention, and is weakened as a result.

This is the reason why some arahants at the time of the Buddha, when their exceptional abilities became known publicly so that people became attached to them as an individual and gave them personal donations, and they became a focus of attention to the extent that the importance of the monastic community as a whole waned, would quickly leave that locality.<sup>107</sup> {927}

For monks to boast about or proclaim their exceptional spiritual qualities to laypeople, regardless of whether these claims are true or false, have the following harmful consequences:

- It causes the laypeople to become preoccupied and focused on an individual person or group rather than taking an interest in the wider monastic community. Laypeople who lack an understanding will judge and compare people, praising some while disparaging others, based sometimes on truth and sometimes not. This can cause harm to themselves and to the wider Buddhist community.
- If such proclamations were acceptable, it would not only be those individuals with righteous attainments who would proclaim; those individuals who misjudge their own attainments would also proclaim. But even more serious, it would offer a chance for shameless individuals to cause trouble by boasting. Those laypeople who

<sup>107</sup> See the stories of Ven. Isidatta and Ven. Mahaka at: S. IV. 283-91; AA. I. 387.

lack knowledge and experience of these matters are unable to distinguish between what is true and what is false. They may be misled by skilled charlatans and consequently view something false as marvellous and reliable.

- Unawakened laypeople possess varying preferences and interests, and those monks who have realized exceptional spiritual qualities may have personality traits or abilities that are incompatible with the laypeople's wishes. Not all spiritually attained people are endowed with the skills and attributes to act as leaders while following in the footsteps of the Buddha. Some realized monks are unable to explain and to teach, similar to the 'silent Buddhas' (*pacceka-buddha*), and they are sometimes no match for erudite unawakened teachers. This is similar to a person who has travelled to a distant land, but on returning is unable to give a captivating, persuasive description of his travels. Another person who has never been to this land, however, may be able to give a vivid, dramatic account, like some geography professors who are adept at teaching about foreign countries despite having never stepped foot there.

In terms of personal attributes, some monks have realized the fruits of awakening but have an unattractive physical appearance. Ven. Lakunṭaka-Bhaddiya, for example, was an arahant but was both dwarfed and hunch-backed; the young monks and novices would tease and ridicule him so much that the Buddha needed to come to his aid.<sup>108</sup> If such a person proclaims his spiritual achievements he may lead people to refute these achievements or to view Buddhism in a negative light. A deceptive, unawakened person, however, may lead a great number of people down an incorrect path due to his being charismatic and articulate.

- If realized beings skilled at teaching, realized beings unskilled at teaching, unrealized beings who overestimate their achievements, and people who are charlatans were all to proclaim their spiritual attainments, the Buddhist teachings would become mixed up and muddled; people would not know which teachings are correct and

<sup>108</sup>S. II. 279; Ud. 76; DhA. II. 147; DhA. III. 386; JA. II. 141.

which are false. Some people possess a true knowledge of some aspects of their experience, but their attempts to describe the realization are at odds with its essential meaning because they lack a formal study of the teachings, which leads to confusion, misunderstandings, and a disunity of the Buddhist teachings.

The confirmation of enlightenment is the responsibility and imperative of the Buddha, who established the Buddhist religion and protected both the teachings and the disciples. Confirmation and endorsement rests with the Buddha and his teachings; later disciples voluntarily accept these teachings. The responsibility of disciples does not require referring to personal spiritual attainments but rather consists of remaining true to the Buddha's teaching.

True disciples of the Buddha try not to deviate from the Buddha's own teaching and they use consistency with the Buddha's teachings as the basic criteria for correct transmission of the teachings. They need not refer to their own awakening as a criteria for evaluation. This preserves the integrity of the teachings and of Buddhism. {928}

- When a person proclaims exceptional spiritual qualities, faithful lay supporters will bring material gifts and offerings. These gifts are due to that person's proclamation, and thus according to the Vinaya they are 'impure gains'.

It is of the nature of awakened beings to refrain from speaking about or proclaiming their spiritual attainments. A person who boasts of being an awakened person, reveals precisely the opposite: of not being awakened. The only people who proclaim exceptional spiritual qualities that they truly possess are unawakened people with mundane spiritual attainments like concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*).<sup>109</sup>

### C. OFFERINGS TO THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY

This subject of revealing one's personal attainments is connected to the tradition of making offerings to the monastic community (*saṅgha-dāna*).

<sup>109</sup>See: VinA. IV. 751.



Buddhism distinguishes between two kinds of donations (*dāna*): donations made to a specific individual (*pāṭipuggalika-dāna*) and donations made to the entire monastic community (*saṅgha-dāna*).

The Buddhist teachings state that offerings made to someone with little virtue bear relatively little fruit, while offerings made to a highly virtuous person bear great fruit. Offerings made to the community, however, are more fruitful than offerings made to any individual.

The Buddha categorized offerings made to individuals, from high to low: gifts to the Buddha, gifts to ‘silent Buddhas’ (*paccekabuddha*), gifts to arahants, once-returners, etc., all the way to gifts made to virtuous unawakened persons, immoral persons, and animals. And he used this comparison: a gift to animals may be expected to repay a hundredfold, a gift to an immoral ordinary person may be expected to repay a thousandfold, a gift to a virtuous ordinary person may be expected to repay a hundred-thousandfold, a gift to a renunciant outside the dispensation who is free from lust for sensual pleasures may be expected to repay ten-thousand millionfold, a gift to a stream-enterer may be expected to repay incalculably, immeasurably – what then should be said about giving a gift to one whose virtues exceed this?

As stated above, however, offerings made to the community are more fruitful than offerings made to any individual. The most complete donation to the monastic community is offered to both the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis with the Buddha at the head. Next are donations made to both bhikkhu and bhikkhuni communities after the Buddha has passed away, and then donations made to a predetermined number of monks and nuns (acting as representatives for the wider community and not specifying particular individuals’ names). Even in the future, when the Dhammavinaya has almost perished, offerings made in the name of the sangha to immoral monks who simply wear some brown cloth around their necks bears great fruit. The Buddha concluded:

I say that in no way does a gift to an individual person ever have greater fruit than an offering made to the sangha.<sup>110</sup>

At one time the Buddha had the following conversation on this subject with a householder:

*Buddha:* ‘Householder, are alms given by your family?’

*Householder:* ‘Oh yes, lord, my family offers alms, and these alms are given to such monks who keep the observances of dwelling in the forest, eating only almsfood, and wearing rag-robles, who are arahants or have realized the path of arahantship.’

*Buddha:* ‘But surely you who are a layman, a householder, and a busy family man, find it difficult to tell which monk is an arahant or has realized the path of arahantship. {929} Regardless of whether a monk dwells in the forest or in the village, whether a monk eats almsfood or accepts meal invitations, whether a monk wears rag-robles or robes offered by the laity, if he is distracted, proud, overconfident, outspoken, foulmouthed, absent-minded, uncircumspect, irresolute, agitated, and with senses unrestrained, he on that count is blameworthy. But if he is not distracted, not proud, not overconfident, not outspoken, not foul-mouthed, mindful, circumspect, one-pointed, determined, and with senses restrained, he on that count is praiseworthy.’

A. III. 391.

The Buddha then encouraged the householder to make offerings to the wider monastic community, saying that by making such offerings the mind is joyful and bright, and when the mind is bright, at death one goes to a happy abode.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from focusing on self-training and self-development, the practice and behaviour of the bhikkhus should take into consideration the wellbeing of the monastic community and of all human beings. At the very least, as a result of the monastic rules of discipline, the monks should make those people whom they interact with feel safe, happy and at ease.

<sup>110</sup>Cf.: A. IV. 394-5.

<sup>111</sup>Trans.: this story was also referred to in chapter 15 on wise reflection.

Furthermore, if possible, the monks should teach the Dhamma so that people develop in faith, moral conduct, learning, generosity, and wisdom.

In other words, the monks have two responsibilities in relation to the laity: a responsibility in regard to the Vinaya – of gladdening the minds of the laity by keeping moral precepts and observances – and a responsibility in regard to the Dhamma – of imparting the truth and sharing goodness in order to help the laity develop spiritually.

As for the laypeople, when they interact with the monks, they should aim to acquire spiritual riches in order to advance in the way of truth, and when they offer support to the monks, they should take into account the benefits accrued to the wider monastic community. And in the case that laypeople choose to interact with or make offerings to an individual monk, they should do so with the wish that the monastic sangha be stable and secure, and for the lasting welfare and happiness of all people.

### 17.13 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE MONASTIC DISCIPLINE

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The prime moral objectives of the monastic code of discipline (*vinaya*) can be summed up as follows: to honour the monastic community and its activities; to emphasize the stability and wellbeing of the community; and to develop a sense of responsibility towards the community. The Buddha and his arahant disciples embodied the spirit of this teaching and acted as paragons of virtue.

Responsible and supportive actions in regard to the sangha are correct according to Dhamma and consistent with the Vinaya. Respect for the sangha is thus connected to respect for both the Dhamma and the Vinaya.<sup>112</sup>

A sense of responsibility for the sangha is also connected to the practice for benefiting all human beings, because the term ‘sangha’ literally means ‘community’ or ‘multitude’, and the monastic community was established for the welfare and happiness of all people. {930}

<sup>112</sup>For example, see the teaching at: VinA. VII. 1377.

The Buddha is a leading example in this way of practice as confirmed by these passages:

The Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully Awakened One, the Champion and King of the Dhamma, relying on the Dhamma, respecting, honouring, and revering the Dhamma, with the Dhamma as his standard, banner, and sovereign, provides righteous protection, shelter and safety to the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, laymen, and laywomen, [by teaching] thus: ‘Such bodily action ... verbal action ... mental action ... livelihood ... dwelling in town or village should be undertaken and such [action, etc.] should not be undertaken.’

*A. III. 149-50; cf.: A. I. 109-10; Ps. II. 159-60.*

I dwell honouring and respecting and depending on that very Dhamma to which I have fully awakened. And whenever the sangha is possessed of greatness, then I also have deep reverence for the sangha.

*A. II. 21.*

When the monastic community increased, became more widespread, and grew in both knowledge and experience, the Buddha established various formal acts of the sangha (*saṅghakamma*), by giving prominence and entrusting authority to the collective community. In regard to ordinations, for example, he ceased giving ordinations by himself or permitting individual disciples to give ordinations, and rather had the sangha perform this duty.<sup>113</sup>

When Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī (the Buddha’s aunt and stepmother) brought a set of new robes that she had sewn herself to offer to the Buddha, the Buddha said to her: *Give to the sangha, Gotamī. When you give an offering to the sangha, it will be made both to me and to the sangha.*<sup>114</sup>

Before the Buddha’s final passing away, he spoke thus to Ven. Ānanda:

<sup>113</sup>See: Vin. I. 56.

<sup>114</sup>M. III. 253.

Ānanda, the Dhamma and Vinaya that I have taught and assigned to all of you, that, at my passing, will be your teacher.

D. II. 154.

After the Buddha's final passing away the brahmin Vassakāra asked the following question to Ven. Ānanda:

Is there, Master Ānanda, any single bhikkhu who was appointed by Master Gotama thus: 'He will be your refuge ('point of reference', 'anchor') when I am gone', and to whom you are now devoted?

Ven. Ānanda replied that there is no such individual, nor is there such an individual who has been chosen by the sangha and appointed by a number of elder bhikkhus before the Buddha's final passing away. Nevertheless: *We are not without a refuge, brahmin. We have a refuge; we have the Dhamma as our refuge.* And he went on to explain how the Dhamma acts as a refuge:

Brahmin, the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened, has prescribed the course of training and has laid down the Pātimokkha. On the observance day as many of us as live in dependence upon a single village district meet together in unison, and when we meet we ask one who knows the Pātimokkha to recite it. If a bhikkhu remembers an offence or a transgression while the Pātimokkha is being recited, we impose a penalty on him according to the Dhamma in the way we have been instructed. In this way, it is not the venerable ones who correct us; it is the Dhamma that corrects us. {931}

Ven. Ānanda went on to say, however, that there are monks who are seen as leaders and as a mainstay:

There are, brahmin, ten qualities inspiring confidence that have been declared by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened. When these qualities are

found in anyone among us, we honour, respect, revere, and venerate him, and live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him.<sup>115</sup>

M. III. 9-12.

A monk who is appointed to adjudicate legal disputes must be one who defers to the sangha rather than deferring to an individual, one who honours the truth rather than honouring material objects.<sup>116</sup>

It is incumbent on leading arahant disciples to act as role models in giving importance to community activities. For example, there is the story of the Buddha exhorting Ven. Mahākappina to attend the observance day ceremony, in order for the monks to review their conduct in light of the Vinaya, even though Mahākappina was an arahant and perfectly pure at heart.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, although Ven. Mahākassapa lived in a remote place about four kilometres from the place where the observance day ceremony was held, he would walk on foot each fortnight to attend this ceremony, even though it meant passing across a river.<sup>118</sup>

Those monks who are arahants and non-returners, and who are able to enter the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*), make the following determination before entering that state: ‘If during the seven days that I enter the state of cessation the sangha requires to perform a formal act, for example a formal resolution (*ñatti-kamma*), I will exit this state immediately, before another monk needs to invite me.’ This is because the authority of the community is vital and worthy of respect.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup>The ten qualities inspiring confidence (*pasādanīya-dhamma*) are: (1) to possess moral conduct, (2) to be one of great learning, (3) to have contentment, (4) to have attained the four jhānas, and (5-10) to possess the six kinds of supreme knowledge (*abhiññā*).

<sup>116</sup>Vin. V. 163.

<sup>117</sup>Vin. I. 105.

<sup>118</sup>Vin. I. 109. (The commentaries at VinA. V. 1049 claim that the distance was one *gāvuta* = 4 km, but some commentators claim the distance was three *gāvuta* = 12 km.)

<sup>119</sup>See: Vism. 706-7; PsA. I. 320; [VinT. 3/595].

When events or circumstances occur that affect the welfare of the monastic community or have an impact on the growth or decline of the Buddhist religion, the monks, especially the arahants, have an obligation to pay attention and to get involved. For example, they organize councils (or ‘recitations’: *saṅgāyanā*) to purify the sangha, protect the teachings from deviation or from disrespectful, slanderous people or ideologies, help the Buddhist religion survive in times of danger, and to cultivate and support those individuals who are skilled at safeguarding and promoting Buddhism.<sup>120</sup>

If an individual neglects to participate in these sangha activities, the sangha will impose a penalty on him even if he is an arahant and even if the reason for neglect was to pursue a wholesome, blameless action like dwelling in a concentrative attainment.<sup>121</sup> When the community imposes a penalty, the person penalized has the opportunity to explain the reasons for his actions, but if the sangha makes a final decision, the person will honour this, as is seen in the case of Ven. Ānanda, who was rebuked during the First Council.<sup>122</sup> {932}

It is also the tradition for members of the monastic community to pay attention to minor activities requiring collective effort, like sewing robes. Such collective effort is particularly important in matters pertaining to formal acts of the sangha, for example in regard to the Kaṭhina ceremony, during which the community agrees to offer a robe sewn from donated cloth to an individual monk. Every monk in the community, irrespective of a monk’s seniority or spiritual accomplishments, should participate in sewing this cloth into a robe.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup>For example, the first, second, and third recitations (‘councils’), and the events surrounding King Milinda (Vin. II. 284-5, 297-300; VinA. I. 57; Miln.: *Bāhirakathā*; VbhA. 445).

<sup>121</sup>E.g.: VinA. I. 36; Miln.: *Bāhirakathā*.

<sup>122</sup>Vin. II. 289.

<sup>123</sup>VinA. 3/212.

Communal responsibilities can be separated into two layers of importance:

1. Minor communal affairs pertaining to specific circumstances, or deeds of mutual assistance to be performed as companions in a single community, which accord with the ‘factors leading to harmony’ (*sārāṇīya-dhamma*), in particular the factor of kindly assistance and support (*mettā-kāyakamma*), for example by nursing each other in times of illness, and the factor found in an alternative presentation of this teaching, of a willingness to give a helping hand (*kiṅkaraṇīyesu-dakkhatā*) – a diligence to help out in all communal matters, big and small.<sup>124</sup>
2. Communal activities that have a bearing on the wellbeing and stability of the entire community, or matters requiring joint consideration and decision making, which accord with the ‘factors leading to prosperity’ (*aparihāṇīya-dhamma*), especially the first two factors: to hold regular and frequent meetings, and to meet in harmony, adjourn in harmony, and conduct sangha business in harmony.<sup>125</sup>

In relation to the first matters (A), if a monk takes no heed and makes no effort to help out, it is likely that he will be criticized and censured by the community, and requested to come forward to explain his actions and receive words of caution. This procedure, however, is dependent on the circumstances and has exceptions. For instance there may already be someone else specifically assigned to a task, there may be sufficient people helping out, or the individual monk may have important personal duties to attend to.

<sup>124</sup>The first presentation of the *sārāṇīya-dhamma*, e.g.: A. III. 288-9; the second presentation of the *sārāṇīya-dhamma* is found at A. V. 89, and is often known as ‘virtues making for protection’ (*nāthakaraṇa-dhamma*): see, e.g.: A. V. 23-4. The factor of *kiṅkaraṇīyesu-dakkhatā* appears in many other groups of virtues, e.g. at: Vin. I. 70; A. III. 113-14; A. V. 338.

<sup>125</sup>E.g.: D. II. 76; A. IV. 21. ‘To adjourn in harmony’ (*samaggā vuṭṭhahissanti*) can also be translated as ‘to cooperate in harmony’ (DA. II. 524).



There is a story of a newly ordained monk who spent the afternoon quietly in his *kuti*<sup>126</sup> while the other monks were sewing robes. The monks went to the Buddha and accused this monk of negligence. The Buddha called this monk for questioning and when he found out that the monk had been developing *jhāna*, he told the other monks to cease their protest.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, there are occasions when the majority of the community is caught up and disturbed about a communal issue, but respond to it in a confused and fruitless fashion. Those monks who remain quiet and detached in order to cultivate the Dhamma are considered to be acting appropriately.<sup>128</sup>

In relation to the second matters (B), there are no exceptions. When the community gathers to conduct a formal activity (*saṅghakamma*), all members of the community must be present. If a monk is ill or there is another reason preventing him from attending, then he must give his formal consent to the *sangha*.<sup>129</sup> {933}

In sorting out the details of these formal activities, however, the monks should first consider and look to those individuals who are directly involved or responsible for the matters at hand. The Buddha stated that for one who is still in training it is a way of decline to not acknowledge and defer to those experienced elders and instead to be obstructive and troublesome when there is formal communal business to attend to.<sup>130</sup>

The guidelines of social ethics which are a part of the Vinaya consist of a complete code of social conduct, designed to make communal activities, the relationship to the outside world, and the whole environment in which a person lives conducive to the growth and prosperity of a person's internal life. And in a complementary way, this code of conduct promotes a spiritual life whose virtues will be expressed outwardly, creating an atmosphere in which all people can train themselves and develop virtuous conduct, concentration, and wisdom, in order to discover true happiness,

<sup>126</sup>Trans.: *kuṭī*: meditation hut; monk's dwelling.

<sup>127</sup>S. II. 277-8.

<sup>128</sup>See the story of Ven. Attadattha Thera at DhA. III. 158 (cf.: Dh. verse 166).

<sup>129</sup>E.g.: Vin. I. 121-2.

<sup>130</sup>See: A. IV. 24-5.

with a free and pure mind and within a peaceful, ordered, and secure environment.

The Vinaya is a model example of morality on the level of a code of discipline, which is a complete system of guiding social conduct for a specific group of people, namely, the Buddhist monastic community.

The monastic discipline is not a set of moral principles in a restricted or limited sense, but rather it incorporates all aspects of the monks' social behaviour and conduct, including: designating the terms and procedures for accepting new members into the community (along with their privileges and responsibilities); caring for and training these new members; appointing officials for specific communal activities; determining the proper policy in regard to the search for, production, storage, and distribution of the four requisites, for example the kinds of allowable food, the receiving and sharing of food, the making of and proper use of robes, the kinds of proper medicines, the procedure of caring for sick monks (including responsibilities of both the nurse and the patient), the allocation of dwellings, the duties of a resident in these dwellings, the policy of building new dwellings, the design and planning of new dwellings, and the management of building projects; regulations for organizing community meetings; the way of dealing with formal accusations; the proper conduct of a plaintiff, a defendant, and the arbitrators of the case; the ways of executing and settling legal disputes; and the imposition of various penalties.

The term *vinaya* refers to a comprehensive system of conduct, enabling a specific group of people to be stable and secure, to live in a way that accords with their principles, and to perform their activities in an optimal way in order to arrive at their aspired goal.

If one uses modern terminology the *vinaya* is a system of conduct that encompasses the entire range of governance, social management, legislation, economics, and education (along with other areas of responsibility), according to the formal agreements made by a group of people (this can include an entire nation), by enacting a constitution, charter, legal system, or set of edicts.

In Buddhism the term *vinaya* denotes a foundation of conduct that supports the entire Buddhist way of life and promotes a favourable practice along Buddhist principles. The bhikkhu Vinaya is an instrument enabling the monastic community to be a source of prosperity and growth for the monks and to provide them with the true benefits that the Buddhist teachings have to offer. {934}

When the Vinaya exists, the monastic sangha exists. When the monastic sangha exists, the benefits derived from the Buddhist way of life exist. For this reason, a respect for the monastic community and its activities, and a sense of responsibility in regard to its stability and wellbeing, is a key objective to Buddhist social ethics.

The Buddha established a complete code of discipline – the Vinaya – for the monastic community, which lies at the heart of the wider Buddhist community. As for establishing an expanded, detailed code of discipline for the wider Buddhist community, it is up to people in each specific time period and set of circumstances to accomplish this task by drawing on the spirit of the Vinaya, as King Asoka once tried to do.

When one understands the principle of morality (*sīla*) on the level of a disciplinary code, one will be able to distinguish between morality as Dhamma and morality as *vinaya*. The former is included in the term ‘Dhamma’, while the latter is the definition of the term *vinaya*. One will also understand why the Buddha referred to Buddhism – the entire Buddhist teachings – as ‘Dhammavinaya’, and why the Dhamma and the Vinaya comprise the entire spectrum of Buddhism.

### 17.14 DEFINITION OF VINAYA BEYOND THE SCOPE OF MORAL PRECEPTS

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The discussion of *vinaya* above remains within the domain of moral conduct (*sīla*) or is directly linked to moral conduct. The term *vinaya*, however, has a wide range of meaning. An understanding of the various nuances of this term helps to clarify the general Buddhist perspective and framework.

There are two basic definitions for the term *vinaya*:

1. The practice of conforming one's behaviour and way of life to a systematized code of conduct; the development of self-discipline in order to follow an ethical code; the application of an ethical code to determine one's conduct, way of life, and communal activities.
2. A code of conduct, a set of precepts, or a set of regulations, which are formulated as a principle or standard for training and self-discipline, and which give order and excellence to a person's behaviour and to communal activities.

Upon closer inspection one can distinguish five nuances of meaning inherent within these two basic definitions:

1. Training: training oneself, and encouraging others to train themselves, in order for people's conduct to be virtuous, correct, disciplined, and systematic, and to bring about success and fulfilment.
2. Discipline: care and supervision of people's behaviour in order that it accords with a code of conduct; applying a code of conduct as a means to regulate people's actions and communal activities.
3. Declaration of rules and regulations (*nīti-paññāpana*): the formulation and establishment of a code of conduct, rules and precepts, laws and statutes, etc., to act as guidelines and a set of criteria in training or regulating people.

4. Legislation (*nīti-paññatti*): the actual code of conduct, rules and precepts, laws and statutes, etc. established for training or regulating people.
5. Arbitration (*vinicchaya-karaṇa*): passing judgement in the case of legal disputes, settling them according to an established code of conduct, laws and statutes, etc., in order to maintain righteousness, orderliness, and peace. {935}

In terms of human social evolution, the Buddhist teachings state that these systems of regulation arise out of necessity. When people live together in large numbers, with each person seeking the four requisites and consumable objects, it is natural that there arise quarrels, conflict, and competition. As a result, someone is required to settle these disputes, giving rise to supervision and governance.<sup>131</sup> For the wellbeing of society, the chosen ruler or governor must establish rules and guidelines for resolving any problems and regulating people's behaviour. A set of rules and laws are thus prescribed and legislation is enacted. And when disputes arise, judgement is passed and punishment meted out.

Originally, it was the sole duty of the ruler to lay down the law and pass judgement in times of conflict. Later, as human societies developed and became more complex, institutions and organizations were created to help establish legislative and judicial systems and procedures, to carry out these duties on behalf of the executive branch of government. Here, we can see that even the court system and the administration of justice is one aspect of the term *vinaya*.

As mentioned above, social exigencies brought about the need for a ruler, who was empowered with the right to judge legal disputes and lay down rules and regulations. The purpose of these guidelines was to foster social order, peace, and virtue, so that citizens could engage in their livelihoods with minimum conflict and that society would be secure and prosperous. If the society had a just ruler, whose honesty

<sup>131</sup>The Buddha discusses this social evolution in the Aggañña Sutta (D. III. 92). For more on this topic, see chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

and righteousness was trusted by the people, he would be referred to as a ‘righteous wheel-turning monarch’ (*cakkavatti dhammarāja*).

Although in such societies there existed something called ‘training’, it was generally only for developing knowledge and aptitude in those arts and sciences necessary for successfully engaging in a profession, in order to meet the demands of that particular society.

An important contribution by Buddhism in this context of *vinaya* was a change in how people are guided and managed. The regulation of people as a consequence of the social exigencies mentioned above, supported chiefly by a system of governance, is a means of controlling people through obligation and compulsion. This form of control is inadequate and not truly effective. One ought to also cultivate a sense of self-discipline.

Human beings are capable of being trained; they are able to change from bad to good, from coarse to refined. They have the ability to develop the highest spiritual qualities, including virtuous conduct, inner fortitude, happiness, and most importantly wisdom, which leads to the realization of the ultimate truth. Human beings are the primary agents in this dynamic; human society is formed by the intentional actions of people themselves. For this reason, the essential discipline and training should occur within each individual. {936}

A key feature of Buddhism is that the *vinaya* – the system of guidance and management – emphasizes that people manage themselves, by cultivating virtuous conduct, the mind, and wisdom. Those acting as guides are viewed as ‘beautiful friends’ (*kalyāṇamitta*), rather than disciplinarians.

In Buddhism, the *vinaya* is seen primarily as a system of spiritual training. For this training to proceed well and reach success, the other aspects of *vinaya* are introduced as supports, including supervision, administration, the laying down of rules and training precepts, and a course of justice (including the settling of disputes).

This key system of training is reinforced by *vinaya* in the sense of supervision, legislation, and arbitration, as described above. Importantly, the Buddhist discipline does not rely chiefly on adhering to rules and

imposing punishments. The emphasis is on ‘training rules’ rather than ‘commandments’.

Let us now turn to a literal explanation of the term *vinaya*. Traditionally, this term has been defined as ‘leading (to excellence)’. It may also be translated as ‘guiding’ or ‘managing’. In particular, this term refers to: managing individual people, so that they develop in virtue, reach fulfilment, and are released from all suffering; managing society, to bring about social peace and stability; and managing miscellaneous affairs, so that they are accomplished well.

The adjectival form *vinīta* (past participle of the verb *vineti*) is frequently used in the scriptures, primarily in reference to individuals and groups of people. It may be translated as ‘led to excellence’ or ‘well-trained’. When used in reference to affairs or circumstances (e.g. in the term *vinīta-vatthu*), it means that these things have been carried out, concluded, and accomplished well.

The Buddha stated that he would defer his final passing away (*parinibbāna*) until his disciples from the four assemblies were well-trained (*vinīta*). In many commentarial passages the term *vinaya* is explained as the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*). (See Note 17.10)

The meaning of the term *vinaya* is made clearer when it is compared with the word *dhamma*.

*Dhamma* refers to essential truths and principles, ranging from laws of nature to principles of conduct comprising the holy life (*brahmacariya*). The *vinaya* is a way of applying these truths and principles, giving substantial form to the conduct and behaviour of the holy life, and enabling this behaviour to spread outwards into the wider world.

In other words, *vinaya* acts as an instrument for the Dhamma, regulating how a community or society functions in accord with the principles and objectives of the Dhamma; it helps to systematize the holy life.

The Dhamma focuses on the essence of the teachings and emphasizes the individual; *vinaya* focuses on form and emphasizes a system of practice. {937}

## NOTE 17.10: ESTABLISHING THE DHAMMA-VINAYA

Evil One, I will not take final Nibbāna till I have monks and disciples who are astute, well-trained, learned, fearless, knowers of the Dhamma, trained in conformity with the Dhamma....

*Na tāvāhaṃ pāpima parinibbāyissāmi yāva me bhikkhū na sāvakā bhavissanti viyattā vinītā visāradā bahussutā dhammadharā dhammānudhammapaṭipannā....*

*D. II. 104-105.*

Several commentaries contain the following explanation: ‘It is called Dhamma in the sense that it is a natural truth (*sabhāva*); it is called *vinaya* in the sense that it ought to be practised’: NdA. [143]; PsA. II. 505; VbhA. [348].

One commentarial passage states: ‘*Vinaya* is the threefold training’ (*vinayo sikkhattayaṃ* – Vibhaṅga Mūlaṭṭikā: Jhānavibhaṅgo, Suttanta-bhājanīyaṃ, Niddesavaṇṇanā).

Another passage states: ‘One is not well-trained (*vinīta*) when one has not trained in the higher moral training, etc.’: Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā: Mūlapaṇṇāsaṭṭikā, Mūlapariyāyavaggo, Suttanikkhepavaṇṇanā.

If people overlook the deeper meaning of *vinaya*, do not apply the social principles inherent in the concept of the *vinaya* and do not apply the spirit of this concept to their everyday life – do not formulate a systematic code of conduct that is based on Buddhist values and appropriate to the present time, follow it strictly and share it with others, and do not seek the essence of the Dhamma – it is reasonable to expect the following dire consequences:

1. The domain of Buddhist practice or the sphere of a Buddhist way of life will become more constricted and limited. The Buddhist community will not advance; on the contrary, it will be on the defensive and retreat far from the rest of human society, as if fleeing to an island surrounded by rising tides, cut off from the rest of the world.
2. The social circumstances, especially the overall state of society, will change according to outside power and influences, with Buddhists



having almost no participation in the creation and management of social affairs. When social circumstances change in ways unsupportive to Buddhist practice, they will have a direct impact on Buddhism, perhaps even reaching the stage where Buddhist practice is impossible. If this happens, Buddhists will have themselves to blame for their carelessness and neglect.

The ancient traditions in Thailand related to ordination – of having boys and young men be ordained as novices and monks to receive an education in the monastery, and the belief that a man must first be ordained as a rite of passage before he gets married and starts a family of his own – are examples of establishing a moral code (*vinaya*) and a Buddhist social system, which helped greatly for Buddhism to thrive and become widespread in Thai society. The deterioration of these traditions has had obvious adverse effects on Buddhism in Thailand.<sup>132</sup>

If Buddhists do not understand the essence of the term *vinaya* and the true objective of Buddhist social ethics, not only will the spirit of moral training not extend out and be integrated into the practice of lay Buddhists, but even the essential function of the monastic Vinaya will fade away, leaving only a set of empty rituals.

If one is to restore the proper application of moral discipline (*vinaya*), a mere emphasis on strictness of form is inadequate. An essential task, which has not been carried over from the past and has been reduced in importance, is to restore and revive the spirit of social ethics inherent in the monastic Vinaya. Moreover, Buddhists should extend this spirit of social ethics outwards and apply it to the spiritual practice of the lay community, establishing a Buddhist code of conduct and social system that is appropriate to today's day and age.

<sup>132</sup>Whether these traditions are appropriate to the modern era, or whether they have disadvantages, I will not examine here.

### 17.15 APPENDIX 1: TEACHING THE DHAMMA AND LAYING DOWN THE VINAYA

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The Dhamma refers to the absolute truth, which exists according to its own nature. The Buddha discovered this truth and revealed it to others. Generally, the Pali term *dhamma-desanā* is used in this context, meaning ‘exposition of the Dhamma’ or ‘Dhamma teaching’. (The term *dhamma-paññatti* appears once in the Tipiṭaka, but its meaning is the same as *dhamma-desanā*, or it refers to presenting or arranging the Dhamma in order to make it more easily understood.)<sup>133</sup>

The Vinaya is a code of regulations formulated and laid down by the Buddha for the specific purpose of assisting the monastic order (*saṅgha*) which he had established. (The Vinaya is directly connected to the Dhamma: it exists in order for the sangha to benefit from the Dhamma or to arrive at the Dhamma in the best possible way.) In this context, the term *vinaya-paññatti* is used, meaning to lay down the Vinaya, or it refers to the regulations that comprise the Vinaya. (The term *vinaya-desanā* is used occasionally in the scriptures, increasingly in the later texts, and has the specific meaning of Vinaya terminology or the method of formulating the Vinaya.)<sup>134</sup>

Although the term *paññatti* is occasionally used in the context of the Dhamma,<sup>135</sup> it refers simply to formulating, arranging, classifying, and grouping the truth in order to clarify it – to make it easier to understand and to practise; it is not a matter of laying down new clauses as in the context of the Vinaya.

Note that in regard to the Buddha’s utterance in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta: *Mayā dhammo ca vinayo desito paññatto*, the commentators translate this passage as: ‘The Dhamma that has been taught and formulated and the Vinaya that has been taught and formulated.’<sup>136</sup> The terms ‘taught’ and ‘formulated’ here should be understood and distinguished according to the explanations above.

<sup>133</sup> A. III. 87.

<sup>134</sup> VinṬ. [1/7]; VinṬ.: Paṭhamo Bhāgo, Paṭhamamahāsaṅgītikathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>135</sup> E.g.: D. I. 192; A. I. 286; S. II. 25–6.

<sup>136</sup> D. II. 154; DA. II. 591.

## 17.16 APPENDIX 2: SĪLA, VINAYA, AND SĪLA-DHAMMA

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(Trans.: this appendix combines material from appendix 2 of chapter 19  
and appendix 3 of chapter 11 of the Thai edition of Buddhaddhamma.)

Moral principles (*sīla*) not specifically outlined and included in a moral discipline (*vinaya*) can be defined as ‘Dhamma on the level of morality’. This should not be confused with the Thai term *sīla-dhamma* (ศีลธรรม), which has a distinct meaning limited to morality and virtue. In this term, *sīla* refers to the refraining from doing bad or from transgressing precepts, and *dhamma* refers to virtuous conduct or teachings promoting virtue. According to the Buddhist teachings, the entire practice of Dhamma is divided into the three stages of training (*tisso sikkhā*): virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). *Sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* are all aspects of Dhamma, and therefore there is Dhamma on the level of virtuous conduct, Dhamma on the level of concentration, and Dhamma on the level of wisdom.

Some people try to expand the definition of *sīla-dhamma*, for example by interpreting it as *sīla* and *dhamma*, which in effect encompasses the entire Buddhist teachings, but this is generally not accepted by Buddhist scholars. Most Thai people, when thinking of the term *sīla-dhamma*, do not think of concentration, the Four Factors of Mindfulness, insight meditation on the three characteristics, etc. The expansion of this term’s definition is therefore limited to academic studies. (One can broaden the definition as ‘virtuous conduct as well as other qualities’, including concentration and wisdom. Alternatively, one can equate *sīla* here with *vinaya*: *sīla-dhamma* thus means ‘*vinaya* and *dhamma*’, corresponding to the original term ‘Dhammavinaya’.)

As far as this term is generally understood, however, *sīla-dhamma* refers to ‘Dhamma on the level of morality’. In the dictionary of the Royal Institute, *sīla-dhamma* is defined simply as ‘virtuous conduct’. To whichever extent the meaning of this term is expanded it lies within the confines of the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṣaḍḍhi*), otherwise known as the ways of righteous conduct (*dhamma-cariyā*). Indeed, the

term ‘righteous conduct’ (*dhamma-cariyā*) is a suitable substitute for ‘virtuous conduct’ (*sīla*; *sīla-dhamma*). (Note that although the two words constituting the term *sīla-dhamma* are etymologically linked to Pali and Sanskrit, the use of this compound is only found in the Thai language.)

A simple definition one sometimes finds for *sīla* is ‘a set of prohibitions’. This ‘negative’ definition came about as a way to explain the meaning of *sīla* on a basic level, but to stick to this as the only definition is both limiting and incorrect. Indeed, even *sīla* as a code of discipline (*vinaya*), for example the bhikkhu Vinaya, contains both prohibitions and directives for ‘positive’ action: to gather for formal community meetings, to undertake communal responsibilities (e.g. the duties of a monk in charge of food distribution), to act with humility and respect, to endeavour to be of service to others, etc.; these are all matters of *sīla*.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, the discussion of virtuous conduct often overlooks the matter of earning a livelihood, which is a vital part of *sīla*. To avoid an overly narrow understanding of *sīla*, one should develop a more comprehensive view, including right speech, right action, and right livelihood.

<sup>137</sup>See: DA. III. 998; ItA. II. 25; DhA. 158; Comp.: Vīthimuttaparichedo, Kammacatukkaṃ.

### 17.17 APPENDIX 3: THE FIVE PRECEPTS AND THE TEN WHOLESOME COURSES OF ACTION

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*(Trans.: note that this appendix is attached to chapter 16 of the Thai edition of Buddhaddhamma, on the Middle Path.)*

The term *pañca-sīla* ('five precepts') is on the whole a more recent term. In the Tipiṭaka it is used only rarely and when it is used the precepts are not enumerated; it is used as a tool for recollection or it is used in a technical sense. It is found at Vin. II. 161-2, but without listing the precepts, and at Ps. I 46-7, but here, when the factors are explained, the ten ways of righteous conduct are mentioned instead of the precepts. In the commentaries and later texts the term is abundantly used.

In the Tipiṭaka, the more common references to the five precepts include the terms 'five virtues' (*pañca-dhamma*) and five 'training rules' (*sikkhāpada*), or else the five precepts are mentioned without a heading. Further references to the five precepts include: 'bright qualities' (*sukka-dhamma*), 'an absence of fearful retribution', and a defining quality of a layperson's morality.<sup>138</sup> The five precepts are also included as part of the 'householder's observances' (*gihi-vatta* or *gahaṭṭa-vatta*).<sup>139</sup>

Regarding the ten wholesome courses of action, or the ten ways of righteous conduct, there are many alternative names for these qualities, and there are also many passages where these ten qualities are listed without a heading. The section in the Pali Canon that contains the longest description of these qualities is at A. V. 249-308 (running to fifty-nine pages).<sup>140</sup>

<sup>138</sup>The five precepts referred to as the five training rules (*sikkhāpada*): D. I. 146; D. III. 235; A. III. 211-12; Vbh. 285-91. Further references: D. II. 12 (= M. III. 120-21); D. III. 195; M. II. 51; S. II. 69; S. IV. 245; S. V. 387-8; A. I. 225; A. II. 57-8, 99, 217 (= Dhṭk. 22), 234; A. III. 35, 170-71, 203-5, 209, 276; A. IV. 220; It. 63; Nd. I. 388; Vbh. 378.

<sup>139</sup>Sn. 69.

<sup>140</sup>Further references at: D. I. 138; D. II. 322; D. III. 74, 82-3, 269; M. I. 287-8, 313-4, M. II. 87, 150; M. III. 47-50, 210; S. IV. 313, 321-2, 350-51; A. I. 269-72, 297; A. II. 59-60, 220, 253-4; Nd. I. 37-8, 48 (= 501-2), 218-19; Vbh. 363-4, 391; Pug. 39-41.

It appears that in general contemporary Buddhist teachings there is more emphasis on the negative aspects of the ten wholesome courses of action (or ‘ways of righteous conduct’) – an emphasis on avoidance and omission – than the positive aspects – on what should be performed or practised – even though the Pali Canon describes both positive and negative aspects. {561}

Apart from the five precepts and the ten ways of righteous conduct, morality (*sīla*) is also presented according to the factors of the Eightfold Path (= the first seven factors of *dhamma-cariyā*),<sup>141</sup> or according to the teaching on the four vices of conduct (*kamma-kilesa*).<sup>142</sup>

<sup>141</sup>D. II. 311-12; M. III. 23, 251-2; S. V. 353-4; A. II. 83-4, 219; Vbh. 105, 235, 383.

<sup>142</sup>D. III. 182; M. II. 35-6; A. II. 71; A. III. 432-3; Vbh. 376.

17.18 APPENDIX 4:  
CLASSIFYING THE TEN WAYS  
OF RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT INTO THE THREE TRAININGS

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*(Trans.: note that this appendix is attached to chapter 11 of the Thai edition of Buddhadhamma, on the Middle Path.)*

Note that at A. I. 269-70 the Buddha classifies the eighth and ninth factors of the righteous ways of conduct (*dhmma-cariyā* = the ten wholesome courses of action – *kusala-kamma-patha*), i.e. non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*) and non-ill-will (*abyāpāda*), as *citta-sampadā* ('mental cultivation'; 'mental accomplishment'), which means that they are part of the 'training in higher mentality' (*adhicitta-sikkhā*): they are part of concentration (*samādhi*). (The first seven factors of the righteous ways of conduct are classified as *sīla-sampadā* – the accomplishment of virtue; the tenth factor is classified as *diṭṭhi-sampadā* – accomplishment of view.) This is because the eighth and ninth factors are devoid of the first two hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and ill-will (*byāpāda*).<sup>143</sup> The abandonment of the five hindrances is the initial step in reaching 'attainment concentration' (*appanā-samādhi*) and accessing *jhāna*.<sup>144</sup> Non-covetousness and non-ill-will are states devoid of the first two hindrances; the absence of the hindrances in itself equals concentration (*samādhi*).

There are other passages, however, in which these two factors are classified as wisdom factors. The reasons for classifying these two factors either as factors of concentration or as factors of wisdom is such: the state of mind possessing non-covetousness and non-ill-will, or the development of these factors in the mind, is classified as training in higher mentality – as concentration; thoughts or intentions consisting of these two factors is classified as 'right intention' (*sammā-saṅkappa*) – as training in higher wisdom. In the presentation of the wholesome courses of action at M. I. 287-8, the emphasis is on thoughts and intentions consisting of these

<sup>143</sup> *Abhijjhā* as one of the hindrances is equivalent to the term *kāma-chanda* ('sensual desire') and is often used as a substitute for *kāma-chanda* (e.g. at: D. I. 207).

<sup>144</sup> The moment of abandoning the five hindrances is classified as 'access concentration' (*upacāra-samādhi*).

two factors and therefore they are classified under right intention.<sup>145</sup> When viewed as pure mental factors, however, they are classified under mental cultivation as explained above.

Note also in this context that if one covets the belonging of someone else, but one is not yet intent on acquiring it for oneself, then one is not corrupted; the same is true if one becomes angry but has not yet begun to harbour evil thoughts and to wish for someone else to be harmed.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>145</sup>Cf.: VbhA. 75.

<sup>146</sup>See: DA. III. 1048; MA. I. 201; SA. II. 148; DhsA. 101; NdA. I. 118.



### 17.19 APPENDIX 5: ILL-EFFECTS RESULTING FROM TRANSGRESSION OF THE FIVE PRECEPTS

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The commentaries present principles for judging the severity of ill-effects resulting from killing various sorts of creatures, based on the following criteria:

1. Degree of virtue: killing someone of great virtue has dire consequences, while killing a creature endowed with meagre or no spiritual virtues has less serious consequences; e.g.: killing an arahant is more serious than killing an unenlightened person; killing a domestic animal is more serious than killing a wild animal.
2. Size: in regard to animals, whose merits are more or less equal, killing a large animal is more serious than killing a small animal.
3. Effort: making great effort to kill is more serious than making little effort.
4. Defilement or intention: if the defilements or intentions are strong there are more serious ill-effects than if the defilements or intentions are weak; e.g. killing with anger or out of premeditated hatred is more serious than killing in self-defence.

The commentaries offer a similar analysis in regard to the other precepts. For example:

- The consequences of stealing correspond to the value of the stolen object, the virtue of the owner of the object, and the degree of effort made in stealing the object.
- The consequences of sexual misconduct depend on the virtue of the violated person, the intensity of defilement, and the degree of effort made.
- The consequences of lying are determined by the interests and advantages at stake. E.g.: the case of someone who is reluctant

to give up a possession and who claims he doesn't have it is less serious than that of someone who gives false testimony in court; the situation of a renunciant speaking a falsehood as a joke is less serious than him deliberately and falsely claiming to have achieved a spiritual realization.

- The ill-effects of consuming intoxicants depend on the defilements or unwholesome mind states occurring at the time of drinking, on the amount consumed, and on the effects of drinking that lead to evil and unskilful behaviour.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>147</sup>See the references cited at footnote 20; see also: VbhA. 383.

## 17.20 APPENDIX 6: VARIANT MEANINGS OF 'VINAYA'

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The commentaries refer to the *vinaya* in the sense of a code of precepts or rules as a 'prescribed code of discipline' (*paññatti-vinaya*). There exist, however, several other important terms in which the word *vinaya* is used. One of these, which is found frequently and has a similar meaning to that just mentioned, is *ariya-vinaya*, which refers to the code of conduct, way of life, or system of training of noble beings. This term corresponds to the term *sugata-vinaya*, which the Buddha defined as *brahmacariya*: the 'holy life' or the way of leading a supreme life. {939} This is consistent with the commentaries, which define *ariya-vinaya* as the Buddhist religion;<sup>148</sup> this definition is broader than that of *vinaya* in the context of virtuous conduct (*sīla*).<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup>DA. I. 236; MA. V. 107; AA. II. 353; AA. IV. 173.

<sup>149</sup>The term *ariya-vinaya* appears in a verse at A. III. 353-4; apart from this, it appears in the phrase *ariyassa vinaya*: Vin. I. 315 = Vin. II. 192 = D. I. 85 = M. III. 247 = S. II. 128 = A. I. 237-8 = A. II. 146-7; D. I. 245; M. I. 40-41, 266, 359-60; M. III. 298-9; S. II. 271; S. IV. 95, 157; S. V. 362; A. I. 163, 167-8, 261; A. II. 113; A. III. 352-3, 411; A. IV. 430; A. V. 234-5 (= 250), 263; Nd. I. 378-9.

The commentators give a comprehensive explanation of the term *vinaya* at VinA. I. 225. The commentaries at AA. V. 33 offer four definitions, and of these four definitions other commentaries subdivide the first two into another ten definitions: MA. I. 22; SA. II. 252; SnA. I. 8; NdA. 77; DhA. 351.

## 17.21 APPENDIX 7: PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF THE MANYFOLK

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Apart from those passages cited in the main text above, there are many more examples in the Pali Canon of the teaching on practising for the wellbeing and happiness of all beings, for example: the sending forth of the disciples to proclaim the teachings was for this purpose;<sup>150</sup> the Well-Farer and the Well-Farer's discipline (*sugata-vinaya*) exist for this purpose;<sup>151</sup> the Buddha recommended studying, practising, and rehearsing the Dhamma so that the holy life – the Buddhist religion – will last for a long time, in order to benefit all beings;<sup>152</sup> the Buddha emphasized sangha harmony and warned against sangha schism, interpersonal quarrels, incorrect teachings on the Dhammavinaya, and leaders in the sangha who possess wrong view, out of consideration for the wellbeing of the multitudes.<sup>153</sup>

The essential principle of practising for the wellbeing of the manyfolk is to establish people in the 'noble path' (*ariyañāya-dhamma*), so that they possess virtuous qualities (*kalyāṇa-dhamma*) and wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*).<sup>154</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Vin. I. 20-21; S. I. 105-106.

<sup>151</sup> A. II. 147.

<sup>152</sup> D. II. 119-20; D. III. 127, 210-11.

<sup>153</sup> See: D. III. 246; M. II. 245-6; A. I. 18-21; A. III. 114-15, 334-5; It. 11; Vin. II. 89; Vin. V. 167-8.

<sup>154</sup> This practice as an attribute of the Buddha: A. V. 66; as an attribute of a 'great man': A. II. 35-6. Compare with the passage at A. III. 115-16, which describes the attributes of an elder monk who is called one who practises for the welfare of the manyfolk; one important attribute is to lead the manyfolk away from the untrue Dhamma and to establish them in the true Dhamma.

## 17.22 APPENDIX 8: HONOURING THE DHAMMA, HONOURING THE VINAYA

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The Buddha honoured the Dhamma, and he said that whenever the sangha is possessed of greatness then he also honours the sangha.<sup>155</sup> This practice of veneration accords in principle with both the six and the seven kinds of respect, which include respect for the Master (the Buddha), respect for the Dhamma, respect for the Sangha, and respect for the training (Vinaya).<sup>156</sup>

There is one noteworthy point to make here about the term ‘belief’ in reference to arahants. On one level the term ‘belief’ can be used in relation to the Dhamma. The Buddhist teachings classify this belief as one stage in the development of wisdom (corresponding to the term ‘faith’). In this context arahants have passed beyond this stage of ‘belief’, because they have penetrated and realized the truth for themselves and do not need to believe anyone else.

On another level the term ‘belief’ can be used in relation to the Vinaya or to a set of directives, which are connected to a social code of discipline (corresponding to the term ‘obedience’). In this context arahants are obedient or highly disciplined, as confirmed by a passage in the scriptures stating that if the Buddha commanded an arahant (or other awakened person) to walk into a bog, the arahant would obey without hesitation.<sup>157</sup>

{940}

<sup>155</sup>A. II. 21; and see: A. III. 122.

<sup>156</sup>A. III. 330, 424; A. IV. 28.

<sup>157</sup>M. I. 439-40.

### 17.23 APPENDIX 9: SHOWING RESPECT ACCORDING TO SENIORITY

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The use of seniority (i.e. the number of years that a monk has been ordained) as the standard for showing respect is the most appropriate, convenient, and practical method of conduct, and it accords with the Buddha's aim for the sangha to be an example for others – of not using ancestry, social standing, or caste as the criterion for respect.<sup>158</sup>

An alternative criterion is to use the level of spiritual realization as the standard, but this method would be confusing and ultimately ineffective, because realization is not obvious and is difficult to prove, and realized persons do not go around boasting about their achievements. There were monks who proposed this standard but the Buddha refused to adopt it.<sup>159</sup>

What is particularly worthy of attention here is that while the Buddha chose seniority as the criterion for showing respect in the context of social relationships, which relates to external conditions, in the context of training in order to reach the highest goal, which is an internal factor and lies at the essence of the Buddhist teachings, he considered spiritual virtue to be the ideal and the true criterion for respect.

Those monks who receive honour according to the statutes of the Vinaya or according to rules of social interaction should be aware of the truth that it is the spiritual qualities that a person has realized, or righteous conduct (for example to be 'one who has practised well' – *supaṭipanno* – as mentioned in the nine attributes of the Sangha),<sup>160</sup> that truly make a person worthy of respect, and that these spiritual qualities must be cultivated within oneself.

<sup>158</sup>The Buddha's prescription for monks to pay respects according to seniority appears at Vin. II. 160-62.

<sup>159</sup>For an exception to showing respect according to seniority, made out of respect for the Dhamma, see: Vin. II. 168-9; and see also: S. IV. 122-3.

<sup>160</sup>Trans.: I have used the lowercase 'sangha' to refer to the monastic community and the uppercase 'Sangha' for the community of awakened disciples. See the earlier section 'The Dual Freedom of the Sangha' discussing the contrast between the conventional sangha (*sammati-saṅgha*) and the 'community of true disciples' (*sāvaka-saṅgha*) – sometimes referred to as the 'noble community' (*ariya-saṅgha*).

The Buddha gave many reminders of this truth to the elders in the sangha, for example in this Dhammapada verse:

Having grey hair does not make a person an elder.  
He may be ancient in years, but he gets old in vain.

One who possesses honesty, virtue,  
Harmlessness, restraint and control,  
Such a one who is a sage purged of impurities  
Is indeed called an elder.

*Dh. verses 260-61.*

One passage in the Pali Canon divides elders into three kinds: elders by 'birth' (i.e. by seniority – *jāti-thera*), elders by truth (*dhamma-thera*), and elders by convention (elders simply by name – *sammati-thera*).<sup>161</sup> Elders designated according to the Vinaya may be classified as elders by convention. Another passage mentions four qualities that make a person an elder.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup>D. III. 218. The commentators created the division of the three conditions of being an elder (*vuḍḍhi*): elders by birth (*jāti-vuḍḍhi*), elders by age (*vaya-vuḍḍhi*), and elders by virtue (*guṇa-vuḍḍhi*): JA. I. 220; at [VinT. 4/399] and SnA. I. 332 'elders by wisdom' (*paññā-vuḍḍhi*) is added to make four conditions.

<sup>162</sup>*Therakaraṇa-dhamma*: A. II. 22; and see the ten qualities of an elder (*thera-dhamma*) at A. V. 201.

## 17.24 APPENDIX 10: IS BUDDHISM A PESSIMISTIC RELIGION?

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The passage by Ven. Sāriputta quoted under the section ‘Theistic Morality vs a Doctrine of Natural Truth’ is cited in Albert Schweitzer’s ‘Indian Thought and Its Development’.<sup>163</sup> It is re-cited in Joseph L. Sutton’s ‘Problems of Politics and Administration in Thailand’.<sup>164</sup>

In this latter book (pp. 2-8), Prof. Sutton refers to other Dhamma teachings, for example the teachings on kamma, rebirth, and the retreat or escape from the world, to corroborate his critical viewpoint. I have touched upon the Buddhist teachings on intentional action (karma/kamma) already in earlier chapters. As for the claim that the teaching on rebirth leads to procrastination (as opposed to Christian doctrine which emphasizes a single lifetime), this can be answered by the Buddhist teaching on the extreme difficulty of being reborn as a human being – the chances for human rebirth are less than that of a blind turtle sticking its head through a hole in a piece of wood adrift in the ocean. Furthermore, Buddhism teaches that redemption is not possible through baptism or through confession of one’s sins.

As for the issue of withdrawing from worldly matters, Prof. Sutton refers to the following quote: ‘Those who love nothing in this world are rich in joy and free from pain.’ This quotation is found in the Udāna: *Tasmā hi te sukhino vītasokā yesaṃ piyaṃ natthi kuhiñci loke*.<sup>165</sup> The Pali word for love here is *piya*, which refers to a form of infatuation leading to personal attachment. This passage describes the attributes of an awakened being; it emphasizes liberation and the happiness of liberation, free from selfish infatuation and endowed with unbounded love – *mettā*. When one’s mind is free from suffering and selfish attachment, there is a complete spaciousness to act and abide with lovingkindness and compassion. One acts purely for the wellbeing of other beings, as is epitomized by the maxim:

<sup>163</sup> Henry Holt and Co.; New York; 1936, p. 112.

<sup>164</sup> Indiana University; Bloomington; 1962, p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> Ud. 92.



*bahujana-sukhāya lokānukampāya*: ‘For the happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world.’

However limited Prof. Sutton’s understanding was, or whatever his intentions, his comments can be useful as a reminder for Buddhists to deepen their knowledge and to clarify their understanding of the Buddhist teachings. There are many Western scholars who share Prof. Sutton’s criticisms, and it must be conceded that prevalent beliefs and misunderstandings among Thai Buddhists contribute to such criticism. (When *Buddhadhamma* was first published thirty years ago, Westerners had a limited understanding of Buddhism and harboured various misconceptions, for example that Buddhism teaches to see the world in a negative light, filled only with suffering. These days, this situation has changed dramatically.)

### 17.25 APPENDIX 11: MORAL PRECEPTS (*sīla*) AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (*vata*)

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Moral precepts (*sīla*) and religious practices (*vata*) differ. According to the Mahāniddeśa, *sīla* refers to self-restraint, self-control, and the non-transgression of precepts, while *vata* refers to undertaking religious practices or vows. The rules in the bhikkhu Vinaya contain both moral precepts and religious practices. The ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) are *vata*, not moral precepts – *sīla*.<sup>166</sup> Rules of practice that are *vata* but not *sīla*, like the ascetic practices, are extra: they are means to practise strictly in order to enhance self-discipline and self-development, and they emphasize contentment with little. But they are not mandatory: they are undertaken suiting one's disposition and level of preparedness. This differs from moral precepts, which each member of a community must keep; if someone fails to keep them there are harmful consequences both to the individual and collectively (and if the moral precept is included in the Vinaya, there are designated forms of punishment).

Furthermore, moral precepts are generally fundamental principles of behaviour, whereas religious practices are supplementary, increasing a sense of virtue and discipline and supporting the precepts, especially by removing or decreasing the opportunity to transgress them. In any case, some religious practices (*vata*), although they may appear austere and strict, are incompatible with Buddhist principles; the Buddha forbade them and in some cases they are incorrect according to the Vinaya. Examples include the vow of silence (*mūga-vata*;<sup>167</sup> this vow prevents wrong speech, for example lying; the Buddha criticized this practice and called it 'behaving like cattle') and the vow to eat only fruit that falls naturally from a tree (this vow prevents a person from harming animals and plants; it is considered an overly austere practice kept by members of non-Buddhist sects who hide from society).<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup>Nd. I. 66, 475–6.

<sup>167</sup>Vin. I. 157–9.

<sup>168</sup>E.g.: A. I. 295–6.

Note that there are also secondary or minor observances, called *vatta*, that complement moral precepts (*sīla*). In some Pali editions of the Tipiṭaka in Thai script, there is some mix up and confusion between the terms *vata* (religious practice/austere practice) and *vatta* (religious observance).



Small bells hanging from the eaves of temples  
and monastery buildings



Wat Chamathevi or Wat Kukut  
Chamathevi Road, Lumphun Province, Thailand

# CHAPTER 18

## PATH FACTORS OF CONCENTRATION

### 18.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Buddha classified the eight Path factors (the Noble Eightfold Path) into three groups or ‘aggregates’ (*khandha*), namely: the morality group (*sīla-khandha*), the concentration group (*samādhī-khandha*),<sup>1</sup> and the wisdom group (*paññā-khandha*), or simply: virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhī*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Here, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are included in the concentration group.

As a group, these three factors are also referred to as ‘training in higher mind’ (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), which can be defined as: training the mind, cultivating spiritual qualities, generating happiness, developing the state of one’s mind, and gaining proficiency at concentration. The essence of training in higher mind is to develop and enhance the quality and potential of the mind, which supports living a virtuous life and is conducive to applying wisdom in the optimal way.

On the highest level, ‘higher mind’ (*adhicitta*) or concentration refers to methods of developing tranquillity (*samatha*) and to various methods

<sup>1</sup>Trans.: note that the term *samādhī* here is both a classifying term for this group of three factors – *vāyāma*, *sati*, and *samādhī* – as well as one of the factors contained in the group. It is thus important in this context to understand that *samādhī* as the classifying term has a much broader definition than ‘concentration’ or ‘formal meditation’, as it is normally understood. Here, the term encompasses the entire range of mental training, of mental balance, composure, awareness (including ‘emotional awareness’), heedfulness, and one-pointed attention.

of tranquillity meditation. But in a general, comprehensive sense, higher mind or concentration encompasses all the methods and means to induce calm in people's minds, to make people be steadfast in virtue, to rouse enthusiasm, and to generate perseverance in developing goodness.

## 18.2 RIGHT EFFORT

Right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) is the sixth factor of the Eightfold Path. The suttas define right effort as follows:

Monks, what is right effort? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline:

1. Generates wholesome enthusiasm, exerts effort, rouses energy, strives, and determines to prevent unarisen evil, unwholesome qualities from arising.
2. Generates wholesome enthusiasm, exerts effort, rouses energy, strives, and determines to abandon arisen evil, unwholesome qualities.
3. Generates wholesome enthusiasm, exerts effort, rouses energy, strives, and determines to foster unarisen wholesome qualities to come into being.
4. Generates wholesome enthusiasm, exerts effort, rouses energy, strives, and determines for the continuance, non-disappearance, increase, completion, thriving, and fulfilment of arisen wholesome qualities.

*D. II. 311; M. I. 62; M. III. 251-2; Vbh. 105, 235.*

The Abhidhamma offers an additional definition:

What is right effort? The rousing of energy (*viriyārambha*) in the mind; progress, perseverance, determination, effort, exertion, persistence, steadfastness, constancy; steady progress, not forsaking enthusiasm, not neglecting work, shouldering responsibility;

energy, the faculty of energy, the power of energy, balanced effort; the enlightenment factor of energy, which is a factor of the Path, connected to the Path. This is called right effort.

Vbh. 107, 237.

In these definitions note the importance of wholesome enthusiasm (*chanda*; ‘wholesome desire’), which is the forerunner of right effort and is the essence of all forms of honourable perseverance. {755}

The definition in the suttas above, in which right effort is divided into four factors, is also called ‘right endeavour’ (*sammappadhāna*)<sup>2</sup> or the four endeavours (*padhāna*),<sup>3</sup> and each of these four endeavours has a specific name, as follows:

1. *Saṁvara-padhāna*: the endeavour to prevent or to be on guard against (un arisen unwholesome qualities).
2. *Pahāna-padhāna*: the endeavour to abandon or to eliminate (arisen unwholesome qualities).
3. *Bhāvanā-padhāna*: the endeavour to cultivate or to develop (un arisen wholesome qualities).
4. *Anurakkhanā-padhāna*: the endeavour to protect, safeguard, or increase (arisen wholesome qualities).

These four efforts are sometimes explained by presenting examples:<sup>4</sup>

1. *Saṁvara-padhāna*: when a monk sees a material form with the eye, he does not grasp at its signs and features (he is not captivated by its dominant and minor attributes). He practises in order to restrain the sense faculties, which when unrestrained are the cause for the unwholesome mind states of covetousness and aversion to overwhelm the mind. He protects the eye faculty, he is restrained

<sup>2</sup>A. II. 15; also translated as ‘right effort’, ‘proper effort’, or ‘perfect effort’.

<sup>3</sup>A. II. 74.

<sup>4</sup>See: A. II. 16.

in regard to the eye faculty (the same for hearing sounds, smelling odours, savouring tastes, contacting tactile objects by way of the body, and cognizing mental objects by way of the mind).

2. *Pahāna-padhāna*: a monk does not permit thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill-will, thoughts of cruelty, and evil, unwholesome states that have arisen to be sustained; he abandons them, decreases them, brings them to destruction, makes them without remainder.
3. *Bhāvanā-padhāna*: a monk develops the seven factors of enlightenment, which rely on seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, and incline towards liberation.
4. *Anurakkhanā-padhāna*: a monk nurtures the ‘concentrative signs’ (*samādhi-nimitta*), that is, the six ‘perceptions’ (*saññā*).<sup>5</sup>

Effort is a vital quality in Buddhism, which is evident from the fact that right effort is one of three factors (along with right view and right mindfulness) which is required as a constant support for the other factors of the Eightfold Path.<sup>6</sup> In almost every group of spiritual factors found in the scriptures effort is included, represented by different Pali terms.<sup>7</sup> The following passages by the Buddha confirm the importance of effort:

This Dhamma is for the energetic, not for the indolent.

A. IV. 233.

<sup>5</sup>Trans.: the six perceptions: perception of a skeleton, perception of a worm-eaten corpse, perception of a blue-black corpse, perception of a fissured corpse, and perception of a bloated corpse.

<sup>6</sup>See: M. III. 72-5.

<sup>7</sup>Trans.: note that one of the most common Pali terms denoting effort is *virīya*, which is a synonym for *vāyāma* and is often translated as ‘energy’. For this reason I have used the terms ‘energy’ and ‘effort’ interchangeably, as suits the circumstances.



Monks, I know clearly the value of two things:

1. To not be content with wholesome states of mind so far achieved.
2. To be unremitting in putting forth effort.

Therefore, you should practise accordingly: ‘May I put forth unremitting effort. Let only my skin, sinews and bones remain; let the flesh in my body dry up; yet there shall be no ceasing of energy till I have attained whatever can be won by manly strength, manly energy, manly effort.’ Thus should you train yourselves. {756}

A. I. 50.

Among other reasons, the repeated emphasis on effort stems from the primary Buddhist principle that the truth is an aspect of nature or exists as laws of nature. The role of the Buddha (the ‘Teacher’ – *satthā*) is to discover this truth and then reveal it to others. The fruits of spiritual practice occur in an impartial way according to natural causes and conditions; they are not generated by the Teacher. Therefore, people must make effort and produce results by their own strength and energy; they should not expect or appeal for desired results without putting forth effort, as is confirmed by this verse in the Dhammapada:

The Awakened Ones can but point the way;  
You must make the effort yourselves.

*Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ akkhātāro tathāgatā.*

Dh. verse 276.

Putting forth effort is similar to developing other spiritual qualities; all these qualities must be cultivated in an integrated manner, not in isolation. When effort has been properly prepared and integrated in the mind, one is then ready to express it as concrete actions in the external world. It is not a matter of simply generating a wish to make effort and then wilfully applying physical force in one’s exertions, which may lead to excessive straining and have very harmful consequences.

The making of effort must thus be in harmony with other spiritual qualities, most notably mindfulness and clear comprehension. One acts with understanding and awareness. One makes a balanced effort, by being neither too tight nor too slack, as is described in this story from the suttas:

At one time Ven. Soṇa was residing in the Sītavana grove near Rājagaha. He put forth extreme effort in his practice, doing walking meditation (*caṅkamana*) until the soles of both his feet were blistered and bleeding, but without success. He thus had this thought:

I am one of the most energetic disciples of the Blessed One, yet my mind has not attained liberation from the taints nor is it free from clinging. Now my family is wealthy, and I can utilize my wealth and do meritorious deeds. Let me then give up the training, and utilize my wealth and do meritorious deeds.

The Buddha knew what Soṇa was thinking and came to speak with him:

‘Soṇa, weren’t you just now thinking of giving up the training...?’

‘Yes, Lord.’

‘Tell me, Soṇa, when in earlier days you were a layman, were you not skilled in playing the lute?’ – ‘Yes, Lord.’

‘And, Soṇa, when the strings of your lute were too taut, was your lute well tuned and easy to play?’ – ‘No, Lord.’

‘And when the strings of your lute were too loose, was your lute well tuned and easy to play?’ – ‘No, Lord.’ {757}

‘But, Soṇa, when the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too loose, but adjusted to an even pitch, was your lute then well tuned and easy to play?’ – ‘Yes, Lord.’

‘Similarly, Soṇa, if energy is applied too forcefully it will lead to restlessness, and if energy is too lax it will lead to inertia. Therefore, Soṇa, keep your energy in balance, understand a balance of the spiritual faculties,<sup>8</sup> and hold a mental sign (*nimitta*) of this balance.’

Although right effort as one of the Path factors is an internal quality, for it to be effective and to be developed, it must rely on an interaction with the outside world. This includes how one responds to various sense impressions, and generally how one behaves, lives one's life, and engages in various activities. It also includes how one's environment affects one's effort and the cultivation of related spiritual factors, in both favourable and adverse ways.

The effort (referred to as *padhāna* – 'endeavour') made in Dhamma practice, which manifests as external action and is given systematic form, is connected to and dependent on particular environmental factors like the physical body, natural surroundings, and society. The Buddhist teachings thus emphasize the importance of external environmental factors for fostering a virtuous life and realizing the highest goal of Buddhism:

Monks, there are these five attributes of one who puts forth effort (*padhāniyāga*). What five? Here:

1. A monk has faith, he has confidence in the Tathāgata's awakening thus: 'For these reasons, the Blessed One is accomplished, fully enlightened ... is one who elucidates and disseminates the Dhamma.'
2. He is not encumbered by illness and affliction; he possesses a balanced metabolism for digesting food that is neither too cool nor too warm, but medium and suitable for striving.
3. He is not boastful or deceptive; he shows himself as he actually is to the Teacher and to his discreet companions in the holy life.
4. He is energetic in abandoning unwholesome states and in fulfilling wholesome states, steadfast, persevering, constant, not neglectful in cultivating wholesome states.
5. He is wise; he possesses wisdom regarding rise and dissolution that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. {758}

*D. III. 277; M. II. 95; A. III. 65; A. V. 15.*

<sup>8</sup>The five spiritual faculties: faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

Monks, there are these five unfavourable occasions for striving. What five? Here:

1. A monk is old, overcome by old age.
2. A monk is ill, overcome by illness.
3. There is a famine, crops are bad, food is hard to come by and it is not easy to keep oneself going by receiving almsfood.
4. Danger is prevalent, there is turmoil with bandits from the forests pillaging the land, and the countryfolk mount their carts and flee.
5. There is a schism in the sangha; when the sangha is divided there is mutual condemnation, accusation, denigration, and rejection; then those who are without faith do not develop faith and some of the faithful become otherwise.

Monks, there are these five favourable occasions for striving. What five?:

1. A monk is young, youthful, black-haired and endowed with the good fortune of youth, the prime of life.
2. He is not encumbered by illness and affliction....
3. A time when food is plentiful, crops are good, food is readily available and it is easy to keep oneself going by receiving almsfood.
4. A time when people dwell in harmony, as milk and water, cherish one another, do not quarrel, but look upon one another with friendly eye.
5. A time when the sangha dwells at ease – harmoniously, with mutual appreciation, without disputes, with a single recitation; when the sangha dwells in harmony, there is no mutual condemnation, accusation, denigration, and rejection; then those who are without faith develop faith and the faithful grow in faith.

### 18.3 3. RIGHT MINDFULNESS

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#### A. DEFINITION

Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is the second factor in the group classified as *samādhi* or as ‘training in higher mind’ (*adhicitta-sikkhā*).<sup>9</sup> The suttas define right mindfulness as follows:

Monks, what is right mindfulness? This is called right mindfulness: a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline:

1. Discerns the body in the body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, free from covetousness and grief for the world.
2. Discerns feelings in feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, free from covetousness and grief for the world.
3. Discerns the mind in mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, free from covetousness and grief for the world.
4. Discerns mind objects in mind objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, free from covetousness and grief for the world.<sup>10</sup> {759}

The Abhidhamma provides another definition:

What is right mindfulness? Mindfulness is constant recollection and reflection; [or] mindfulness is the state of recollection, remembering, non-fading, non-forgetting. Mindfulness is the faculty of mindfulness, the power of mindfulness, balanced awareness, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, which is a factor of the Path, connected to the Path. This is called right mindfulness.

*Vbh.* 107, 237.

The sutta definition of right mindfulness above is part of the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Each of the four factors in this teaching has an abbreviated name:

<sup>9</sup>Trans.: right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is the seventh factor of the Eightfold Path.

<sup>10</sup>D. II. 312-3; M. I. 62; M. III. 251-2; *Vbh.* 105, 236.

## NOTE 18.1: MEANING OF DHAMMĀNUPASSANĀ

Trans.: there appears to be a fair deal of confusion among Buddhists as to the meaning of *dhammānupassanā*. (Translations of this term range from: ‘contemplation of mind objects’, ‘contemplation of the nature of things’, ‘contemplation of phenomena’, ‘contemplation of true nature’, and ‘contemplation of psychological qualities’.) I therefore went to visit the venerable author to try and clarify some doubts over this matter. Ven. Phra Payutto’s response in a nutshell was as follows:

Basically, the term *dhammānupassanā* does refer to ‘mind objects’ – to thoughts and reflections. The reason why the Buddha chose examples of the formal teachings (e.g. the seven factors of enlightenment, the five hindrances, etc.) is because these particular kinds of reflections are conducive to awakening. The fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* is linked with the third: for example, one may have insight into the fact that the mind is subject to greed (*cittānupassanā*) and then contemplate the nature of greed, say as a manifestation of one of the hindrances.

The reason why the four mental aggregates (*khandha*) do not comprise one of the foundations of mindfulness is because these aggregates are in a sense more abstract: they are more difficult to ‘capture’ in awareness. The four *satipaṭṭhāna* are more practical – they are more easily observable and deal with everyday phenomena.

1. *Kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body; observing the nature of the body).
2. *Vedanānupassanā* (contemplation of feelings; observing the nature of feelings).
3. *Cittānupassanā* (contemplation of mind; observing the nature of mind).
4. *Dhammānupassanā* (contemplation of mind objects; observing the nature of mind objects). (See Note 18.1)

Before examining right mindfulness within the context of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, it is important to gain a basic understanding of this term *sati* (‘mindfulness’).

## B. MINDFULNESS AS HEEDFULNESS

*(English translations for sati include: mindfulness, attentiveness, and detached watching. Translations for appamāda include: heedfulness, watchfulness, earnestness, diligence, zeal, carefulness, non-neglect of mindfulness, and non-negligence.)*

*Sati* is most simply rendered as ‘recollection’, but such a translation may convey the idea that it is simply an aspect of memory. While memory is certainly a valid element of *sati*’s function, it does not do full justice to the essential meaning of the term. As a negation, apart from its meaning of ‘non-forgetting’, *sati* also refers to ‘non-carelessness’, ‘non-negligence’, ‘non-distraction’, and ‘non-confusion’. The mind is neither disorientated nor inattentive; rather it is focused and alert. These negations point to the positive qualities of circumspection, discernment of one’s responsibilities, attentiveness to one’s actions, and a readiness to receive things combined with an awareness of how to engage with them, giving rise to vigilance and care.

The function of mindfulness is often compared to that of a gatekeeper, who pays constant attention to those people who enter and leave a city gate, permitting those suitable persons to enter and leave, while forbidding those who are unsuitable. Mindfulness is thus of major importance in the field of ethics. It regulates people’s actions, and it helps to protect and restrain, by keeping people from indulging in bad actions and by preventing unwholesomeness from infiltrating the mind. Put in simple terms, mindfulness reminds us to do good and to give no ground to the bad.

The Buddhist teachings give great importance to mindfulness at every level of ethical conduct. Conducting one’s life or one’s Dhamma practice constantly governed by mindfulness is called *appamāda*, or heedfulness. Heedfulness is of central importance to progress in a system of ethics, and is usually defined as ‘living with uninterrupted awareness’. {760} This may be expanded on as implying: constant care and circumspection, not allowing oneself to stumble into harmful ways; not missing any opportunity for betterment; a clear awareness of what things need to be done and what left undone; non-negligence; and performing one’s daily tasks with

sincerity and with unbending effort towards improvement. It may be said that *appamāda* is the Buddhist sense of responsibility.

Heedfulness is classified as an ‘internal factor’, as is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). Both of these factors may form a pair with an identical external counterpart: association with good and noble friends (*kalyāṇamittatā*). The Buddha’s words describing heedfulness sometimes overlap his descriptions of wise reflection, for these two qualities are of equal importance, though they differ in application.

Wise reflection is a wisdom factor and is a tool for practical application. Heedfulness, on the other hand, is a concentration factor; it is that which governs the use of wise reflection, urges its employment, and constantly inspires one to further progress.

The importance and scope of heedfulness at various levels of ethical conduct may be seen from the Buddha’s own words in the following examples:

Monks, just as the footprints of all land animals fit into the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be the chief among them, that is, with respect to size, so too whatever wholesome states there are, they are all rooted in diligence, converge upon diligence, and diligence is declared to be the chief among them.

S. V. 43; A. V. 21-22.

No other thing do I see which is so responsible for causing unarisen wholesome states to arise and arisen unwholesome states to wane as diligence. In one who is diligent, wholesome states not yet arisen will arise and unwholesome states that have arisen will wane.

A. I. 11.

No other thing do I see which is so helpful for great benefit as diligence....

A. I. 16.



No other thing do I see which is so helpful for the stability, the non-vanishing, the non-disappearance of the True Dhamma as diligence.

*A. I. 16-17.*

As to internal factors, I do not see any other factor that is so helpful for great benefit as diligence.

*A. I. 17-18.*

Just as the dawn is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, accomplishment in diligence is the forerunner and precursor for the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path for a bhikkhu.... {761} The chief quality for greatly assisting the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path is accomplishment in diligence.... I see no other thing by means of which the unarisen Noble Eightfold Path arises and the arisen Noble Eightfold Path prospers and is fulfilled as the accomplishment of diligence.... When a bhikkhu is diligent it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate this Noble Eightfold Path.

*S. V. 30, 32-3, 35-7, 41-45.*

In regard to four matters, O monks, should diligence be cultivated. What four?

1. You should abandon immoral physical conduct, cultivate virtuous physical conduct, and not be negligent in this.
2. You should abandon immoral verbal conduct, cultivate virtuous verbal conduct, and not be negligent in this.
3. You should abandon immoral mental conduct, cultivate virtuous mental conduct, and not be negligent in this.
4. You should abandon wrong view, cultivate right view, and not be negligent in this.

If a monk has abandoned immoral physical conduct, cultivated virtuous physical conduct ... abandoned wrong view, and cultivated right view, he does not fear advancing death.

*A. II. 119-20.*

In four ways, O monks, should a monk cultivate diligence by himself, guarding the mind with mindfulness:

1. 'May my mind not harbour lust for anything inducing lust....'
2. 'May my mind not harbour anger for anything inducing anger....'
3. 'May my mind not be deluded by anything inducing delusion....'
4. 'May my mind not be infatuated by anything inducing infatuation....'

When a monk's mind does not harbour lust for lust-inducing objects, because he is free from lust, when his mind does not harbour anger ... when he is not deluded ... when he is not infatuated, then he will not waver, shake, recoil, or tremble with fear, and he will not [need to] believe anyone, not even the words of ascetics.

*A. II. 120.*

*King Pasenadi:* Is there, venerable sir, one thing which secures both kinds of good, the good pertaining to the present (or the visible good) and that pertaining to the future (or the spiritual, inconspicuous good)?

*Buddha:* There is.

*King Pasenadi:* And what is that one thing?

*Buddha:* Diligence, great king.

*S. I. 86; A. III. 364.*

So it is, great king! The Dhamma which has been well expounded by me is for one with good friends, good companions, good comrades, not for one with bad friends, bad companions, bad comrades.... Indeed, good friendship is equal to the whole of the holy life.

Therefore, great king, you should train yourself thus: 'I will have good friends, good companions, good comrades to associate with.' When, great king, you have good friends, good companions, good

comrades, you should dwell with one thing for support: diligence in wholesome states. {762}

When, great king, you are dwelling diligently, with diligence for support, your ladies of the court ... retinue of nobles ... soldiers ... subjects in town and countryside will think thus: 'The king dwells diligently, with diligence for support. Come now, let us also dwell diligently, with diligence for support.'

When, great king, you are dwelling diligently, with diligence for support, you yourself will be guarded and protected, your retinue of royal ladies will be guarded and protected, [even] your treasury and storehouses will be guarded and protected.

S. I. 87-9.

Even the Buddha's last words which he uttered before his final passing away (*parinibbāna*) pertain to heedfulness:

All conditioned things are of a nature to decay; strive to attain the goal by diligence.

D. II. 155-6.

### C. SOCIAL VALUE OF MINDFULNESS

In the following quotation from the *Sedaka Sutta*, the Buddha's words describing the benefits of mindfulness (*sati*) reveal the closeness, in practical terms, of its meaning to that of heedfulness (*appamāda*). Besides clarifying the meaning of these two qualities, this *sutta* also reveals the Buddhist attitude towards a person's relationship to society. The Buddhist teachings view the internal life of an individual as intimately connected to the external world – to society. These two aspects of a person's life are inseparable:

Monks, once in the past an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and addressed his apprentice thus: 'Come, climb the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.' Having consented to this request, the

apprentice climbed up the bamboo pole and stood on the teacher's shoulders.

Then the acrobat said to the apprentice: 'You protect me and I'll protect you. Thus guarded by one another, protected by one another, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.'

When this was said, the apprentice replied: 'That's not the way to do it, sir. You protect yourself, teacher, and I'll protect myself. Thus, each self-guarded and self-protected, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.'

That is the correct method in that case. It is just as the apprentice said to the teacher. When thinking, 'I will protect myself', one must apply the foundations of mindfulness; [so too], when thinking, 'I will protect others', one must apply the foundations of mindfulness. Protecting oneself, monks, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.

And how is it that by protecting oneself one protects others? By persistent practice, by cultivation, and by enhancement. It is in such a way that by protecting oneself one protects others.

And how is it that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, lovingkindness, and compassion. It is in such a way that by protecting others one protects oneself.

When thinking, 'I will protect myself', one applies the foundations of mindfulness; when thinking, 'I will protect others', one applies the foundations of mindfulness. Protecting oneself, monks, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself. {763}

S. V. 168-9.

#### **D. MINDFULNESS FOR WISDOM DEVELOPMENT AND THE REMOVAL OF MENTAL IMPURITY**

Heedfulness (*appamāda*) refers to seamless mindful awareness, to living one's life with constant mindfulness. Heedfulness makes one careful and

prudent; it prevents one from falling into bad or harmful ways. It leads to self-restraint, warning one against infatuation and indulgence. It urges one to not be complacent; it induces striving and encourages one to continually develop in spiritual practice. It makes one constantly aware of one's responsibilities, by reminding one of what needs to be done and what does not, of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. And it helps one to perform one's various tasks with circumspection and precision. Thus, as stated earlier, heedfulness is of major significance in a system of ethics.

Heedfulness as an expression of mindfulness has a wide-ranging significance in relation to one's general conduct in life. Broadly speaking, it is applicable from the stage of moral conduct (*sīla*) up to the stage of concentration (*samādhi*). At these stages, mindfulness is associated with a large number of other spiritual qualities, particularly effort (*vāyāma*), with which it is combined at all times.

Looked at solely in terms of the mind during the process of wisdom development (the use of wisdom to purify the mind), however, heedfulness (*appamāda*) is not directly involved, but rather gives devoted support and encouragement from without. At this stage, attention is confined to the workings of the mind, finely discriminating between the various phenomena present, in a moment-by-moment analysis. It is at this stage that mindfulness is fully engaged and plays a prominent role, and is referred to by its specific name: *sati*.<sup>11</sup>

An understanding of the essential, unique meaning of *sati* may be gained by contemplating its function on those occasions when its role is clearly distinguishable from that of other spiritual factors, most notably in the practice called the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). On such occasions the function of mindfulness can be summarized as follows:

<sup>11</sup>Trans.: when the author was asked to elaborate on the difference between heedfulness (*appamāda*) and mindfulness (*sati*), especially in relation to concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*), he stated the following: (1) heedfulness is technically a factor of concentration; (2) mindfulness lies at the heart of heedfulness; and (3) heedfulness supports the establishment of wisdom.

The primary function of mindfulness is that it prevents the mind from distraction; it does not allow sense impressions to pass by unheeded. It guards against absent-mindedness. It is attentive, as if keeping its eyes on each impression that passes into consciousness and then bearing down on it. When one wishes to concentrate on a particular object, mindfulness maintains one's attention fixedly upon it, not allowing the object to slip away or disappear. By means of *sati*, one constantly recollects the object and bears it in mind.<sup>12</sup>

One metaphor for mindfulness is a pillar, because it is firmly embedded in its object of attention. Another metaphor is a gatekeeper, because it watches over the various sense doors through which sense data pass, inspecting all that enters. The 'proximate cause' (*padaṭṭhāna*) for the arising of *sati* is firm and clear perception (*saññā*) of an object. Alternatively, the proximate cause is any one of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), which are discussed below.

Looking at it from the point of view of ethics, one can discern both negating and positive aspects of mindfulness. As a negating factor, mindfulness guards the mind; it defends against mental distraction, protects one from making mistakes, and prevents one from falling into undesirable mental states or situations. It allows no opportunity for unwholesomeness to enter the mind and it prevents the misuse of thought.

On the positive side, mindfulness guides the stream of conscious experience, the flow of thought, and indeed all of one's actions, so that they follow a desired course. It keeps the mind harnessed to its chosen object. It is thus the tool for laying hold of an object of attention, as if placing it in front of the mind for consideration. {764}

In the Buddhist path of practice, there is great emphasis on the importance of mindfulness. Indeed, the Buddha said that it is required in every situation. Mindfulness is compared to salt, which must be used in every

<sup>12</sup>The meaning of *sati* is not the same as 'memory', yet 'recollection' or 'remembrance', which is an expression of memory, is one aspect or one definition of *sati* used frequently in the scriptures, for example in the term *buddhānussati* ('recollection of the Buddha'). The true meaning of *sati*, however, is as defined above and is fairly adequately translated into English as 'mindfulness'.

curry, and to a prime minister, who is involved in every branch of government. Mindfulness may either restrain or support the mind, depending on the needs of the situation.<sup>13</sup>

Considering the attributes of mindfulness mentioned above, one sees the benefits of developing mindfulness as follows:

- An ability to maintain and safeguard desired states of mind, by monitoring the cognitive process and the stream of thought; one accepts only that which is favourable to the mind and bars all that which is not. Moreover, by regulating and stilling the thinking process, one facilitates the attainment of concentration (*samādhi*).
- Freedom, both physical and mental, and ‘self-sufficiency’; the body and the mind are intrinsically at ease and relaxed, ready to encounter various situations, and able to effectively deal with things in the world.
- An ability, in states of concentration, to guide the cognitive process and the stream of thought, and to expand their range of activity.
- Investigation by the wisdom faculty proceeds with optimum clarity. By taking hold of a meditation object and, as it were, placing it in front of the mind for subsequent investigation, mindfulness acts as a basis on which wisdom can be developed and brought to perfection.
- The purification of all volitional actions of body, speech and mind; a freedom from the tainted influence by craving and clinging. Accompanied by clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), mindfulness ensures that one’s actions are guided by wisdom – by pure, reasoned discernment.

The last two benefits listed above are the goals of an advanced stage of spiritual development, and are obtained through a prescribed method of practice referred to as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

<sup>13</sup>See: Vism. 130, 162-3, 464; VbhA. 311; DA. III. 787 = MA. I. 291.

## E. RIGHT MINDFULNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

*Satipaṭṭhāna* may be translated as the ‘foundations of mindfulness’ or the ‘establishing of mindfulness’ (i.e. the supervision or guidance by mindfulness). Technically, this term refers to methods of applying mindfulness that produce optimal results, as indicated by the Buddha’s words in the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta*:

Bhikkhus, this is the chief path for the purification of beings, for passing beyond sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the sublime way, for the realization of Nibbāna – namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.<sup>14</sup>

*D. II. 290; M. I. 55-6.*

The cultivation of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is a very popular and revered method of Dhamma practice. It is considered to incorporate both tranquillity meditation (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassanā*). A practitioner may develop tranquillity until the attainment of *jhāna* (see the following section on concentration) before developing insight based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and reaching the final goal. Alternatively, he or she may develop insight (again, based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness) as the principal form of meditation, relying on only a basic level of concentration, just as much as is necessary for the task, and then reach the final goal. {765}

Insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is a vital principle of Buddhist practice, which, though widely discussed, is also widely misunderstood. The following examination of the Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), however brief, will shed some light on the meaning of *vipassanā*, including its essential attributes, its range of application, and its versatility, as well as the possibilities and benefits of practising insight meditation in everyday life.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are outlined as follows:

<sup>14</sup>See also: Vbh. 193-207.



**1. Kāyānupassanā:** contemplation of the body; mindfulness of the body:

1. Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*): going to a secluded place, sitting in a suitable posture for meditation, establishing mindfulness, and focusing on various aspects of the in- and out-breathing.
2. Mindfulness of posture (*iriyāpatha*): clearly perceiving the present 'mode' or posture of the body, say of standing, walking, sitting, or lying down.
3. Clear comprehension (*sampajañña*): maintaining clear comprehension in every activity, e.g.: moving forward, looking around, stretching out the arms, dressing, drinking, eating, chewing, urinating, defecating, waking up, going to sleep, speaking, and remaining silent.
4. Meditation on the repulsive (*paṭikkūla-manasikāra*): contemplating the body, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, as a repository of various unattractive constituents.
5. Meditation on the elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*): contemplating the body by considering it separated into its four constituent elements.
6. Nine cemetery contemplations (*nava-sīvathikā*): looking at corpses in nine different stages of decay, from one newly dead to one reduced to crumbling bones. In each case, one reflects that one's own body must meet a similar fate.

**2. Vedanānupassanā:** mindfulness of feeling (*vedanā*; sensation): when a feeling of pleasure or pain or a neutral feeling arises, whether dependent on material things (*sāmisa*) or independent of material things (*nirāmisa*), one perceives it clearly, as it actually exists in that moment of occurrence.

**3. Cittānupassanā:** mindfulness of the nature of the mind; insight into the state of the mind in any given moment. For example, one perceives clearly whether the mind is lustful or free from lust, angry or

free from anger, deluded or free from delusion, agitated or concentrated, liberated or fettered, etc.

**4. Dhammānupassanā:** mindfulness of mind-objects:

1. Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*):<sup>15</sup> clearly perceiving, in each moment, whether any of the five hindrances are present in the mind or not; clearly perceiving how as-yet unarisen hindrances arise, how hindrances already arisen may be abandoned, and how abandoned hindrances may be prevented from arising again.
2. Aggregates (*khandha*): clearly understanding the five aggregates; knowing the nature of each aggregate; knowing how each aggregate arises and how it ceases. {766}
3. Sense spheres (*āyatana*): clearly understanding each of the six internal sense bases and the six external sense objects; understanding the mental fetters (*saṃyojana*) which arise dependent on the sense spheres; knowing how unarisen fetters arise, how arisen fetters may be abandoned, and how abandoned fetters may be prevented from arising again.
4. Enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅga*):<sup>16</sup> clearly understanding, in each moment, whether any of the seven factors of enlightenment are present in the mind or not; knowing how unarisen enlightenment factors arise, and knowing how arisen factors can be brought to completion.
5. Noble truths (*ariya-sacca*): clearly perceiving the nature of the Four Noble Truths.

<sup>15</sup>The five mental hindrances include: sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*); ill-will (*byāpāda*); low-spiritedness and drowsiness (*thīna-middha*; often translated as ‘sloth and torpor’); restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and doubt (*vicikicchā*). For more information see the following section on right concentration.

<sup>16</sup>Seven enlightenment factors: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of truth (*dharmavicaya*), energy (*virīya*), bliss (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*saṃādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, at the end of every one of the above clauses, there is an identical refrain:

A monk abides contemplating the body in the body internally (i.e. his own body), or he abides contemplating the body in the body externally (i.e. someone else's body), or he abides contemplating the body in the body both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating the truth of origination in the body, or he abides contemplating the truth of cessation in the body, or he abides contemplating the truth of both origination and cessation in the body. Indeed, he establishes mindfulness in front of him that 'there is a body' to the extent necessary for knowledge and recollection. And he abides independently, not clinging to anything in the world.<sup>17</sup>

#### F. GIST OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

One may see from the description above that the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*; this includes the practice of *vipassanā*) does not require a withdrawal from society into seclusion or a fixed time schedule. The Buddhist teachings therefore encourage its practice and integration into daily life.

In essence, the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness describes four areas in our lives which require the guidance and supervision by mindfulness (*sati*), namely: (1) the body and physical behaviour; (2) various sensations of pleasure and pain; (3) various states of mind; and (4) thoughts and reflections. Sustaining mindfulness at these four points helps to ensure a life free from danger and suffering, and such a practice culminates in the realization of the ultimate truth.

It is evident from the outline of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness above that, in practice, mindfulness is never applied on its own, but always in conjunction with other spiritual factors. One such factor, which is not specifically mentioned in the standard sutta definition of *sati* (above), is concentration (*samādhi*), which must be present, at least

<sup>17</sup>The term 'body' is changed to 'feelings', 'mind', and 'mind objects', accordingly.

in a weak form, sufficient for the task at hand.<sup>18</sup> The factors which are specifically and regularly mentioned include:

- *Ātāpī*: ‘ardour’, ‘effort’; this refers to right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), the sixth factor of the Eightfold Path, which entails guarding against and abandoning what is unwholesome, and cultivating and protecting what is wholesome.
- *Sampajāno*: ‘clear comprehension’, ‘full awareness’ (= *sampajañña*); this refers to wisdom (*paññā*).
- *Satimā*: the possession of *sati*; this refers to the very factor of mindfulness.

In the scriptures the term *sampajañña* usually appears coupled with the term *sati*. As the term *sampajañña* refers to wisdom, training in mindfulness is thus one part of wisdom development. {767} Clear comprehension is the clear and penetrative understanding of those things or activities focused on by mindfulness: one understands their nature and their purpose; one knows how to relate to them, free from delusion and misunderstanding.

The subsequent phrase ‘free from covetousness and grief for the world’ (see above, under the definition of right mindfulness) demonstrates the attitude resulting from having mindfulness and clear comprehension. A person is equanimous and independent, unbound by defilements, neither swayed by attachment nor by aversion.

In the ending refrain, the clause: ‘he contemplates origination and cessation’ points to an understanding of things in light of the Three Characteristics, giving rise to a perception and experience of things as they actually exist. The phrase: ‘He establishes mindfulness in front of him that “there is a body”,’ for example, refers to an awareness of the body in its actuality, without clothing it in assumptions and cherished beliefs,

<sup>18</sup>This is called ‘insight concentration’ (*vipassanā-samādhi*), which is at a stage between ‘momentary concentration’ (*khaṇika-samādhi*) and ‘access concentration’ (*upacāra-samādhi*).

without labelling it as a ‘person’, as a ‘self’, as ‘him’, ‘her’, ‘me’, or ‘mine’. This attitude is one of freedom and independence, in that it is not reliant on external conditions, and it is free from attachment by way of craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*).

In this context, let us examine the meaning of some important Pali terms:

*Kāye kāyānupassī*: ‘contemplating the body in the body’. This is the standard, literal translation, which can easily give rise to misunderstanding. One can sympathize with the translators here, because it is sometimes extremely difficult to convey a clear and concise meaning of some Pali terms and phrases. This phrase refers to accurately discerning at all times the body simply as a body, as nothing more than a collection or assembly of various organs and component parts. One does not see the body as being ‘him’, ‘her’, ‘me’, ‘John’, or ‘Susan’, etc., nor does one see it as belonging to anyone, as say ‘mine’ or ‘his’; when looking at the hair or the face, one sees these for what they are, not as a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’.

In other words, one sees directly in line with the truth, corresponding with the actual state of the body; what one sees corresponds to what one is looking at, that is, one looks at a body and sees a body, rather than looking at a body and seeing ‘Mr. Smith’ or someone loathsome or someone attractive. This is consistent with the saying of the old masters: ‘One looks but does not see. One’s vision is distorted and one sees otherwise. Not seeing, one is deluded. Deluded, one cannot escape.’ (See Note 18.2)

*Ātāpī sampajāno satimā*: ‘ardent, fully aware, and mindful’. This refers to right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), and right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), the three constant factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, which must always be applied in conjunction with the development of every aspect of the Path.<sup>19</sup>

1. Effort energizes the mind; it prevents the mind from becoming discouraged or depressed, from wavering, flagging, or retreating, and it gives no opportunity for unwholesome mind states to arise.

<sup>19</sup>This corresponds to the teaching in the Mahācattārisaka Sutta (M. III. 72-5). For passages equating *ātāpī* with *sammā-vāyāma*, see, e.g.: Vbh. 194-5.

## NOTE 18.2: CONTEMPLATING THE BODY IN THE BODY

DA. III. 756; MA. I. 241; VbhA. 217. The commentaries offer four or five different explanations for this expression ‘body in the body’, most of which point to a person’s focus of attention.

For example: not to perceive things in a confused manner – to see the body as the body; and not to see feelings, mind states, or mind objects as the body.

Another interpretation is to see subsidiary physical parts within the body as a whole; this is a way of dissecting or analyzing the body until one discerns that there is nothing more to the body than a collection of subsidiary parts; there is no ‘Mr. Addison’ or ‘Mrs. Bartlett’. It is an analysis of a collective unit or an unraveling of a clustered mass, like peeling back the leaves and leaf sheathes from a banana tree until one sees there is in truth no tree as such. (The same should be understood for ‘feelings in feelings’, ‘mind in mind’, and ‘mind objects in mind objects’.)

It is a force urging the mind to press on, and it fosters the growth of wholesome qualities. {768}

2. Clear comprehension is equivalent to wisdom, which penetrates the true nature of those objects focused upon by mindfulness, and it prevents delusion from arising in regard to them.
3. Mindfulness is the fixing and holding of attention on an object in each moment, preventing forgetfulness and confusion.

*Vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassaṃ*: ‘free from covetousness and grief in the world’. This phrase refers to a freedom from desire and aversion, likes and dislikes. By practising in this way, the mind is spacious and bright; neither attachment nor aversion can overwhelm the mind.

*Atthi kāyoti vā paṇassa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti yāvadeva ñāṇamattāya paṭisatimattāya*: ‘He establishes mindfulness in front of him that “there is a body”, to the extent necessary for knowledge and recollection.’ A mindful person knows clearly and accurately that the body is merely the body; one does not mistake it for a being, a person, a man, or a woman, as a ‘self’, as ‘mine’ or ‘yours’. The purpose of this reflection is for the sake of knowledge and recollection, for the development of mindfulness, clear

comprehension, and wisdom, and to ward against fanciful proliferations. The same reflection applies to feelings, the mind, and mind objects.

*Anissito ca viharati*: ‘He dwells independently.’ This refers to a mind that is free, not tied to any condition; one need not entrust oneself to anything or anyone else. Technically speaking, one does not take refuge in or rely on craving (*taṇhā*) and views (*diṭṭhi*). When cognizing something one experiences it directly, according to how it actually exists. One does not resort to craving and views in order to colour and embellish the experience, to lull oneself into forgetfulness, or to dictate one’s thoughts, reflections, and general wellbeing.

*Na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*: ‘He does not cling to anything in the world.’ One does not grasp at or attach to anything at all, whether form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, or consciousness as being self or belonging to self (*attaniya*).

*Ajjhattaṃ vā... bahiddhā vā....*: ‘either internally or externally’. Scholars have differed in their explanations of this phrase, but the consensus of the commentators is that ‘internal’ refers to oneself and ‘external’ refers to others.<sup>20</sup> Such an interpretation corresponds with the Abhidhamma texts, which elucidate the meaning of these terms, for example: ‘And how does a monk see the mind in the mind externally? Here, when another person’s mind is lustful, he clearly perceives that that is so.’<sup>21</sup>

Some people may question whether it is appropriate to intrude and probe into someone else’s mind, and whether this is even possible. A brief answer to this question is that the Buddha encouraged us to apply mindfulness to all things that we encounter, and to simply see these things as they are. {769} In daily life we must interact with other people, and we should do so mindfully. We should be aware of people as they are, as they clearly manifest to us in our direct, personal experience. (If one possesses the ability to read another person’s mind, one knows directly according to this ability; if one does not have this power then one need

<sup>20</sup>E.g.: DA. III. 776; MA. I. 280; VbhA. 217, 268.

<sup>21</sup>E.g.: Vbh. 197-8. There are passages in the Pali Canon describing knowledge of another person’s mind by way of telepathy (*cetopariya-ñāṇa*) which correspond to the teachings in the Foundations of Mindfulness (e.g.: D. I. 79-80).

not be inquisitive.) This way one will not obsess over other people and give rise to such unwholesome qualities as lust and aversion. There is no obligation to monitor or pry into the affairs of others. If, however, while say speaking to someone else who shows signs of anger, one is unaware of his or her emotional state, how can one claim to be practising the Foundations of Mindfulness and applying them in daily life?

To summarize, the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness entails living with mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), which prevents any fixed perceptions of self generated by ignorance to interfere with one's thoughts and to cause problems.

Some Western scholars have compared the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness with contemporary methods of psychotherapy, and have come to the conclusion that the former provides better results and greater benefits, because everyone is able to apply this practice by him- or herself, and can do so in everyday circumstances in order to maintain a healthy state of mind.<sup>22</sup>

Here, let us return to a summary of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, yet this time by using a contemporary mode of analysis.

#### **G. FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS: WAY OF PRACTICE**

The constituent factors in the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are twofold: the passive (that which is focused on, observed, discerned), and the active (the act of observing, paying attention, insight).

- The passive constituents are those ordinary, mundane things common to all of us: the body and its movements, thoughts, feelings, etc., which exist or manifest in the present moment of awareness.
- The active constituents are mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), which are the principal factors in the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. These two agents focus on

<sup>22</sup>See, e.g.: N. P. Jacobson, 'Buddhism: the Religion of Analysis' (Carbondale, Illinois; Southern Illinois University Press, 1970; pp. 93-123).



and observe those things present in the mind, unfalteringly and free from distraction.

Mindfulness (*sati*) is that which keeps hold of the chosen object; clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) is the wisdom faculty, which clearly discerns the nature and purpose of the object under investigation. For example, while walking one is mindful of and fully present with the movements of the body, and simultaneously one knows clearly the reason for walking, the intended destination, and the factors related to walking. Moreover, clear comprehension understands the object or the action as it is, without coating it with preferences and aversions.

There is a matter of linguistics here that needs to be addressed. Some people misconstrue the common definition of *sati* as ‘recollection’ and the definition of *sampajañña* as ‘self-awareness’, leading to misguided practice. They establish mind-fulness on the sense of self and then have the impression that they are the agents for various actions, thinking, ‘I am doing this’, ‘I am doing that’; as a result they create or reinforce the concept of self. They become preoccupied with this self-image and develop a rigidity of mind. At the very least, their minds are not truly focused on the activity and their efforts thus do not come to fruition. {770}

Someone prone to such misunderstanding should recall the definition of *sati* as ‘bearing in mind’, ‘sustaining attention on the object or task at hand’, and ‘sustaining attention on the flow of events’. Similarly, one should recall the definition of *sampajañña* as ‘clear comprehension of an object of attention’ or ‘clear comprehension of one’s current activity’. In other words, it is not a matter of focusing on the sense of self (‘I am doing this’). Rather than focusing on the ‘performer’ of the task, one focuses on the task itself. One’s attention is so present and focused that eventually there is no opportunity for a sense of self to interfere in the process.

The essential feature of mindfulness is an accurate, undistorted perception of things. One sees and understands what the object of awareness is, how it manifests, and what effects it has in each moment. This entails a constant acknowledging, observing, contemplating, and understanding. One does not react to the object, evaluate it, criticize it, or judge it

as being good or bad, right or wrong, etc. One does not paste one's emotions, biases, or attachments onto the object, say as being agreeable or disagreeable, satisfactory or unacceptable. One merely discerns how that object, condition, or quality actually is, without supplementing one's perception with such thoughts as 'mine', 'his', 'us', 'them', 'Mr. Crabtree', 'Mrs. Simpkins', etc.

Take the example of mindfulness of feelings (*vedanā*): in this very moment, one knows, for instance, that mental discomfort exists; one knows that it has arisen, one knows the way in which it came about, and one knows how it is gradually dissipating. Similarly, one is mindful of 'mind objects' (*dhammārammaṇa*): if worry or anxiety arises, one observes such emotions and contemplates how they have come about and how they unfold. If anger arises, the very awareness of this anger leads to its dissipation. One then reflects on that past anger, contemplating its advantages, its ill-effects, its causes, and its ending. Eventually, it can become enjoyable to study, reflect on, and investigate one's own suffering!

When it is pure, unadulterated suffering arising and passing away, and there is no trace of 'my suffering' or 'I am suffering', then that suffering is robbed of all its power to harm the one who contemplates it. Whatever form of virtue or vice exists externally or is present in the mind, one faces up to it, without any evasion or avoidance. One pays close attention to it, from the moment of its arising until it reaches its natural end. It is similar to watching actors perform a play or to being a bystander at some event. It is an attitude comparable to that of a doctor performing an autopsy or that of a scientist analyzing a subject of research, rather than that of a judge settling a case between plaintiff and defendant. It is an objective rather than a subjective approach.

The constant application of mindfulness and clear comprehension implies living in the present moment. One is aware in each moment of what is arising, what is happening, or what one is doing; attention does not slip. One does not attach to or linger over past events, and one does not drift off into the future in search of things that do not yet exist. If some unresolved matter from the past or some future obligation should be considered, mindfulness lays hold of the relevant details and the wisdom

faculty reflects on them in a purposeful way, so that these matters become the present object of awareness. One does not get caught up in aimless thought, nostalgic reminiscence, or fantasies of the future. By dwelling in the present moment, one is not enslaved, seduced, or driven by craving. One lives wisely, freed from various forms of suffering, such as grief, regret, worry, and depression. This way of life leads to an awareness accompanied by spaciousness, clarity and ease. {771}

#### H. FRUITS OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

- Purity: when mindfulness is focused on a chosen object and when clear comprehension understands that thing in its true light, then the stream of cognition and thought is purified, for there will be no room for mental defilements to arise. When one discerns phenomena simply as they are, without colouring the experience by emotions or reacting from personal prejudices and preferences, there is no clinging. This is a way to eliminate existing mental taints (*āsava*) and to prevent newly-founded taints from arising.
- Liberation: when the mind is purified as described above it is also liberated; it is not shaken or disturbed by sense impressions, because they are used as food for contemplation in a purely objective way. When these things are not misinterpreted by subjective mental taints they have no power over people, and one's behaviour is freed from the controlling influence of unconscious drives and motivations. This is what is referred to by the passage: 'One abides independently, not clinging to anything in the world.'<sup>23</sup>
- Wisdom: when the mind is thus purified and liberated, wisdom functions most effectively, because the mind is not 'coated over' or detracted by emotions, prejudices, and biases. One then sees things as they are, according to the truth.
- Freedom from suffering: when this state of vigilance and true understanding of things is sustained, prejudicial responses, either in a negative or a positive sense, which do not accord with pure

<sup>23</sup>One is not enslaved by craving (*taṇhā*) and wrong view (*ditṭhi*).

reasoned discernment, cannot arise. There are no feelings of covetousness (*abhijjhā*) or resentment (*domanassa*), and there is a liberation from all forms of anxiety. This is called freedom from suffering, which is marked by unbounded clarity, ease, peace, and contentment.

Indeed, these four fruits of practice are interrelated, or they are aspects of the same thing. From the perspective of the teachings on Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and on the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), one can conclude the following: at first, most people are ignorant of the fact that the so-called ‘self’ they cling to is ultimately non-existent. People exist merely as a continuum of myriad interrelated and interdependent physical and mental phenomena, which continually arise, transform, and disperse.

When one is unaware of this truth, one repeatedly clings to emotions, thoughts, desires, habits, opinions, beliefs, perceptions, etc. and one identifies with these. Although the resulting sense of self undergoes a constant transformation, one thinks: ‘I was that; now, I am this’, ‘I felt that way; now, I feel this way.’

To engage in such self-identification is to be deceived by such things as thoughts and feelings, which are merely subsidiary mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) active in that particular moment. This deception is the source of wrong thinking. As a consequence, one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions are motivated and driven by the exigencies of whatever is being clung to as self at the moment.

When one practises in line with the Foundations of Mindfulness, one sees each material and mental component within a specific process as arising and ceasing according to its own nature. By analyzing and distinguishing each factor of this moment-to-moment continuum, one is not deceived into grasping onto things and identifying with them as ‘self’. These things thus lose their power of coercion. {772}

If this insight attains an optimum profundity and clarity, one realizes liberation. The mind is established in a new mode of being, which is pure,

spacious, free from mental bias and attachment. Even one's personality is altered.

This is a state of perfect mental health. It is comparable to a body which is in perfect health, when, in the absence of disease, all of its organs function smoothly and normally. Indeed, the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is a method of cleansing the mind of mental illness, of completely eliminating those things that restrict, obstruct, and impede the mind. A person is then prepared to face and deal with all things in the world resolutely and with joy.

This matter can be summarized with the following teachings by the Buddha:

Monks, there are two kinds of illness: physical illness and mental illness. There are to be seen beings who can assert to be without illness of the body for an entire year. There are to be seen beings who can assert to be without illness of the body for two years... three years... four years... five years... ten years... twenty years... thirty years... forty years... fifty years... a hundred years. But beings who can assert to be without illness of the mind, even for an instant, are difficult to find in the world, with the exception of those who are free from the taints.

A. II. 143.

*Ven. Sāriputta:* 'Householder, your faculties are bright, your facial complexion is pure and radiant. Did you get to hear a Dhamma talk today in the presence of the Blessed One?'

*Nakulapitā:* 'Why not, venerable sir? Just now I was anointed by the Blessed One with the ambrosia of a Dhamma talk.'

*Ven. Sāriputta:* 'In what manner did the Blessed One anoint you with the ambrosia of a Dhamma talk?'

*Nakulapitā:* 'Here, venerable sir, I approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: "I am old, venerable sir, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, afflicted in body, often ill. I rarely get to see the Blessed One and the

bhikkhus who are a cause for delight. Let the Blessed One exhort me, venerable sir, let him instruct me, since that would lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time.”

[The Buddha replied]: “So it is, householder, so it is! This body is afflicted, like an egg which is covered by a shell. If anyone carrying around this body were to claim to be without illness even for a moment, what would this be other than foolishness? Therefore, householder, you should train yourself thus: ‘Even though I am afflicted in body, my mind will be unafflicted.’”

‘It was with the ambrosia of such a Dhamma talk, venerable sir, that the Blessed One anointed me.’ {773}

*S. III. 2.*

### **I. MOMENTARY AWARENESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR INSIGHT MEDITATION**

People’s most ordinary, mundane activity, one that is going on constantly in their daily lives, is the cognition of sense impressions through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Cognition is always accompanied by a feeling – either of pleasure, pain, or a neutral feeling. In response to feelings, the mind reacts: if the object is pleasant there arises desire and delight; if the object is unpleasant or painful, there arises annoyance and aversion.

When there is liking of something, one wishes to experience more of it, to repeat the enjoyment, to obtain or possess the object. When there is dislike of something, one wishes to escape from it, to rid oneself of it or destroy it. This process is continuing all the time, both on subtle levels which tend to remain unobserved, and, on occasion, with an intensity which is plainly recognizable and which inflicts clearly discernible and lasting effects on the mind. These powerful or unsettling experiences tend to generate long and involved mental proliferations, and if they are not resolved they intrude into the whole range of one’s speech and actions.

People's lives, their roles in society, and their interactions with others, issue primarily from this incessant contact with sense impressions which is present in every moment of human existence.

Heedlessly abandoning the mind to the process of delighting in pleasure and comfort and resisting pain and discomfort impedes the development of wisdom. One will be prevented from discerning the true nature of things. A lack of restraint in this matter creates the following obstacles:

- The mind falls under the sway of liking and disliking and it gets stuck at these points of reaction. One's vision is thus obscured and one sees things from a biased perspective, not according to how they truly are.
- The mind falls into the past or drifts into the future. When one experiences a sense impression and either delight or aversion arises, the mind gets stuck at the point or feature of that object that is considered agreeable or disagreeable. One then makes a mental image of these agreeable or disagreeable features, nourishes it, and proliferates over it. Dwelling on particular agreeable or disagreeable aspects of something, and clinging to concepts or images of it, is equivalent to slipping into the past. The ensuing mental proliferations over these images entail drifting off into the future. A person's understanding of the object – the mind-created images based on likes and dislikes, or the embellished ideas about it – is in fact not a true understanding of the object as it truly exists in the present moment.
- The mind is subject to proliferated thinking, which interprets the meaning of what is sensed or experienced in the light of one's personal history or ingrained habits, e.g. according to one's cherished views, values, and opinions. The mind is at the mercy of these proliferations; it is unable to see things objectively and purely as they are.
- The mind adds embellished mental images of new experiences to one's preexisting mental biases and habits, thus compounding one's habitual patterns of reaction.

The negative characteristics of mind mentioned above do not pertain only to the coarse and shallow matters of one's daily life and general affairs. The Buddhist teachings emphasize their manifestation at the subtle and profound level of the mental continuum. It is through their presence that ordinary, unawakened beings are led to see things as stable and substantially real, to perceive inherent beauty or ugliness in them, to attach to conventional truths, and to overlook the all-encompassing law of causality. {774}

People accumulate habits and conditioned tendencies of misperceiving existence almost from the day they are born, and go twenty or thirty years, forty or fifty years, even longer than that, without ever training themselves to break the cycle of wrong thinking. Dealing with and rectifying this situation is thus not easy. At the very moment that one becomes conscious of an object, before one has had time to steady oneself to check the process, the mind has already switched into an habitual response.

The remedy in this case is not simply a matter of cutting a cycle of reactivity and abrogating a conditioned process, but also necessitates curbing the habitual tendencies and dispositions of the mind that flow strongly along fixed channels.

Mindfulness is an essential factor here for clearing the way and for marshalling other spiritual factors. The practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness has the following objectives: through mindfully keeping pace with experience and seeing things in their bare actuality, one breaks the circuit of deluded thought, destroys unwholesome mental dynamics, modifies old conditioning, and cultivates new dispositions in the mind.

A mind possessing such moment-to-moment awareness is endowed with characteristics which are the complete antithesis of those shown by a mind caught up in the flow of unwholesome conditioning:

- Attachment and aversion have no opportunity to arise in the mind, because their presence is dependent on the mind seizing on and lingering over a particular point or aspect of an object, and thus being caught up in the past.



- Attachment and aversion exist when there is a falling away from the present moment. A consequence of a free, unentangled mind, which observes things as they arise from moment to moment, is that it does not slip into the past or drift off into the future.
- The mind is not subject to mental proliferations based on past conditioning, which lead to a biased, distorted, and coloured experience of phenomena; the mind is prepared to see things as they truly are.
- The mind does not compound or intensify bad habits.
- When one pays attention to phenomena as they arise in each moment, one perceives certain character traits in oneself which are unwelcome or unacknowledged. With mindfulness, one can face up to these qualities as they are, without seeking to avoid them and without any self-deception. One is thus able to cleanse such impurities from the mind and to solve personal difficulties.
- The mind endowed with constant mindfulness is unconstricted and untarnished; it is pure, radiant, spacious, joyous, and free.

All things exist and proceed according to their own nature. Figuratively speaking, the truth is revealing itself at all times, yet people tend to shut themselves off from it; alternatively they see things in a distorted manner or deceive themselves as to the nature of truth altogether. The cause for this concealment, distortion, and deception is the immersion in the conditioned stream of heedless abandon to pleasure and discomfort detailed above. The factors for distortion and delusion are strong in themselves; add to these the compulsive and misleading power of habit, and the chance to really know the truth is almost non-existent.

Because personal habits and dispositions have been accumulated steadily over an extremely long period of time, the practice to remedy them and to create a new mode of relating to the world is also likely to require a long time. {775}

Whenever mindfulness is consistent and proficient – when one does not evade the truth, does not distort the things one sees, and escapes the

power of old conditioning – one is prepared to see things as they are and to understand the truth. At this point, if other spiritual faculties, especially wisdom, are well-developed, they will join forces with mindfulness by relying on it to operate in the most effective way, giving rise to ‘knowledge and vision’ (*ñāṇa-dassana*), which is the goal of insight meditation. To gain mastery in wisdom (and in other spiritual faculties), however, depends on gradual training and on basic study. Study and reasoned analysis therefore are supportive for the realization of truth.

### **J. THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS NOURISH THE ENLIGHTENMENT FACTORS**

Mindfulness (*sati*) is not the same as insight (*vipassanā*); indeed, it is wisdom or the application of wisdom that is equivalent to insight. Wisdom, however, operates in a reliable, fully proficient way when supported and guided by mindfulness, as described above. The development of mindfulness is thus of great importance for insight meditation. In other words, mindfulness is developed simultaneously with wisdom, or the practice of mindfulness is performed in order to gain proficiency in wisdom. In the terminology of spiritual practice, the mention of mindfulness usually includes the joint factor of ‘clear comprehension’ (*sampajañña*), which is equivalent to wisdom, and the strength and fluency of mindfulness depends on the participation by wisdom.<sup>24</sup>

The wisdom that accompanies mindfulness in everyday activities is generally referred to as ‘clear comprehension’ (*sampajañña*). At this stage wisdom is only a supporting factor in practice, cooperating and collaborating with mindfulness. Here, mindfulness is viewed as the principal or prominent factor. When it comes to more subtle levels of investigation, however, prominence shifts to wisdom, and mindfulness is relegated to

<sup>24</sup>Mindfulness arises together with wisdom and thus has strength; without wisdom mindfulness is weak (MA. III. 30; VbhA. 312). Wisdom without mindfulness does not exist (VismṬ.: Asubhakammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā, Vinic-chayakathāvaṇṇanā). A person without mindfulness is not able to use recollection (*anupassanā*; e.g.: DA. III. 758; SA. III. 180). The mention of *sati* always refers as well to *paññā* (e.g.: AA. III. 360, which is an explanation of A. III. 324-5; see the common explanation of the term *satokārī*, e.g.: Ps. I. 176-7; and see the reference at Vism. 271).

a role of serving wisdom. An example of wisdom functioning on this level is 'investigation of Dhamma' (*dhamma-vicaya*) contained in the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

It seems appropriate here to review the teaching mentioned at the beginning of the chapter introducing the Middle Way, which describes how the Four Foundations of Mindfulness nourish and support the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), which in turn nourish and support true knowledge (*vijjā*) and liberation (*vimutti*), as confirmed by this passage:

Monks, liberation and supreme knowledge have their nutriment, I declare; they are not without a nutriment. And what is the nutriment of liberation and supreme knowledge? 'The seven factors of enlightenment' should be the answer. The seven factors of enlightenment, too, have their nutriment; they are not without a nutriment. And what is the nutriment of the seven factors of enlightenment? 'The Four Foundations of Mindfulness' should be the answer....

When the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are fulfilled, they bring about the fulfilment of the seven factors of enlightenment. When the seven factors of enlightenment are fulfilled, they bring about the fulfilment of liberation and supreme knowledge. Such is the nourishment and fulfilment of liberation and supreme knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

A. V. 114.

From this passage it is clear that the seven factors of enlightenment generate true knowledge and liberation; they enable the realization of Path and Fruit. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness help by nourishing the seven factors of enlightenment. {776}

This passage elucidates the process of insight meditation. In the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, mindfulness (*sati*) is the

<sup>25</sup>See also: S. V. 329; M. III. 82.

constant, basic factor, while wisdom, under the name of clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), operates in tandem, by understanding everything that mindfulness observes or engages with. Mindfulness focuses on things in order for clear comprehension to understand them, just as one may grasp an object in one's hand in order to look at it closely with one's eyes.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness act as a basis for the seven factors of enlightenment. Mindfulness focuses on an object and submits it to wisdom, which here is called 'investigation of truth' (*dhamma-vicaya*). At this stage wisdom is the predominant factor, investigating the object just as one uses one's eyes to thoroughly inspect something. This is the process of wisdom as an enlightenment factor.

In any case, whether wisdom is referred to as 'clear comprehension', 'investigation of truth', or by any other designation, if it leads to a realization of things as they truly are and to the deliverance of the heart, then it is encompassed in the meaning of the term *vipassanā* ('insight').<sup>26</sup>

Mindfulness plays an important role in both tranquillity meditation (*samatha*) and in insight meditation (*vipassanā*). An examination of the role of mindfulness in these two forms of meditation sheds light on the subject described above.

In tranquillity meditation, mindfulness keeps attention focused on a single object, or it holds an object in awareness, in order to achieve one-pointed concentration. The mind then becomes peaceful and still; it is free from distraction and agitation. When the mind has reached this one-pointed, unwavering, and steady concentration, tranquillity meditation is accomplished.

In insight meditation, mindfulness similarly holds an object in awareness or directs attention to an object, but it uses the mind as the platform on which an object is placed for inspection by wisdom. Here, one takes hold of the object in order to let wisdom investigate and analyze it, using the firm and stable mind as one's laboratory.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g.: Vbh. 250.

<sup>27</sup> *Sati* is used to direct attention; *paññā* is used for reflection, analysis, and investigation (see: VismṬ.: *Asubhakammaṭṭhānaniddesa*vaṇṇanā, *Vinichayakathā*vaṇṇanā).

The practice of tranquillity meditation is like tying a wild young bull to a post with a rope. All it can do is circle around the post to which it is bound, until, eventually, when its stubbornness has abated, it lies down meekly at the foot of the post. Here, the mind is compared to the wild young bull, the meditation object to the post, and mindfulness to the rope.

The practice of insight meditation is like fixing a specimen onto a flat surface to allow a subsequent examination to proceed smoothly and with precision. Here, the means used to pin down the specimen is compared to mindfulness, the specimen to the meditation object, the surface to a concentrated mind, and the examination to wisdom.

So far, the primary principles of these two forms of meditation have been discussed. In this context, there are a few additional observations and distinctions to make:

The objective of tranquillity meditation is to make the mind calm. In this context, when mindfulness directs attention to an object, it fastens onto it with the sole aim of producing a firm and unswerving concentration on the object, preventing even the slightest deviation of awareness, until the mind dwells unwaveringly on a 'mental image' (*nimitta*; 'sign') of the meditation object. Tranquillity meditation thus involves fixing attention on an object that is merely a perception created in the mind by the meditator.

In insight meditation, on the other hand, the aim is towards knowledge and understanding of the way things are. Here, mindfulness focuses only on truly existent phenomena, in order for wisdom to fully and clearly comprehend the nature of their existence. It focuses on things from the moment of their arising through their gradual decline and eventual disintegration, enabling wisdom to gain a thorough understanding of them.

Insight meditation demands an awareness of every kind of sense impression which impinges on consciousness so that wisdom can comprehend each one in its actuality. Thus the object in focus is not a fixed one, and to ensure an accurate and authentic comprehension, one must be mindful of the changing nature of phenomena in every moment, to

prevent one's attention from lingering on any one object or aspect of an object. {777}

In tranquillity meditation, mindfulness focuses on an object that is either stationary or moves within a repetitive and fixed pattern. In insight meditation, mindfulness focuses on an object in whatever state of movement or change it may exist, without restriction.

In tranquillity meditation one selects a certain defined object that is considered conducive for calm and concentration. In insight meditation, one may focus on any object without exception; whatever manifests in the mind and lends itself to investigation; whatever permits a glimpse of the truth is valid. In the context of insight meditation, these objects may be summarized as mental objects (*nāma-dhammā*) and physical objects (*rūpa-dhammā*), or as body, feelings, mind, and mind objects – the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Another crucial factor for spiritual practice, an examination of which helps to clarify the unique qualities distinguishing insight meditation from tranquillity meditation, is analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*; 'wise reflection'). Analytical reflection gives rise to wisdom and is thus essential to insight meditation.

In tranquillity meditation, although analytical reflection may be supportive in many circumstances, it is of lesser significance. In some cases it need not be applied at all, or else ordinary contemplation (*manasikāra*) is sufficient. In this context, mindfulness is used to direct attention to an object until the mind becomes one-pointed. Here, if all goes smoothly and results are duly experienced, there is no need to make use of analytical reflection.

In some situations, however, when the mind does not sustain an interest in the meditation object, when attention wavers and becomes distracted, or else with those meditation themes, e.g. lovingkindness (*mettā*), which require a certain measure of reflective thought, one may need a skilful means to guide the mind. In such a case, one needs to apply wise and systematic reflection, to manage the thought-process, and to lead the mind in a correct direction. An example is knowing how to reflect so as to reduce anger and replace it with lovingkindness.

In any case, in tranquillity meditation the kind of wise reflection that may be required is limited to that used for rousing wholesome qualities.<sup>28</sup> It is not necessary to apply the kind of wise reflection used for promoting realization of the truth.

In insight meditation, on the other hand, the application of analytical reflection is a singularly important step on the path to wisdom and is thus an essential factor. Analytical reflection paves the way for wisdom and is conducive to its further development. (See Note 18.3) Its function and characteristics are so similar to wisdom that these two Pali terms – *yoniso-manasikāra* and *paññā* – are often used interchangeably, which often causes students of Buddhism to have difficulty in distinguishing between them. {778}

Analytical reflection acts as a link between mindfulness and wisdom. It is the vanguard of wisdom; it facilitates a form of thinking that promotes the effective functioning of wisdom. In other words, analytical reflection provides wisdom with a mode of operation; it is a method of applying wisdom in the most effective way.

The reason why some people are confused by these terms is that, in general parlance, *yoniso-manasikāra* refers both to the methods of contemplation, which comprise the very factor of *yoniso-manasikāra*, and to the subsequent application of wisdom in line with these methods. This ambiguity may also occur when discussing the practical expressions of wisdom. For instance, when using the term ‘investigation of truth’ (*dhamma-vicaya*), there is a tacit understanding that in this context the wisdom faculty investigates by relying on one of the methods provided by analytical reflection. In general, the meaning of the term *yoniso-manasikāra* implies both reflection and wisdom – reflection accompanied by wisdom – i.e. ‘wise reflection’.

As a sequence of events, this process unfolds in this way: when mindfulness (*sati*) lays an object down in full view of the mind, analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) holds this object in attention and turns it over so that wisdom (*paññā*) can investigate it. Wisdom attends to the object according to the manner and direction determined by analytical reflection. If analytical reflection lays the foundation and sets the direction

<sup>28</sup>See chapter 15 on *yoniso-manasikāra*.

## NOTE 18.3: WISDOM, FAITH AND REFLECTION

In relation to wisdom, faith (*saddhā*) and analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) lead to different results.

The establishment of some kinds of faith is like digging a fixed channel through which thought processes move. Analytical reflection, on the other hand, paves a way for wisdom to function effectively in each new situation.

The Buddhist teachings promote a faith that is linked to wisdom: a faith that provides an opportunity for wise reflection. An example of faith as a fixed channel is the belief that all things are predestined; a person does not contemplate any further than this. An example of faith leading to wise reflection is that of someone, who, although he has not yet fully realized the truth, has faith in the Buddha's teaching that all things exist according to causes and conditions. This faith leads the person to apply wise reflection in different circumstances, to inquire into the relevant causes and conditions.

correctly, then wisdom bears fruit. Mindfulness is present at every stage of this process; it does not disappear or slip away. Whenever analytical reflection is functioning, mindfulness is present. These two factors are mutually supportive in insight meditation.

A comparison may be made to a person in a rowboat out on a fast-flowing, choppy river, collecting flowers or greens along the shore. First, that person ties up the boat or anchors it in such a way that it will remain stationary at the spot where the plants grow. Then, with one hand he grasps hold of the stems, gathering them together and exposing them as conveniently as possible for harvesting. With the other hand, using the tool he has prepared for the job, he cuts them off.

Here, mindfulness (*sati*) is compared to the rope or anchor which stabilizes the boat, enabling the person to remain within reach of the plants. The boat (or person in the boat), held steady at a given spot, is compared to the mind. The hand which grasps the plant stems and holds them in a convenient way is like analytical reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). The other hand, using a sharp tool to cut off the stems, is like wisdom (*paññā*).<sup>29</sup> {779}

<sup>29</sup> Compare this analogy with the passages at Miln.: *Manasikāralakkhaṇapañho aṭṭhamo*.



## 18.4 RIGHT CONCENTRATION (SAMMĀ-SAMĀDHI)

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Right concentration is the final factor in the Eightfold Path. Because concentration is connected to the cultivation of the mind in its entirety, there is a great deal of material for study in relation to this factor. Concentration involves refined states of mind and its development is highly detailed and complex. One may say that concentration marks the point where all eight factors of the Path converge and engage in unison.

### A. DEFINITION OF SAMĀDHI

The term *samādhi* refers to ‘mental concentration’ or ‘one-pointed attention’. A common definition for *samādhi* is *cittassekaggatā*, or simply *ekaggatā*, which literally means ‘the state of focused attention on one object’. The mind is firmly established on one object; attention is not distracted and does not waver.

The commentaries define *samādhi* as a wholesome mind attentive on one object, balanced and well-steadied, or simply as a steadfast mind.<sup>30</sup> They describe the essence of concentration as non-distraction and non-wavering. Concentration helps to gather together accompanying spiritual factors, just as water helps to bind flour together and prevent it from being dispersed. Concentration manifests as tranquillity and it possesses happiness as its unique proximate cause. A concentrated mind is steadfast and still, like a candle flame in a location free of wind. The candle burns in a steady, even way; it is not immobile, but it is tranquil.

<sup>30</sup>The commentarial analysis here states that the mind (*citta*) and mental concomitants (*cetasika*) are established on one object. For commentarial explanations of *samādhi*, see: Vism. 84-5; NdA. II. 388; PsA. I. 17. It is possible for *samādhi*, or one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), to arise in an unwholesome mind (*akusala-citta*). For example, the teachings at Dhs. 75-87 describe how one-pointedness – the faculty of *samādhi* (*samādhindriya*) – and ‘wrong concentration’ (*micchā-samādhi*) exist together in an unwholesome mind. The commentaries give examples for this, including: a person whose attention is one-pointed at the moment of cutting an animal’s throat, of stealing, and of seducing someone else’s wife. In any case, the one-pointedness of an unwholesome mind is weaker than that of a wholesome mind. It is like sprinkling water on a dry and dusty ground; the dust will disappear temporarily but before long it will return as before (see: DhsA. 144, 248, 251).

In the suttas ‘right concentration’ is defined in terms of the four jhānas:

Monks, what is right concentration? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline:

1. Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, (vitakka and vicāra; ‘initial and sustained attention’), with rapture (pīti) and pleasure (sukha) born of seclusion.
2. He enters upon and abides in the second jhāna, which has clarity of mind and one-pointedness (ekaggatā), without applied and sustained thought, which have been stilled, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration.
3. With the fading away of rapture, he abides in equanimity, mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body,<sup>31</sup> he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on account of which the noble ones announce: ‘He has a pleasant abiding, equanimous and mindful.’
4. With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither pleasure nor pain and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity (upekkhā).

*E.g.: D. II. 312-13; M. I. 62; M. III. 252; Vbh. 105.*

This definition for concentration should be considered as a way to describe the fulfilment of concentration. This is because the suttas sometimes define the faculty of concentration simply as ‘one-pointedness of mind’ (*cittassekaggatā*), for example: {780}

Monks, what is the faculty of concentration? Here, the noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind, having

<sup>31</sup>Here the body refers to the ‘mind body’ (*nāma-kāya*).

made relinquishment the object of attention. The is called the faculty of concentration.<sup>32</sup>

S. V. 198, 200.

The commentaries offer this definition for right concentration:

What is right concentration? The establishment of the mind, the steadfastness of the mind, the stability of the mind, the non-wavering, non-distraction of the mind, the non-swaying of the mind, tranquillity (*samatha*), the faculty of concentration, the power of concentration, balanced concentration, the enlightenment factor of concentration, which is a factor of the Path, connected to the Path. This is called right concentration.

*Vbh.* 107, 238.

In sum, right concentration is applied for the goal of liberation and developed to support wisdom, which understands things as they truly are.<sup>33</sup> It is not used to satisfy worldly desires, for example by becoming an accomplished meditator in order to boast about one's psychic abilities. There are teachings in the scriptures confirming that Dhamma practitioners can develop insight by using only a basic level of concentration (referred to as 'insight concentration' – *vipassanā-samādhi*): a concentration accompanied by wisdom or a concentration applied for developing penetrative insight, which lies between 'momentary concentration' (*khaṇika-samādhi*) and 'access concentration' (*upacāra-samādhi*).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>The commentaries claim that here 'relinquishment' refers to Nibbāna, i.e. one makes Nibbāna one's object of awareness (SA. III. 234).

<sup>33</sup>Note the alternative definitions in the commentaries for right concentration: *yāthāva-samādhi* – 'true concentration' or 'concentration corresponding to truth'; *niyyānika-samādhi* – 'concentration leading out of the round (of *saṃsāra*)', i.e. leading to liberation, to a freedom from suffering; and *kusala-samādhi* – 'wholesome concentration'. See, e.g.: DhsA. 144.

<sup>34</sup>PsA. I. 125. Note that there are teachings in which the term *samādhi* is used to refer directly to *vipassanā*, especially in the teaching of the three kinds of concentration: 'emptiness concentration' (*suññata-samādhi*), 'signless concentration' (*animitta-samādhi*), and 'desireless concentration' (*appañihita-samādhi*); see: D. III. 219-20; A. I. 299; Ps. I. 48-9; AA. II. 386; PsA. I. 102. This use of the term *samādhi*, however, should be considered as exceptional.

## B. LEVELS OF CONCENTRATION

The commentaries divide concentration into three stages:<sup>35</sup>

1. *Khaṇika-samādhi*: momentary concentration. This is an elementary stage of concentration, which people can apply and benefit from in everyday work and activities. It is also the starting point for the development of insight.
2. *Upacāra-samādhi*: ‘access’ or ‘neighbourhood’ concentration. This level of concentration suppresses the five hindrances, and occurs before the mind accesses a state of *jhāna*; it is the initial stage of ‘attainment concentration’.
3. *Appanā-samādhi*: ‘attainment’ concentration; established concentration. This is the highest stage, the fulfilment of concentration, which is present at all levels of *jhāna*.

The second and third kinds of concentration are mentioned frequently in the scriptural explanations of formal meditation techniques (*kammatṭhāna*), and they are defined in a clear fashion. Access concentration occurs when the mind relinquishes the five hindrances. When a person is focusing on an object of meditation, access concentration occurs with the arising of a ‘counterpart sign’ (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*; a mental image of the object of meditation. This image is more refined and profound than an ordinary mental impression; it arises from pure perception and is free from both colour and blemish; a person is able to enlarge or minimize it at will).<sup>36</sup> Access concentration is on the verge of complete concentration; the mind is just about to reach *jhāna*. {781} Skill and proficiency in access concentration results in a settled state of mind, which develops into attainment concentration. (See Note 18.4) From this point the *jhāna* factors are fully present.

The scriptures, however, do not seem to provide a clear definition for the first level of concentration. To help here, an outline of momentary

<sup>35</sup>NdA. I. 129; PsA. I. 183; DhsA. 117; Vism. 144.

<sup>36</sup>Vism. 86, 126–7, 137–8, 146–7; VinA. II. 428.

## NOTE 18.4: ACCESS CONCENTRATION

In access concentration the five hindrances are abandoned and the jhāna factors begin to arise, similar to attainment concentration. The difference is that here the jhāna factors are not strong enough: a person obtains a mental sign (*nimitta*) for a short period of time but then the mind drops into subliminal consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) – attention rises and drops, rises and drops.

It is like training an infant to stand – he props himself up and then falls again. In attainment concentration on the other hand the jhāna factors have adequate power; the mind is removed from the stream of subliminal consciousness for a stretch of time; it can be established in this state continuously. This is like a strong adult person, who gets up from a seat and is able to work all day (see: Vism. 126-7, 146-7).

concentration, describing its essential features, may be formed from the following sources:

The Paramatthamañjusa<sup>37</sup> claims that momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhī*) is comprised of *mūla-samādhī* ('basic concentration', 'initial concentration') and *parikamma-samādhī* ('preparatory concentration', 'initial application concentration'), which are mentioned in the Visuddhimagga.<sup>38</sup>

The commentaries give examples from the Pali Canon describing how 'basic concentration' (*mūla-samādhī*) is equivalent to momentary concentration:

Monk, you should train yourself thus: 'Inwardly, my mind shall become firmly established and well-composed; and evil, unwholesome states shall find no footing in the mind.' Thus should you train yourself.

When inwardly your mind is firmly established and well-composed, and evil, unwholesome states find no footing in the mind, then

<sup>37</sup>VismṬ.: Brahnavihāraniddesavaṇṇanā, Pakiṇṇakakathāvaṇṇanā and Abhiññāniddesavaṇṇanā, Dibbasotadhātukathāvaṇṇanā.

<sup>38</sup>Vism. 323, 404.

you should train yourself thus: ‘I will develop and cultivate the liberation of mind by lovingkindness, make it my vehicle, make it my basis, stabilize it, become proficient in it, and fully perfect it.’ Thus should you train yourself.

When this concentration has been developed and cultivated by you, then you should develop the concentration which has both applied and sustained thought, or which is without applied thought and has only sustained thought, or which is without both applied and sustained thought, or which has rapture, or which is without rapture, or which is accompanied by great happiness, or which is accompanied by equanimity....<sup>39</sup>

A. IV. 299-300.

The commentaries explain that the state described in the first passage above, in which the mind is firmly established and well-composed, and evil, unwholesome states cannot overwhelm the mind, is ‘basic concentration’. The mind sustains attention on a single object and is independent. The second passage describes the cultivation and strengthening of this basic concentration, through the practice of lovingkindness meditation.

The commentaries compare basic concentration to a fire that has been ignited by rubbing two sticks together or by using a flint; and they compare the cultivation of this basic concentration, say by developing lovingkindness, to adding fuel or kindling to this fire so that it blazes further. The third passage describes the increased cultivation of basic or momentary concentration so that it becomes ‘attainment concentration’ (passing over access concentration) at the level of *jhāna*, by focusing on another meditation object, for example one of the ten *kasiṇa* objects.

Another example is the Buddha’s description of his own efforts in meditation: {782}

As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of renunciation arose in me... a thought of non-ill-will arose in me... a thought

<sup>39</sup>Presumably, this sutta is one of the sources for the classification of the five *jhānas* as described in the *Abhidhamma*.

of non-cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: ‘This thought of renunciation... this thought of non-ill-will... this thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me. This kind of thought does not lead to my own affliction, or to others’ affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to Nibbāna. If I think and contemplate upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and a day, I see no danger that may result from it. But with excessive thinking and contemplation the body will become tired, and when the body is tired, the mind is disturbed, and when the mind is disturbed, it is far from concentration.’ So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to one-pointedness, and concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be disturbed....

Tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was relaxed and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified.

Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna....<sup>40</sup>

M. I. 115-17.

The commentaries explain that the phrase, ‘to steady the mind internally, quieten it, bring it to one-pointedness, and concentrate it’, and the phrase, ‘the mind concentrated and unified’, both refer to ‘basic concentration’ (i.e. to ‘momentary concentration’), which exists prior to the arising of attainment concentration in jhāna, as described by the final line of this passage.

The commentaries also offer examples for ‘preparatory concentration’ (*parikamma-samādhi*), such as a person who develops the ‘divine ear’ (*dibba-sota*): when this person exits from jhāna, he focuses attention on

<sup>40</sup>The second and third paragraphs of this sutta passage occur elsewhere, e.g.: M. I. 21-22. The word *samādahati* (‘to firmly establish’ or ‘to concentrate’ the mind) can also mean to ‘compose the mind’, ‘collect the mind’, or ‘put the mind in order’. This definition gives the impression of movement or activity, as if translating the word as: ‘functioning in a composed, steady, and consistent way’, like a concentrated person who balances on a tightrope. The word *asāradhho* (‘untroubled’) can also be translated as ‘free from stress’.

various sounds, beginning with loud, distant sounds, like the roar of a tiger, the rumbling of a wagon, or the blare of a horn. He then gradually focuses on less conspicuous sounds, say of a drum, a gong, the sound of music, the sound of chanting, the sound of two people conversing, the sound of birds chirping, the sound of the wind, or the sound of rustling leaves. Ordinary people can hear these sounds, but someone with ‘preparatory’ or ‘momentary’ concentration will hear these sounds much more clearly and distinctly. Momentary concentration should be understood according to these explanations.

Some texts add ‘insight concentration’ (*vipassanā-samādhi*) to the list, inserting it between momentary concentration and access concentration.<sup>41</sup> Insight concentration is momentary concentration which has been applied in the development of insight and which is refined through this form of meditation. {783}

### C. ADVERSARIES TO CONCENTRATION

The following qualities stand in opposition to concentration. They must be eliminated in order for concentration to arise, or one can say that they must be eliminated by concentration.

These factors have the special Pali name *nīvaraṇa*, which is translated as ‘hindrance’ or ‘obstacle’. Technically speaking, they are things which hinder the functioning of the mind, obstruct the goodness of the mind, and sap the strength from wisdom. They are negative, unwholesome qualities that prevent the development of virtue and sully the mind.

The Buddha described the five hindrances in the following ways:

These five qualities, monks, are obstructions [to wholesome states], hindrances [to spiritual growth]; they constrict the mind and weaken wisdom.

S. V. 96.

<sup>41</sup>E.g.: PsA. I. 125.



[These five hindrances] are impurities of the mind, weakeners of wisdom.<sup>42</sup>

S. V. 94.

These five qualities are hindrances, makers of blindness, causing lack of vision, causing lack of knowledge, detrimental to wisdom, increasing distress, not conducive to Nibbāna.<sup>43</sup>

S. V. 97.

It is important to recognize these hindrances when they arise and not to confuse them with tranquillity (*samatha*) or with concentration (*samādhi*). The five hindrances are as follows:<sup>44</sup>

1. *Kāma-chanda*: the desire to obtain; the desire to acquire; literally, 'delight in sense pleasures'; covetousness (*abhijjhā*); a desire for the five objects of sensual enjoyment (*kāma-guṇa*): sights, sounds, odours, tastes, and tangible objects, which are pleasurable, delightful, alluring. *Kāma-chanda* is a defilement related to greed. When the mind is captivated by sense objects, caught up in desires and attachments, easily distracted and preoccupied by sense impressions, it will not become firmly established, composed, and concentrated.
2. *Byāpāda*: anger and resentment; indignation, hatred, ill-will, spite, and malevolence; seeing others as adversaries; irritation, peevishness, aversion, and displeasure. When the mind is continually in conflict and disturbed, unbalanced and lacking fluency, it will not become concentrated.

<sup>42</sup>*Upakkilesa*: mental impurity, corruption, or defilement.

<sup>43</sup>'Causing lack of knowledge' = 'causing ignorance'.

<sup>44</sup>The description of the five hindrances with *abhijjhā* as the first factor tends to occur in passages immediately followed by a description of the attainment of *jhāna*, e.g.: D. I. 71, 207; D. III. 48-9; M. I. 181; M. III. 134; A. II. 210-11; A. III. 92-3; A. V. 206-7; Vbh. 244-5. Teachings on the five hindrances with *kāma-chanda* as the first factor tend to be on their own, and list the five factors by name without describing their attributes, e.g.: D. I. 246; D. III. 234, 278; M. I. 144; S. V. 60, 97; A. III. 64; Vbh. 378. See the explanation of the six hindrances (with the addition of ignorance – *avijjā*), e.g.: Dhs. 204-205; Vism. 146. *Abhijjhā* = *kāma-chanda*, at e.g.: PsA. I. 176. *Abhijjhā* = *lobha*, at e.g.: Dhs. 190.

3. *Thīna-middha*: despondency and drowsiness; sloth and torpor; boredom and apathy. This hindrance is separated into two sub-factors: *thīna* – despondency, dejection, discouragement, dispiritedness, and listlessness, which are symptoms of the mind; and *middha* – drowsiness, inertia, sleepiness, dozing, sluggishness, and dullness, which are symptoms of the body.<sup>45</sup> The mind overcome by these mental and physical symptoms is weak, constricted, and not suited for application; it thus will not become concentrated. {784}
4. *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and worry. This hindrance too is separated into two sub-factors: *uddhacca* – mental restlessness, agitation, vacillation, confusion, and turbulence; and *kukkucca* – mental anxiety, distress, disturbance, turmoil, and worry. The mind overcome by these factors is restless and drifts aimlessly; it is not peaceful and does not become concentrated.
5. *Vicikicchā*: doubt: uncertainty and scepticism about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, or about the spiritual training; doubt and scepticism about wholesome qualities; an inability to determine whether a specific quality (or a specific kind of meditation, etc.) is valuable, worthy of practice, or effective. There is equivocation, hesitation, and indecision. The mind, obstructed, disturbed, and confused by such doubts, is unable to become concentrated.

#### D. ATTRIBUTES OF A CONCENTRATED MIND

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of training in higher mind (*adhicittasikkhā*) is to generate and increase the quality and capability of the mind. Concentration (*samādhi*), which is the aim of such training, refers to a state of mind with an optimal capability and efficiency. A concentrated mind has the following crucial attributes:

1. It is strong and powerful. This quality is compared to a strong current of water which is guided through a single channel; it will have far greater pressure than if left to disperse in all directions.

<sup>45</sup>The commentaries interpret body (*kāya*) here as the ‘mental body’, i.e. the collection of mental concomitants (*cetasika*); see: DhsA. 377.

2. It is profoundly tranquil and peaceful. The mind is like a still lake; no wind rustles its surface and nothing churns the water.
3. It is clear and pristine; things in the mind can be seen clearly. This is like a still body of water, not streaked by waves, in which any remaining dust has settled to the bottom.
4. It is malleable, adept, and well-suited for the work of insight, because it is free from stress, rigidity, disturbance, confusion, agitation, and anxiety.

As mentioned above, one synonym for *samādhi* is *ekaggatā*, which is sometimes translated as a ‘focus on a single object’. But if we look at the literal meaning of this word – as *eka* + *agga* + *tā* – we see an attribute of the mind that is similar to that described in item #1 above (of mental strength). Although the commentators translate the term *agga* here as ‘object of awareness’ (*ārammaṇa*), the original meaning of this term is ‘point’, ‘tip’, or ‘summit’. According to this meaning, a concentrated mind is sharp and ‘one-pointed’; it can easily pierce and penetrate things and can easily become absorbed in something.

The commentaries say that complete concentration, especially the concentration of *jhāna*, is fully endowed with eight qualities (*aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgata-citta*), which they derive from various teachings by the Buddha. These eight qualities are:

1. Steadfastness.
2. Purity.
3. Brightness.
4. Clarity.
5. Freedom from defilement.
6. Malleability.
7. Dexterity.
8. Freedom from distraction and vacillation.

The commentaries add that a mind endowed with these qualities is best suited for spiritual practice, whether it be the practice of applying

wisdom in order to gain clear insight and understanding, or the practice of developing mental power in order to gain higher psychic attainments.<sup>46</sup>  
{785}

The most outstanding attribute of a concentrated mind, which is connected to the true objective of developing concentration, is dexterity – a readiness and suitability for work and for application. According to the Buddhist teachings the most legitimate or appropriate work is in the area of wisdom. One applies this state of mental readiness and dexterity to create a suitable arena of practice, in order to contemplate reality and to give rise to true realization. And here it should be stressed that right concentration is not a state free from feeling and awareness – a vanishing into some altered state of consciousness – but rather it is a state of mental brightness, spaciousness, independence, wakefulness, and joy – a freedom from obscuring, oppressive, and obstructive qualities, and a readiness to apply wisdom.

Consider the following teachings by the Buddha:

Monks, these five things are obstructions and hindrances; they overwhelm the mind and weaken wisdom. These five things are sensual desire ... ill-will ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness and worry ... and doubt. When a monk has not abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm the mind and weaken wisdom, when his wisdom is weak and ineffective, for him to understand what is for his own benefit, to understand what is for the benefit of others, to understand what is for the benefit of both, or to realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision conducive to being a noble one: that is impossible.

Suppose there were a river flowing down from the mountains – winding far, its current swift, carrying everything with it – and a man would open channels leading away from it on both sides,

<sup>46</sup>These eight factors in Pali are: 1. *samāhita*; 2. *parisuddha*; 3. *pariyodāta*; 4. *anaṅgaṇa*; 5. *vigatūpakkilesa*; 6. *mudubhūta*; 7. *kammaniya*; 8. *ñhita āneñjappatta*. There are many sources for these terms, including: D. I. 76-7; M. I. 22; A. I. 164-5. For the commentarial enumeration of these qualities, see: Nd. II. 357; Vism. 376-8; VismṬ.: Iddhividhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Abhiññākathāvaṇṇanā; see also: A. IV. 421.

so that the current in the middle of the river would be dispersed, diffused, and dissipated; it would not travel far, its current would not be swift, and it would not carry everything with it.<sup>47</sup>

A. III. 63-4.

The Brahmin Saṅgārava approached the Blessed One and said to him: ‘Master Gotama, what is the cause and reason why sometimes even those sacred hymns that have been recited over a long period do not become clear to the mind, let alone those that have not been recited? What is the cause and reason why sometimes those hymns that have not been recited over a long period become clear to the mind, let alone those that have been recited?’

The Buddha replied: ‘Brahmin, when one dwells with a mind besieged by sensual lust, overwhelmed by sensual lust, and one does not understand as it really is the escape from arisen sensual lust, on that occasion one neither knows nor sees as it really is one’s own good, or the good of others, or the good of both. Then even those hymns that have been recited over a long period do not become clear to the mind, let alone those that have not been recited.’

(This is the same for one who is besieged by ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.) The Buddha goes on to mention five similes for the mind overwhelmed by the five hindrances: {786}

1. *The mind overwhelmed by sensual lust* is like a bowl of water mixed with lac, turmeric, green dye, or red dye. If a man with good sight were to examine his own reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is.
2. *The mind overwhelmed by ill-will* is like a bowl of water heated over a fire, bubbling and steaming. If a man with good sight were to examine his own reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is.

<sup>47</sup>Trans.: it appears that this is a reverse analogy, that is, the fast, flowing river is compared to a mind of wisdom, and the opening of channels dispersing the current is compared to the five hindrances.

3. *The mind overwhelmed by sloth and torpor* is like a bowl of water covered over by water plants and algae. If a man with good sight were to examine his own reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is.
4. *The mind overwhelmed by restlessness and worry* is like a bowl of water stirred by the wind, quivering, rippling, churned into wavelets. If a man with good sight were to examine his own reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is.
5. *The mind overwhelmed by doubt* is like a bowl of water that is turbid, unsettled, muddy, placed in the dark. If a man with good sight were to examine his own reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is.

‘When one dwells with a mind that is not besieged by sensual lust ... and one understands as it really is the escape from arisen sensual lust, on that occasion one knows and sees as it really is one’s own good, and the good of others, and the good of both. Then even those hymns that have not been recited over a long period become clear to the mind, let alone those that have been recited.’<sup>48</sup>

S. V. 121-6; A. III. 230.

Monks, there are these five corruptions of gold, corrupted by which gold is neither malleable nor wieldy nor radiant, but brittle and not properly fit for work. What five? Iron, copper, tin, lead, and silver.... But when gold is free of these five corruptions, it is pliable, wieldy, radiant, not brittle, and properly fit for work. Whichever ornament a goldsmith desires to make, whether it be a ring, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain, it can be successfully used for that.

So too, there are these five corruptions of the mind, corrupted by which the mind is neither malleable nor wieldy nor radiant, but weak and not rightly concentrated for the destruction of the taints. What five? Sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.... But when the mind is free of these five corruptions, it is pliable, wieldy, radiant, not fragile, and rightly

concentrated for the destruction of the taints. Furthermore, when you incline your mind towards the realization of whichever things there are to be realized through direct knowledge, you attain the ability to witness these things, there being a suitable basis. {787}

A. III. 16-17; cf.: S. V. 92.

If a monk is free from the five hindrances and makes tireless effort, possesses unremitting mindfulness, with body calm and at ease, his mind concentrated and unified, irrespective of whether he is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, he is called energetic and endowed with a fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*). He makes resolute and consistent effort, and devotes himself in a determined manner.<sup>49</sup>

A. II. 14-15; It. 118-19.

As mentioned earlier, the commentaries offer these interesting analogies: concentration causes the mind to be established on an object in a steady, consistent way, and brings about an integration of associated spiritual factors – they are not dispersed and dissipated – like water which binds flour into a single mass of dough. Similarly, concentration causes the mental processes to be composed and steadfast, like a candle flame in a still room: the flame is unswerving, constant, and uniformly bright.<sup>50</sup>

## E. GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF CONCENTRATION

As has been emphasized above, the aim of correct or ‘right’ (*sammā*) concentration is to prepare the mind for the successful application of

<sup>48</sup>Here, there are five similes that are opposite to those mentioned above. ‘Does not become clear to the mind’ means a person forgets or is unable to remember. There is another sutta passage (A. I. 9) comparing a mind that is not cloudy and unsettled with a clear reservoir, in which one can see the pebbles and stones, the shells and the fish, and comparing a mind that is cloudy to a murky reservoir.

<sup>49</sup>The effort to cleanse the mind of the hindrances is one of the objectives of the practice of wakefulness (*jāgariyānuyoga*); see: A. I. 113-14; VismṬ.: Āruppanidde-savaṇṇanā, Nevasaññānāsaññāyatanakathāvaṇṇanā, referring to: M. I. 346-7.

<sup>50</sup>See: DhsA. 118; Vism. 464; VismṬ.: Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddesavaṇṇanā and VismṬ.: Khandhaniddesavaṇṇanā, Saṅkhārakkhandhakathāvaṇṇanā.

wisdom. Put simply, the purpose of concentration is to assist wisdom, as explained in the following sutta passages:

Concentration is for the goal of knowing and seeing the truth.<sup>51</sup>

*Vin. V. 164.*

The objective and reward of concentration is knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

*A. V. 1-2.*

Purification of mind is for the sake of reaching purification of view. (The development of concentration to purify the mind is for the sake of purification of knowledge and discernment.)

*M. I. 149.*

Concentration, when imbued with morality, has great rewards and blessings. Wisdom, when imbued with concentration, has great rewards and blessings. The mind imbued with wisdom becomes completely free from the taints, that is from the taint of sense desire, the taint of becoming, and the taint of ignorance.

*D. II. 84.*

Apart from these objectives mentioned above, the practice of concentration has further benefits. Some of these benefits are by-products resulting from developing concentration in order to reach the goal of wisdom. Others are exceptional benefits which require special forms of training. And still others assist those individuals who have already attained the final goal of concentration. {788}

The benefits of concentration can be classified as follows:

1. The final goal or ideal: in Buddhism the true goal of concentration
  - with concentration being an essential factor of realizing this goal
  - is freedom from all suffering and mental impurity.

<sup>51</sup>Goal = *attha*; knowledge and vision of the truth = *yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*.



- The precise benefit here of concentration is to prepare the mind for wisdom, in order to reflect on and gain insight into the true nature of reality; concentration acts as a foundation for wisdom. In other words, concentration leads to ‘knowledge and vision of things as they really are’ (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*), which in turn leads to true knowledge (*vijjā*) and liberation (*vimutti*).
  - Although not considered the true goal of concentration practice, a subsidiary benefit is the attainment of temporary states of liberation, that is, ‘revocable’ deliverance of mind (*cetovimutti*). This is a liberation from mental defilement through the power of the mind, especially through the power of *jhāna*. The defilements are suppressed or checked by the strength of concentration for the duration of these concentrated states. Technically, this liberation is referred to as ‘liberation by suppression’ (*vikkhambhana-vimutti*).
2. The development of exceptional psychic abilities: the benefits of higher psychic attainments (*abhiññā*); the use of concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*) to generate psychic powers and other mundane psychic attainments, like the ‘divine ear’, clairvoyance, telepathy, and recollection of past lives, which are sometimes referred to as extrasensory perception (ESP).
  3. Benefits to mental health and to a healthy personality: concentration has positive effects on a person’s mind and disposition; it induces such qualities as inner strength, decisiveness, vigour, resilience, tranquillity, cool-headedness, joy, lovingkindness, compassion, and wise discernment. This is in contrast to a people overcome by the hindrances, who tend to be thinskinny, rude, irascible, aggressive, agitated, easily infatuated, hasty, intrusive, suspicious, lethargic, depressed, and indecisive.

Concentration prepares the mind for the development of other spiritual qualities and for the cultivation of good habits. A person with concentration knows how to calm the mind and to both control and ease any mental suffering. One is able to keep one’s emotions in check and one has a strong mental immune system.

These advantages increase when one applies concentration as a basis for the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, by mindfully paying attention to one's words and deeds, and to one's emotions and thoughts. One determines to use this knowledge only for beneficial purposes and to prevent any danger or harm to arise.

#### 4. Benefits to everyday life:

- Concentration brings about mental relaxation, inner peace, and happiness; it reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, and it also relaxes the body. One can practise mindfulness of breathing, say while waiting for the next activity to begin, while stuck in traffic, or as a break from taxing mental work. {789} This benefit in its complete form refers to the concentrative attainment used by the Buddha and the arahants for resting the mind and body, to be at ease during periods free from other activities. This form of concentration is given the special term 'abiding at ease in the present' (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*).
- Concentration enhances a person's capability in work, study, and all forms of activity. A concentrated mind one-pointed on an activity – not disturbed, distracted, or forgetful – leads to successful work, study, and contemplation. A person works with circumspection and is careful to prevent mishaps. This is because concentration is usually combined with the guiding factor of mindfulness; the mind is dextrous (*kammaniya*) – it is ready and suitable for work. If combined with the benefits mentioned in #1 above (of mental relaxation, etc.), the success of one's activities will be even more greatly enhanced.
- Concentration promotes physical health and aids in curing illness. The mind and body are interdependent and have a bearing on one another. When ordinary people have a physical illness, their mind too tends to become weak and depressed; and when a person is discouraged, the illness often gets worse. Even when the body is healthy, if people encounter an intensely upsetting situation they may fall ill. On the other hand, when those individuals whose minds are

strong (especially those persons who are liberated) have a physical illness, only the body is unwell; the mind remains at ease. Moreover, such persons can use this strong and contented mind to alleviate the symptoms, reduce the severity of the illness, and facilitate the healing process. They can also use the power of concentration to reduce physical pain.<sup>52</sup>

When the mind is bright and joyous, the body tends to be at ease and healthy; a joyful mind boosts the immune system. This relationship also has a bearing on the body's physical needs and metabolism. When the mind is happy and at ease, less food is required for the body to be healthy. For example, a person who is delighted by something often feels no hunger, or a monk who has a realization of truth is nourished by bliss (*pīti*); although he eats only one meal a day his complexion is bright, because he does not hanker after the past or fantasize over the future.<sup>53</sup> The converse is also true: many physical illnesses are psychosomatic and are caused by mental imbalance. Anger and anxiety, for example, can be a source of headaches and stomach ulcers. Developing wholesome mind states helps in curing these illnesses. This benefit of enhancing physical health is brought to perfection when wisdom is also engaged.<sup>54</sup> {790}

<sup>52</sup>E.g.: D. II. 98-9; S. I. 27-9; S. V. 152-3.

<sup>53</sup>S. I. 5.

<sup>54</sup>The relationship between the mind and the body can be divided into three stages, corresponding to spiritual development: on a rudimentary level there is both physical and mental suffering; physical symptoms impinge on the mind – when the body is unwell the mind also becomes unwell, increasing the sense of 'dis-ease'. On an intermediate level physical suffering remains confined to the body; a person is able to limit the impact physical illness has on the mind – one recognizes and accepts the level of discomfort, without allowing the suffering to intensify. On a higher level, the mind at ease helps to allay physical suffering; when the body is unwell, apart from not creating mental suffering, a person is able to use the strength and goodness of the mind to assist in healing the body.

## F. AIMS AND BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONCENTRATIVE MEDITATION

The Pali Canon contains this summary of the aims of concentration:

Monks, there are these four developments of concentration:

1. The development of concentration, cultivated and deepened, that is conducive to dwelling happily in the present (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*).
2. The development of concentration, cultivated and deepened, that is conducive to knowledge and vision.
3. The development of concentration, cultivated and deepened, that is conducive to mindfulness and clear comprehension.
4. The development of concentration, cultivated and deepened, that is conducive to the end of all mental taints.

A. II, 44-5; D. III, 222-3.

**Development #1:** the Pali Canon explains this as the four *jhānas*. This refers to developing the *jhānas* as one way of experiencing happiness, corresponding to the teaching on the ten levels of happiness.<sup>55</sup> From coarse to refined, these levels are: sensual pleasure, bliss in the four stages of fine-material *jhāna*, bliss in the four stages of immaterial *jhāna*, and bliss in the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*). The Buddha and the arahants develop the *jhānas* when they are not engaged in other activities, for ease and relaxation (‘abiding at ease in the present’ – *diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*).

**Development #2:** the Pali Canon explains this as the meditation on the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*), by establishing the perception ‘it is day’ (*divā-saññā*), irrespective of whether it is day or night, with a bright, spacious mind, unencumbered by the hindrances. The commentaries say that ‘knowledge and vision’ (*ñāṇa-dassana*) here refers to the divine eye,

<sup>55</sup>M. I. 398; S. IV. 225.

which they claim is the apex of the five mundane higher psychic attainments.<sup>56</sup> In some places the commentaries claim that the single word *ñāṇa-dassana* refers to all of the five mundane higher psychic attainments. This benefit thus refers to the application of concentration in order to generate special psychic attainments and powers.

**Development #3:** paying attention to and thoroughly knowing thoughts and feelings which arise and pass away in one's daily life; the Pali Canon explains this as knowing clearly the sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), and thoughts (*vitakka*), which arise, are established, and pass away.

**Development #4:** the Pali Canon explains this as the possession of wisdom, of constantly discerning the rising and ceasing of the 'five aggregates of clinging'; to reflect in the following ways: the body is this way, the arising of the body is this way, the decline of the body is this way (similarly with feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness). Generally speaking, this refers to applying concentration to assist wisdom, to act as a support or a foundation for the development of insight, in order to realize the supreme goal: knowledge of the destruction of the taints – knowledge of liberation.<sup>57</sup>

According to the commentaries the first and second developments pertain to tranquillity (*samatha*), while the third and fourth developments pertain to insight (*vipassanā*). {791} Although not specifically mentioned in this canonical passage, the other benefits of concentration mentioned earlier are obtained while developing these four ways of concentration.

The commentaries provide a similar summary of the benefits of developing concentration. The Visuddhimagga outlines five such benefits:<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup>The remaining four are: psychic powers (*iddhividhā*), 'divine ear' (*dibbasota*), telepathy (*cetopariyañāṇa*), and recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati*).

<sup>57</sup>See the commentarial explanations at: DA. III. 1006; AA. III. 84; MA. II. 232; see also: A. I. 43; A. III. 323.

<sup>58</sup>Vism. 371-72.

1. A means of resting at ease in the present (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*): this is a benefit of ‘attainment concentration’ (*appanā*, i.e. of *jhāna*) experienced by arahants, who have completed all necessary tasks for liberation and who do not need to use *jhāna* for achieving specific states of realization. Here, the commentaries cite the Buddha’s words: *These jhānas are called ‘pleasant abidings here and now’ in the noble ones’ discipline.*<sup>59</sup>
2. A basis or proximate cause (*padatṭhāna*) for insight: this is a benefit of attainment concentration, or even of ‘access concentration’, but this degree of concentration is not exceptionally bright or spacious; it is experienced both by a ‘person in training’ (*sekha*)<sup>60</sup> and by ordinary people. Here, the commentaries cite the Buddha’s teaching: *Bhikkhus, develop concentration. A bhikkhu who is concentrated understands things as they really are.*<sup>61</sup>
3. A basis or proximate cause for higher psychic attainments (*abhiññā*): this is a benefit of attainment concentration experienced by a person who has obtained the eight ‘concentrative attainments’ (*samāpatti*); such a person can generate the higher psychic attainments as desired. Here, the commentaries cite the Buddha’s teaching: *The mind is pliable, wieldy ... when he inclines his mind towards the realization of whichever things there are to be realized through direct knowledge, he attains the ability to witness these things, there being a suitable basis.*<sup>62</sup>
4. An ability to reach exceptional planes of existence; a person is born in fortunate and lofty realms of existence. This is a benefit of attainment concentration experienced by an unawakened person who has attained and not fallen away from *jhāna*; such a person is reborn in the Brahma realm. Here, the commentaries cite the

<sup>59</sup>M. I. 40-41. The ‘noble ones’ discipline’ (*vinaya*) = the method or mode of the awakened ones.

<sup>60</sup>Trans.: *sekha*: a person ‘in training’; a person who has reached one of the first three stages of awakening: stream-entry, once-returning, or non-returning.

<sup>61</sup>S. III. 13.

<sup>62</sup>A. I. 258.

teaching: *Having developed the first jhāna to a limited degree (parittakusala), where is a person reborn? He joins the divine company of Brahma's retinue.*<sup>63</sup> Even access concentration can lead to the higher realms of the six sense-sphere heavens.

5. An ability to enter the 'attainment of cessation' (*nirodha-samāpatti*): this is a merit of attainment concentration experienced by an arahant or a non-returner who has reached the eight 'concentrative attainments'; such a person can experience bliss in a state free from perception and feeling for up to seven days. Here, the commentaries cite the teaching in the Paṭisambhidāmagga on knowledge connected to the attainment of cessation.<sup>64</sup> {792}

#### G. PREVENTING MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE AIMS AND BENEFITS OF CONCENTRATION

An understanding of the benefits and objectives of concentration helps to prevent and dispel misunderstandings about the proper role of concentration in Buddhism and about the life of the monastic community. Such misunderstandings include the belief that meditation is a matter of retreat from the world and a disregard for social affairs, or the idea that the life of a monk is one of total isolation and a disregard for social responsibility. The following considerations may help to prevent such misunderstandings:

Concentration is simply a means to an end; it is not the goal of Buddhist spiritual practice. Beginning practitioners may separate themselves from society in order to engage in a form of training for a special, limited period of time, but later they return to take an active role in society suitable to their circumstances. Moreover, the development of concentration generally does not require sitting immobile all day and night; there are many meditation techniques available to choose from.

The Buddha's teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness reveals how some people are able to realize arahantship after practising these

<sup>63</sup>Vbh. 424. Brahma's retinue: Brahmapārisajjā.

<sup>64</sup>Ps. I. 99-100.

factors for only seven days. After this realization these awakened individuals generally apply concentration for the benefit of dwelling at ease in the present. They can dedicate the large remainder of their time to live according to the Buddha's original exhortation: 'Bhikkhus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the manyfolk, for the compassionate assistance of the world' (*caratha bhikkhave cārikaṃ bahujaṇahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya*).

The way of practice for an individual monk depends on suitability, aptitude, personality traits, and interests. Some monks wish to live alone in the forest and this is suitable for them; for others it is inappropriate for them to live in the forest, even if they desire to do so. There are examples in which the Buddha did not give his permission for particular monks to practise on their own in the forest.<sup>65</sup> Even if a monk lives in the forest, the monastic discipline forbids a monk from cutting himself off entirely from social responsibilities in the manner of a rishi or a hermit.<sup>66</sup>

In Buddha-Dhamma the desired benefit of concentration and of jhāna is a state of mind that is 'pliable and wieldy', which is conducive to the application of wisdom, as mentioned earlier. The other benefits obtained from concentration and from jhāna are considered supplementary or special, and they are sometimes even undesirable, in which case the Buddha did not condone these. For example, a person who cultivates concentration with the desire for psychic powers is deemed as establishing wrong intention. Psychic powers can generate many ill effects, are subject to decline, and are unable to lead to the realization of the goal of Buddha-Dhamma.<sup>67</sup> {793} Having said this, someone who practises for the purpose of wisdom, and who obtains psychic powers through the development of concentration, is considered to possess exceptional abilities.

<sup>65</sup> See: A. V. 202; M. I. 104-107; M. III. 59.

<sup>66</sup> Consider, for example, the disciplinary rules dealing with the relationship between the bhikkhus and the laypeople in regards to earning one's living, and the rules obliging all monks to participate in formal acts of the sangha concerning community administration and activities.

<sup>67</sup> Consider the story of Ven. Devadatta and the accounts of the ascetics before the Buddha's time.



In any case, even if a person develops concentration with the proper objective, as long as he or she has not yet realized the true goal, the acquisition of psychic powers will always be a danger.<sup>68</sup> This is because these powers may cause infatuation and attachment, both for the person who has these powers and for others, and because they can lead to an increase of mental defilement and thus impede spiritual progress. Although the Buddha possessed numerous psychic powers, he did not encourage the use of such powers, because they are not the path of wisdom and deliverance. From the Buddha's life story we see that he used psychic powers in certain situations in order to subdue psychic powers or to subdue an attachment to such powers.<sup>69</sup>

Those individuals who have progressed on the Path or who have reached the goal tend to use concentration on the level of *jhāna* as a means for abiding at ease in times free from activity. Although the Buddha travelled around teaching many people, interacting with people at all levels of society, and looked after the large monastic community, he possessed the attributes of *jhāyī* and *jhāna-sīlī*: he was devoted to *jhāna*; he was content to abide in *jhāna* instead of resting during his spare time.<sup>70</sup> This is similarly the case for many of the Buddha's disciples: they used *jhāna* to dwell at ease in the present moment (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāra*). On one occasion the Buddha sought a place of solitude for three months in order to abide in a state of concentration.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Psychic powers are an obstacle (*palibodha*) of insight: Vism. 97.

<sup>69</sup>Trans.: for more on this subject see chapter 9 on the supernatural and the divine.

<sup>70</sup>E.g.: M. I. 34; M. III. 13-14. Note the stories in later texts of hermits and ascetics before the Buddha's time who were exceptionally skilled at *jhāna* and who used *jhāna* as a form of enjoyment (*kīlā*). The term *jhāna-kīlā* is used in this context, meaning *jhāna* as a form of play or as a source of enjoyment during the free time of an ascetic (e.g.: Ap. 18; AA. I. 304; DhA. IV. 55; JA. II. 55, 139, 272, 379, [4/282]). There are occasional references to Pacceka Buddhas (SA. II. 190; AA. I. 173) and to Buddhist disciples who have not yet realized arahantship engaging in *jhāna-kīlā* (DhA. III. 427; SnA. I. 15), but I have never encountered a reference to the Buddha or to the arahants engaging in *jhāna-kīlā*. This observation can be used to distinguish what is the desirable way of life in Buddhism, and to distinguish the suitable ways of practice for people at different stages of spiritual development.

<sup>71</sup>See: S. V. 325-6.

The ability to find jhānic happiness to any degree is a form of individual freedom. However, if the interest in jhāna leads to a neglect for communal responsibilities, such conduct is blameworthy, even if the fascination is to a refined level of consciousness. According to the fundamental principles contained in the monastic discipline, the way of life for the monks emphasizes the importance of communal responsibility. The prosperity or the decline of the monastic sangha hinges on this essential principle of communal responsibility. For the Buddha and for those who practise correctly, concentration on the whole assists in those activities aiming for the welfare of all beings. {794}

## 18.5 THE HIGHEST FRUIT OF CONCENTRATION AND THE SPIRITUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT TRANSCENDING CONCENTRATION

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### A. IMPORTANT RESULTS AND LIMITATIONS OF CONCENTRATION

The development of concentration becomes increasingly refined. The state of mind of a person who has reached attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*) is referred to as jhāna ('absorption'), of which there are many levels. The higher is the level of jhāna the fewer are the remaining mental factors or attributes determining each level (*jhānaṅga*). States of jhāna are generally classified into two main groups, and each group is further divided into four subgroups, resulting in eight levels. These are referred to as the eight jhānas or the eight concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*):

#### 1. Four fine-material jhānas (*rūpa-jhāna*):

- (1) First jhāna (*paṭhama-jhāna*): containing five factors: initial application of thought (*vitakka*), sustained application of thought (*vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
- (2) Second jhāna (*dutiya-jhāna*): containing three factors: bliss (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

- (3) Third jhāna (*tatiya-jhāna*): containing two factors: joy (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
- (4) Fourth jhāna (*catuttha-jhāna*): containing two factors: equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

2. Four formless jhānas (*arūpa-jhāna*):

- (1) Awareness of infinite space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*).
- (2) Awareness of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*).
- (3) Awareness of the sphere of nothingness (*ākīñcaññāyatana*).
- (4) To enter the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), in which one ceases to focus on anything at all.

In the Abhidhamma, especially in the post-canonical sub-commentaries to the Abhidhamma, the fine material jhānas are usually divided into five levels.<sup>72</sup> These five are derived from the original group of four jhānas: a new second jhāna is inserted between the original first and second jhānas. This new jhāna contains four factors: sustained application (*vicāra*), bliss (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*); in other words, it is a jhāna which has sustained application of thought but no initial application. The original second jhāna is shifted to the position of third jhāna, the original third is shifted to fourth, and the fourth is shifted to fifth jhāna, respectively. Students of Buddhism should therefore not be confused or surprised when they encounter the terms *jhāna-pañcakanaya*, *pañcakajjhāna*, and *pañcama-jhāna*. They should realize that this group of five stems from the original group of four.

The scriptures refer to any method of determined effort for developing concentration in order to generate these aforementioned attainments as tranquillity meditation (*samatha*). The efforts by unawakened persons to develop concentration can lead no further than to the eight concentrative

<sup>72</sup>These are referred to as *jhāna-pañcakanaya*, as opposed to the original group of four, which is referred to as *jhāna-catukkanaya*. The original reference to these five is found at Dhs. 42-3, 236; in the context of later texts, see the classification of four or five jhānas at: Vism. 89; Comp.: Cittaparicchedo, Rūpāvacaracittam.

attainments mentioned above. The highest attainment possible by way of tranquillity meditation is thus the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. {822}

Those individuals who have realized the fruits of both tranquillity and insight meditation (*samatha* and *vipassanā*) – who are either non-returners or arahants – are able to reach a ninth, supremely refined state called ‘cessation of perception and feeling’ (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) or the ‘attainment of cessation’ (*nirodha-samāpatti*).<sup>73</sup>

However vital concentration is for spiritual practice and for reaching liberation, which is the final goal of Buddhism, its importance is limited, as can be explained as follows:

The importance of concentration for the practice of liberation is determined by the relationship between concentration and wisdom (that is, to make the mind fit for work). Moreover, the concentration required for the optimal functioning of wisdom does not need to be of the most refined level. Although concentration may be developed to the highest level of *jhāna*, if it is not integrated into the development of wisdom there is absolutely no way for concentration alone to lead to the highest goal of Buddhism.

Although the eight levels of *jhāna* are extremely refined states of mind, if they are solely the results of tranquillity meditation they are still mundane phenomena and should not be confused with the goal of Buddhism.

In states of *jhāna* resulting from tranquillity meditation, mental defilements (*kilesa*) are allayed, and therefore these states are also referred to as a form of liberation. This liberation, however, is only temporary, existing for as long as a person remains in that state of concentration. It is uncertain and subject to regression. The scriptures thus refer to this form of liberation as ‘mundane liberation’ (*lokiya-vimokkha*), ‘unstable liberation’ (*kuppa-vimokkha*),<sup>74</sup> and ‘liberation through suppression’ (*vikkhambhana-vimokkha*; defilements are allayed through suppression by concentration,

<sup>73</sup>Trans.: the author uses the English translation: ‘cessation of ideation and feeling’.

<sup>74</sup>I.e. it is volatile, changeable, and perishable: Ps. II 40-41.

similar to placing a stone on grass – when the stone is removed the grass can sprout again).<sup>75</sup>

From the preceding observations we can see that in Buddhist practice, the crucial and decisive factor is wisdom. The wisdom used at this final stage of practice is referred to specifically as ‘insight’ (*vipassanā*). Therefore, for spiritual practice to be truly effective it must reach the stage of insight.

Concentration is a vital factor for making the mind fit for work, yet there is some flexibility regarding this factor: one can apply different levels of concentration, beginning with initial levels like ‘insight-concentration’ (*vipassanā-samādhi*; existing at the same level as ‘momentary concentration’ – *khaṇika-samādhi*) or access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*).

Although one’s spiritual practice must be endowed with all eight factors of the Eightfold Path in order to reach the highest goal of Buddhism, it is possible to divide the specific methods of concentration applied in this context into two main ways of practice:

1. The method of ‘one who uses insight as a vehicle’ (*vipassanā-yānika*): this method emphasizes mindfulness and was referred to earlier in the section on right mindfulness. Here, only an initial level of concentration is applied, just enough as is necessary as an aide for practice. Mindfulness is the principal factor, used for holding or binding the object of attention and as a preparation for wisdom to then investigate it. Such a person is sometimes referred to more specifically as ‘one who practises pure insight as a vehicle’ (*suddhavipassanā-yānika*). Tranquillity (*samatha*) plays a role here as well, but it is not emphasized. {823}
2. The method of ‘one who uses tranquillity as a vehicle’ (*samatha-yānika*): this method emphasizes concentration, which plays the pivotal role. One develops concentration until the mind is calm and

<sup>75</sup>This term is used frequently in the commentaries, e.g.: DA. II. 426; MA. IV. 167; SA. III. 209; Vism. 410. Compare the term *vikkhambhana-nirodha* used in the Tipiṭaka (Ps. II. 220).

unified, leading to states of absorption (*jhāna*) or to concentrative attainments (*samāpatti*). The mind becomes absorbed in and firmly established on the object of attention, to the point that the mind is automatically primed to engage in activity: the mind is malleable, ready, and optimally suited for a chosen task. In such a state of mind the mental defilements and taints, which normally disturb and afflict the mind, are temporarily stilled. This is similar to silt which settles at the bottom of a pond when the water is still; in such a case a person can see through the water clearly. This state of mind is excellently suited for advancing to the stage of applying wisdom, in which mental ‘sediment’ can be eliminated completely. Methods of practice bringing about such unification of mind are referred to as ‘tranquillity meditation’ (*samatha*).

If one does not stop at the second method, one advances to the stage of wisdom (of insight – *vipassanā*) in which mental defilements and mental taints are completely removed. This is similar to method #1, above, but technically the task is now easier, because the mind is prepared. This method is thus complete, containing both calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).

In reference to persons who are awakened through these two methods of practice, a person who is awakened by following the first method is called a *paññā-vimutta*: ‘one liberated (solely) through wisdom’. Strictly speaking, such a person is called a ‘dry-insight practitioner’ (*sukkha-vipassaka*), whose concentration reaches the level of *jhāna* at the moment of attaining the Path (*magga*). (Within the classification of *paññā-vimutta*, a dry-insight practitioner is considered the lowest or the last of such individuals.)

Someone awakened by the second method is called an *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*: ‘one liberated both ways’ (i.e. liberated by way of concentrative attainments and liberated by way of the noble path – *ariya-magga*).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup>See the section in chapter 8 titled ‘Liberation of Mind and Liberation by Wisdom’.

The second method, which utilizes the complete system of tranquillity meditation before developing insight, and which leads to being liberated ‘both ways’, contains other important attributes:

A person who practises this method often obtains exceptional abilities springing from concentrative attainments, especially the abilities referred to as the six higher psychic attainments (*abhiññā*):<sup>77</sup>

1. *Iddhividhā*: psychic powers.
2. *Dibbasota*: ‘divine ear’; clairaudience.
3. *Cetopariyāñāṇa*: telepathy; mind-reading.
4. *Dibbacakkhu* (or *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*): ‘divine eye’; clairvoyance; knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings according to their kamma.
5. *Pubbenivāsānussati*: recollection of past lives.
6. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āśava*).

A person who is awakened by way of the first method only obtains the knowledge of the destruction of the taints, not the other higher psychic attainments.

A person who practises the second method must complete both stages of development. Although the practice of tranquillity leads to absorption and higher concentrative attainments, if it does not advance to the stage of insight, or is not combined with insight practice, it is impossible for it to lead to the final goal of Buddhism. {824}

## B. SUPPORTING FACTORS FOR CONCENTRATION

Many factors are involved in the development of concentration. Some act as a foundation for concentration to arise, while others act both as

<sup>77</sup>See: Vism. 373-435.

a support for generating concentration and as an aid for bringing it to completion and achieving higher goals, like the development of insight.

Some of these factors are found in numerous contexts, making them seem redundant. Effort (*virīya*), for example, is a road to success (*iddhi-pāda*), a spiritual power (*bala*), a spiritual faculty (*indriya*), and an enlightenment factor (*bojjhaṅga*). One should understand that these factors are classified in different groups according to their properties and functions. For instance, effort is a road to success in circumstances when it is the main thrust behind accomplishing a particular deed. It is a spiritual power when it acts as a protective force, preventing opposing qualities from overwhelming and endangering the mind. It is a spiritual faculty when it ‘governs’ proceedings, acting to eliminate antagonistic, unwholesome qualities, like laziness, discouragement, and indifference, and to generate a readiness for action. It is an enlightenment factor when, in association with other factors and in an interconnected process, it leads to realization of the truth.

### C. THE BASIS, PROXIMATE CAUSE, AND GOAL OF CONCENTRATION

Virtuous conduct (*sīla*) is the basis for concentration. As the first step in the threefold training, it supports the arising of concentration in the same way that it supports the whole of spiritual practice. This is confirmed by the Buddha’s teaching which Ven. Buddhaghosa uses as an opening quote to explain the gist of the Visuddhimagga in its entirety:

A learned monk, well-established in virtue, developing the mind and wisdom, one who is ardent and sagacious: he can disentangle this tangle.

*Vism. 1; original quote at: S. I. 13.*

The Buddha said that a person well-established in moral conduct (*sīla*) will succeed in spiritual practice, regardless of whether one labels this practice as the Eightfold Path, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, or the Four Right Efforts. This is similar to how people rely on the earth as a foundation on which to work, or to



how all creatures depend on the earth for support while standing, walking, sitting, and lying down.<sup>78</sup>

Generally speaking, moral conduct refers to virtuous behaviour and to refraining from causing harm or distress to anyone. Immoral conduct creates affliction and turmoil for the doer, along with a lack of self-confidence. It is a thorn which pierces the heart and prevents a person from being completely peaceful. As for additional levels of moral conduct, these depend on moral codes adopted by individuals to help guide their lives. Bhikkhus, for example, practise according to the principles of restraint contained in the Vinaya. Beyond moral conduct, the prominent supporting forces in spiritual practice which the Buddha mentioned frequently are heedfulness (*appamāda*), the presence of a virtuous friend (*kalyāṇamitta*), and wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*).<sup>79</sup>

Moral conduct acts as a foundation for concentration, but it bears fruit indirectly or from a distance.<sup>80</sup> The commentators claim that the true, immediate condition giving rise to concentration is happiness (*sukha*), and they thus state that ‘happiness is the proximate cause for concentration’.<sup>81</sup> To prevent misunderstandings, note that states of mind warranting the title of *samādhi*, must, at least at initial stages, be accompanied by happiness.

As stated earlier, the objective of concentration is knowledge and vision according to reality (*yathābhūta-nāṇadassana*).<sup>82</sup> As the Buddha said: ‘A person with a concentrated mind knows and sees according to the truth (*samāhito ... yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*).’<sup>83</sup> This means that concentration

<sup>78</sup>See: S. V. 45, 63, 78, 143, 246.

<sup>79</sup>E.g.: S. V. 91, 101. (These references are only in relation to the enlightenment factors – *bojjhaṅga*; for other contexts, see earlier references.)

<sup>80</sup>E.g.: *śīla* → absence of remorse (*avippaṭisāra*) → joy (*pāmojja*) → delight (*pīti*) → tranquillity (*passaddhi*) → happiness (*sukha*) → concentration (*samādhi*); see: A. V. 1-3.

<sup>81</sup>Vism. 85. There are many passages in the Pali Canon acting as a source for this claim. See the passage cited in the preceding footnote on developing concentration according to a natural process.

<sup>82</sup>E.g.: A. V. 1-3.

<sup>83</sup>S. V. 414.

is the ‘domain of practice’ for wisdom; it promotes the development and fulfilment of wisdom. In any case, in regard to the interconnectedness between factors of the Path, wisdom – ‘right view’ – is the compass needle or the provider of light, allowing the other Path factors to progress in the right direction. Wisdom development thus supports the development of concentration. For instance, the clearer is one’s discernment of things, the greater is one’s confidence and the more powerful one’s concentration. These two vital factors – concentration and wisdom – are thus mutually supportive and interdependent:

A person lacking in wisdom has no concentrative absorption.

A person lacking in concentrative absorption has no wisdom.

Indeed, a person possessing both concentrative absorption  
and wisdom abides close to Nibbāna.

*Natthi jhānaṃ apaññassa; natthi paññā ajhāniyo; yamhi jhānañca  
paññañca sa ve nibbānasantike.*<sup>84</sup>

*Dh. verse 372.*

When describing a particular spiritual quality, the commentaries generally explain it by examining various aspects, for example: attribute (*lakkhaṇa*), function (*rasa*), appearance (*paccupaṭṭhāna*; visible effects), and proximate cause (*padatṭhāna*). In this context the commentators state that the attribute of concentration is non-distraction, its function is the elimination of mental distraction or the gathering together of accompanying factors (*sahajāta-dhamma*), its visible effects are non-wavering, tranquillity, and knowledge (*ñāṇa*) of the truth, and its proximate cause is happiness.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup>The term ‘jhāna’ here can refer to a focus on any object of attention (*ārammaṇūpanijjhāna*) or to a meditation on the three characteristics (*lakkhaṇūpanijjhāna*).

<sup>85</sup>Vism. 85; NdA. II. 388; PsA. I. 17; DhsA. 118. The Paṭisambhidāmagga states that *avikkhepa* (non-distraction; non-disturbance) is the purpose (*attha*) of concentration and right concentration (e.g.: Ps. I. 21, 30, 73-4).

#### D. ACCOMPANYING FACTORS OF CONCENTRATION

As mentioned above, firmly established concentration is called attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhī*). When the mind attains this level of concentration, it enters what is called ‘concentrative absorption’ (*jhāna*). In *jhāna*, concentration (also referred to as ‘one-pointedness’ – *ekaggatā*) is always accompanied by a certain number of accompanying factors. {826}

There are several levels of *jhāna*: four levels according to the original suttas of the Pali Canon, or five levels according to the interpretation of the Abhidhamma. The higher the level of *jhāna* the more refined it is. As mentioned in an earlier section, the higher the level of refinement the fewer are the accompanying factors. The regular accompanying factors of *jhāna*, including the factor of concentration (*samādhī* or *ekaggatā*), are called ‘*jhāna* factors’ (*jhānaṅga*). In total there are six: initial mental application (*vitakka*), sustained mental application (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). (See Note 18.5). A summary of these six factors is as follows:<sup>86</sup>

1. Initial mental application (*vitakka*): ‘thinking’; to fix one’s mind on an object; to set one’s attention to an object. This factor is present in the first *jhāna*.
2. Sustained mental application (*vicāra*): ‘reflection’; to embrace, sustain, and be immersed in an object of attention. This factor is present in the first *jhāna* (and in the second *jhāna* according to the five *jhānas* of the Abhidhamma).

These two factors, of fixing and sustaining attention, are linked. This is similar to a person who polishes a tarnished bronze vessel: *vitakka* is like the hand which grasps the vessel, *vicāra* is like the hand holding a brush and polishing the vessel. Another simile is to a potter: *vitakka* is like the

<sup>86</sup>See: Vism. 141-69; VinA. I. 144-56; PsA. I. 181-93; DhA. 114-18. In the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha – Comp.: Samuccayaparicchedo, Missakasaṅgaho – seven *jhāna* factors are mentioned, by substituting *sukha* with the two factors of mental happiness (*somanassa*) and mental displeasure (*domanassa*).

## NOTE 18.5: JHĀNA FACTORS

The early texts of the Abhidhamma refer to the total combined jhāna factors as ‘mental absorption’ (*jhāna*). They also describe a detailed number of jhāna factors for each level of jhāna mentioned in the Sutta Piṭaka, as follows:

1. First jhāna: *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, and *cittassa ekaggatā* (one-pointedness of mind).
2. Second jhāna: *sampasāda* (‘confidence’ – *saddhā*), *pīti*, *sukha*, and *cittassa ekaggatā*.
3. Third jhāna: *upekkhā*, *sati* (mindfulness), *sampajañña* (clear comprehension), *sukha*, and *cittassa ekaggatā*.
4. Fourth jhāna: *upekkhā*, *sati*, and *cittassa ekaggatā*. (Vbh. 257-8, 260-61.)

Moreover, access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) also dispels the five hindrances and contains the same five accompanying factors as the first jhāna, but it has less power than attainment concentration (Vism. 146-7). In some cases, access concentration contains equanimity instead of mindfulness and bliss; in such cases access concentration contains four factors: *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *upekkhā*, and *ekaggatā* (Vism. 85-6).

hand which presses down on the clay, *vicāra* is like the hand which moulds the pot.

3. Bliss (*pīti*): delight; rapture; contentment. Here, this term refers specifically to bliss permeating the entire body; it is also called all-pervasive rapture (*pharaṇā-pīti*).<sup>87</sup> Bliss is present in the first and second jhānas (and in jhānas one, two, and three of the group of five jhānas).

<sup>87</sup>The commentaries define five kinds of *pīti*: (1) minor bliss (*khuddakā-pīti*): enough to make one’s hair stand on end and for one to shed tears; (2) momentary bliss (*khaṇikā-pīti*): one experiences momentary flashes of rapture, like flashes of lightning; (3) periodic or surging bliss (*okkantikā-pīti*): one feels pulses of rapture in the body, like waves washing against the shore; (4) transportive bliss (*ubbeṇḍā-pīti*): one feels a strong sense of exhilaration, causing one to behave or act in spontaneous ways, say by uttering verses, or to feel as if one is floating; (5) all-pervasive bliss (*pharaṇā-pīti*): to experience rapture and exhilaration throughout one’s whole body (Vism. 143-4).

4. Happiness (*sukha*): joy; refreshment; ease; an absence of all mental distress and agitation. This factor is present in the first three levels of jhāna (or the first four levels in the group of five).

The distinction between bliss and happiness can cause confusion for some people. *Pīti* here refers to the delight in acquiring a desired sense object. *Sukha*, on the other hand, refers to the pleasure of experiencing this sense object. {827} Take for example a person wandering in a desert, hot, thirsty, and exhausted. He discovers an oasis surrounded by shady trees, or he meets someone who tells him that such an oasis lies nearby. He then goes to this oasis, drinks, and rests to his heart's content. The delight in seeing or hearing of the oasis is called *pīti*, while the satisfaction of drinking and finding relief is *sukha*.

5. Equanimity (*upekkhā*): detachment; looking on with dispassion; to observe phenomena peacefully; to observe arising phenomena without falling into partisanship. In the case of jhāna, this means to not be attached even to the exceptional pleasure of jhāna. On a higher level, *upekkhā* refers to an equanimity when everything falls into place or reaches completion. One no longer busily searches for results. Especially in the case of the fourth jhāna, which is completely free of harmful mental qualities, one needs not make the effort to eliminate these qualities. This factor is specific to the fourth jhāna (the fifth jhāna in the group of five).

Equanimity, in fact, exists at all stages of jhāna, but it is not pronounced in the early stages. It is still suppressed by unfavourable factors like initial mental application, sustained application, and feelings of pleasure. This is similar to the moon during the daytime: it is not clear and bright because of the dominant light of the sun. In the fourth jhāna the unfavourable factors are stilled and one enters 'night-time': one is supported by neutral feelings (*upekkhā-vedanā*, or *adukkhamasukha-vedanā*). (See Note 18.6) Equanimity is pure, clear and bright, and it purifies and brightens accompanying factors like mindfulness.

6. One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*): one-pointed attention; this is precisely the factor of concentration (*samādhi*). It is present at all levels of jhāna.

One thing that needs to be reiterated is that although the so-called jhāna factors are constant to specific levels of jhāna and help to distinguish which level of jhāna has been reached, this does not mean that these are the only factors present in jhāna. Although they are not used to distinguish various levels of jhāna, many other accompanying factors (*sampayutta-dhamma*) exist, like perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), enthusiasm (*chanda*), effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), and reflection (*manasikāra*).<sup>88</sup> Some of these factors always accompany states of jhāna while some are occasionally in attendance.

The descriptions in the Sutta Piṭaka of different stages of jhāna often emphasize distinctive factors. For example, in the context of the third jhāna, mindfulness and clear comprehension are emphasized; although these factors are present in the first two jhānas, their role is more pronounced in the third jhāna. And in the fourth jhāna an emphasis is made on the clarity and purity of mindfulness, which is supported by pure equanimity; accompanying factors likewise are sharpened by equanimity.<sup>89</sup> This material here helps to prevent the misunderstanding that jhāna is a state of non-awareness, a form of trance, a fading away or absorption into some other reality. {828}

The Visuddhimagga cites the Peṭakopadesa, which states that the five jhāna factors arising along with attainment concentration and the realization of the first jhāna are adversaries to the five hindrances, resulting in five pairs of opposing qualities: initial mental application is the foe of sloth and torpor; sustained mental application is the foe of doubt; bliss is the foe of ill-will; happiness is the foe of restlessness and worry; and concentration or one-pointedness is the foe of sensual desire.<sup>90</sup> When these jhāna factors arise they dispel the five hindrances, and when they

<sup>88</sup>See: M. III. 25-8.

<sup>89</sup>Vism. 162-3, 167-8.

<sup>90</sup>Vism. 141. For the original source of the Abhidhamma explanation of the four jhānas, the five jhānas, and the various jhāna factors, see: Vbh. 263-8.

## NOTE 18.6: TWO FORMS OF UPEKKHĀ

To prevent confusion, note the difference between:

- *upekkhā* as a *jhāna* factor, which is translated as ‘equanimity’ and is a wholesome quality classified within the aggregate of volitional formations (*saṅkhāra-khandha*), and
- *upekkhā* as a feeling (*vedanā*), which is a neutral feeling or a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*), and is neither wholesome nor unwholesome.

In the fourth *jhāna* equanimity as a *jhāna* factor is accompanied by neutral sensations – both of these kinds of *upekkhā* are present.

are present they prevent the hindrances from resurfacing. On the contrary, if the five hindrances exercise influence over the mind the *jhāna* factors cannot function. In any case, according to the Buddha, the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) are the direct adversaries to the five hindrances, a subject which will be discussed below.

### E. CRITERIA FOR PREPAREDNESS

The five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are the criteria for determining a person’s spiritual readiness and for indicating the rate of a person’s spiritual development, namely: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*saṁādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). These criteria are used for the whole of spiritual practice, not just in the context of meditation.

The term *indriya* refers to the governing factor or principal agent in a specific activity. In this context it refers to the governing factor in the elimination of unwholesome, opposing qualities. Effort, for example, eliminates laziness and leads to a preparedness for spiritual engagement. The scriptural definitions for the five faculties can be summarized as follows:<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup>See: S. V. 196-201. There are no direct teachings by the Buddha on the specific functions of the five faculties; such direct teachings are found at Vism. 129-30, which are a synopsis of the canonical passages at e.g.: Ps. I. 16, 180; Ps. II. 21-2.

1. Faculty of faith (*saddhā; saddhindriya*): as seen in the teaching on the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*), this faculty essentially refers to faith in the Buddha's awakening (*tathāgatabodhi-saddhā*).<sup>92</sup> The function of faith is intent devotion and determination (*adhimokkha*). A common definition for the faculty of faith is 'rational belief and a confidence in the truth and goodness of something one honours and practises'.
2. Faculty of effort (or 'energy'; *virīya; viriyindriya*): this faculty is described in the teaching on the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*). In some places it is defined as the effort derived from engaging in the four right efforts, or as equivalent to the four right efforts. In other places it is defined as the effort to abandon unwholesome qualities and to bring wholesome qualities to completion, as diligence, courage and perseverance, and as not neglecting wholesome actions. The function of effort is to support and 'lift up' (*paggaha*) the mind. A common definition for the faculty of effort is 'determination, vitality, and non-discouragement'.
3. Faculty of mindfulness (*sati; satindriya*): this faculty is described in the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). In some places it is defined as the mindfulness derived from engaging in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, or as equivalent to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. In other places it is defined as 'to be attentive, to be possessed of great mindfulness, and to be able to recall what one has previously done or said, even from a long time in the past'. The function of mindfulness is to attend to or oversee (*upaṭṭhāna*) the mind. A common definition for the faculty of mindfulness is 'to recollect, to guide the mind in its activities, and to remember that which one has recently done or been engaged in'. {829}
4. Faculty of concentration (*samādhi; samādhindriya*): this faculty is described in the teaching on the four jhānas. In some places it is defined as equivalent to the four jhānas, while in other places it is defined as making relinquishment the object of attention,

<sup>92</sup>Trans.: on the four factors of stream-entry see chapter 7 on awakened beings.



resulting in concentration and one-pointedness. The function of concentration is to make the mind unwavering and non-distracted (*avikkhepa*). A common definition for the faculty of concentration is ‘to have firmly established awareness, to be concentrated on an activity and on an object of attention’.

5. Faculty of wisdom (*paññā*; *paññindriya*): this faculty is described in the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. It is defined as a direct knowledge of the Four Noble Truths: to be endowed with noble wisdom which penetrates the truth of arising and ceasing, which eradicates mental defilement and leads to the complete ending of suffering. The function of wisdom is discernment (*dassana*) of the truth. A common definition for the faculty of wisdom is ‘to know according to the truth, to know thoroughly, to know accurately what one is doing, to have insight into the nature of reality’.

The Buddha confirmed the words of Ven. Sāriputta stating that the five spiritual faculties are interconnected. Faith gives rise to effort. Effort reinforces mindfulness. Stable mindfulness leads to concentration. Firm concentration results in wisdom: a profound discernment of the perils of ignorance and craving, which are the cause of the round of rebirth (*saṃsāra-vaṭṭa*). There arises an appreciation for Nibbāna, a state free from the darkness of ignorance and agitation of craving, a supreme peace. When a person gains clear insight into the truth, he or she develops great faith or transcends faith. A person’s practice thus circles back to the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), as explained in the Buddha’s ending passage:

Sāriputta, a noble disciple puts forth effort in such a way. When he has put forth effort, he recollects in such a way. When he has recollected, his mind is concentrated in such a way. When his mind is concentrated he understands clearly in such a way. When he has understood clearly, he goes beyond faith (*abhisaddhā*) thus: ‘As to these things that previously I had only heard about, they are truly so, as I have now contacted them myself, and realized and penetrated them with wisdom.’

The Buddha gave a teaching on the four different paths of spiritual practice: some people practise with difficulty and gain insight slowly; some practise with difficulty but gain insight quickly; some practise with ease but gain insight slowly; while some practise with ease and gain insight quickly. Here, the Buddha explains that the determining factors for the rate of spiritual development are the five faculties: if the faculties are weak, insight will come slowly; if they are keen, insight will come quickly.<sup>93</sup> The five faculties even determine the different kinds of non-returners.<sup>94</sup>

Generally speaking, the potency or deficiency of the five faculties is the criterion for measuring the stage of a person's awakening. When these faculties are thoroughly complete, the person is an arahant. If the faculties are less strong than this, the person is a non-returner, a once-returner, a 'truth-devotee' (*dhammānusāri*) stream-enterer, or a 'faith-devotee' (*saddhānusāri*) stream-enterer, respectively. If someone is completely devoid of these faculties, he is classified as an unawakened person 'outside' (of the Dhammavinaya). {830} To sum up, a difference in the spiritual faculties leads to a difference in spiritual results; a difference in results leads to a difference in kinds of persons.<sup>95</sup>

The Paṭisambhidāmagga describes the five unwholesome qualities which are eliminated by the five faculties:<sup>96</sup>

1. Faith is in charge of devotion or resolve, and eliminates a lack of trust.
2. Effort is in charge of supporting or raising up the mind, and eliminates laziness.
3. Mindfulness is in charge of guarding or protecting the mind, and eliminates heedlessness.

<sup>93</sup> See: A. II. 149-52.

<sup>94</sup> A. II. 155-6.

<sup>95</sup> See: S. V. 200-205. See also Ps. II. 48-57 on the subject of 'paths to deliverance' (*vimokkha-mukha*) and on how the faculties determine the level of awakened beings.

<sup>96</sup> See: Ps. II. 2, 21-2.

4. Concentration is in charge of stabilizing the mind, and eliminates restlessness.
5. Wisdom is in charge of discerning the truth, and eliminates ignorance.

The Visuddhimagga mentions the importance of bringing the faculties into balance with one another. It stresses that if one of the faculties is overly strong while the others are weak, these other faculties are not capable of fulfilling their functions. For example, if faith is overly ardent, effort is unable to uplift the mind, mindfulness is unable to protect the mind, concentration is unable to firmly establish the mind, and wisdom is unable to discern the truth. It is then necessary to reduce faith by using wisdom to contemplate the nature of reality or to reflect in a way that does not further intensify faith.

In general, the commentaries recommend balancing the faculties in pairs, by matching faith with wisdom, and concentration with effort. If faith is strong and wisdom weak, a person may gain faith in something that is not worthy of faith. If wisdom is strong but faith weak, a person will incline towards arrogance and will be difficult to train, similar to an illness which is caused by taking medicine. If concentration is strong and effort weak, indolence will take hold of the mind, because *samādhi* shares attributes with indolence (*kosajja*). If effort is strong and concentration weak, however, a person will become restless, because *virīya* shares attributes with restlessness (*uddhacca*). When these two pairs of faculties are well-balanced, Dhamma practice progresses and bears fruit, a principle which is also applied to meditation.

The commentaries mention some special circumstances: when one solely practises tranquillity meditation, even if one's faith is extremely ardent, one may reach attainment concentration and concentrative absorption. Strong faith is suitable to the development of concentration. Similarly, in insight meditation there is no problem if wisdom is overly developed as this will lead to more comprehensive knowledge. These are special cases, however. If one applies the general principle of balancing the two pairs of faculties, one's practice will bear fruit, for example by reaching attainment concentration.

Mindfulness is an exception to the above principle. The texts state that the more powerful mindfulness is, the better. Increased mindfulness aids other spiritual factors and prevents the mind from falling into either restlessness or indolence. Both uplifting and restraining the mind requires mindfulness. The commentaries cite the Buddha's teachings that for mindfulness to be effective it must be applied at all times and in all circumstances,<sup>97</sup> and that mindfulness is the shelter and refuge for the mind.<sup>98</sup> {831}

Generally speaking, when some of the faculties are overly developed while others are weak, this situation must be rectified by cultivating the corresponding enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅga*). If there is too much effort, for example, one can reduce this faculty by cultivating the factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi*).<sup>99</sup>

According to the aforementioned teachings a person must train in and develop all five of the spiritual faculties in order to progress in spiritual practice. But as confirmed by the Buddha, there are exceptions to this rule in situations where one develops only the essential faculties. This is especially the case in the practice for complete realization of the truth, which is the highest goal of Buddhism. In this case, only four faculties need to be developed, by omitting the cultivation of faith:

Monks, because he has developed and cultivated four faculties, a bhikkhu who has destroyed the taints declares the fruit of arahantship.... What four? The faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom.

S. V. 223.

The next faculty which can be omitted is effort:

<sup>97</sup>This teaching is given in connection to the enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅga*): S. V. 114-5.

<sup>98</sup>S. V. 218.

<sup>99</sup>This subject of balancing the spiritual faculties is discussed at: Vism. 129-30. I suspect that this material is based on the Buddha's exhortation to be aware of the evenness of the faculties at: Vin. I. 182-3 and A. III. 375.

Monks, because he has developed and cultivated three faculties, Venerable Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja has declared the fruit of arahantship.... What three? The faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, and the faculty of wisdom.

*S. V. 224.*

If necessary, the next faculty which can be omitted is mindfulness:

Monks, because he has developed and cultivated two faculties, a bhikkhu who has destroyed the taints declares the fruit of arahantship.... What two? Noble wisdom and noble liberation. For his noble wisdom is his faculty of wisdom; his noble liberation is his faculty of concentration.

*S. V. 222-3.*

The faculty which is indispensable and which with adequate power (even without an advanced development of concentration) can lead on its own to the final realization of Buddha-Dhamma is wisdom:

Monks, because he has developed and cultivated one faculty, a bhikkhu who has destroyed the taints declares the fruit of arahantship.... What is that one faculty? The faculty of wisdom.

*S. V. 222.*

The passages describing the practice of only four, three, two, or a single faculty do not imply that the omitted faculties are absent. Although they are inconspicuous they are all still present to a necessary degree. They are developed in conjunction with the chief factors, but need not be given special prominence, as is seen in this teaching on wisdom: {832}

For a noble disciple who possesses wisdom, the faith that follows from it becomes stabilized, the energy ... mindfulness ... concentration that follows from it becomes stabilized.

*Ibid.*

These exceptional cases apply to specific individuals who are endowed with exceptional abilities. For ordinary people the aforementioned practice of cultivating all five of the faculties evenly is appropriate.

The following passages on the importance of the spiritual faculties highlight the role of wisdom in Buddhism:

Monks, just as among all animals the lion, the king of beasts, is declared to be their chief, that is, with respect to strength, speed, and courage, so too, among the states conducive to enlightenment (bodhipakkhiya-dhamma) the faculty of wisdom is declared to be their chief, that is, for the attainment of enlightenment (bodha).<sup>100</sup>

S. V. 227.

Monks, just as in a house with a peaked roof: so long as the roof peak has not been set in place, there is as yet no stability of the rafters, there is as yet no steadiness of the rafters; but when the roof peak has been set in place, then there is stability of the rafters, then there is steadiness of the rafters. So too, so long as noble knowledge has not arisen in the noble disciple, there is as yet no stability of the [other] four faculties, no steadiness of the [other] four faculties. But when noble knowledge has arisen in the noble disciple, then there is stability of the [other] four faculties, then there is steadiness of the [other] four faculties. What four? The faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration. In the case of a noble disciple who possesses wisdom, the faith that follows from it becomes stabilized, the energy ... mindfulness ... concentration that follows from it becomes stabilized.

S. V. 228-9.

<sup>100</sup>The term *bodhipakkhiya-dhamma* here refers to the five spiritual faculties. There are many other similar analogies, for example the footprint of an elephant is greater than that of any other land animal, red sandalwood is the greatest of all fragrant heartwoods, the Jambolan tree is the greatest of all trees in India, the *pārichattaka* tree is the greatest of all trees in Tāvātimsa heaven, the trumpet-flower tree is the greatest of all trees among the asuras, and the *koṭasimbali* tree is chief among the supaṇṇas (see: S. V. 231-2, 237-9). The Maṅgalatthadīpanī offers this eloquent description of wisdom's importance: *Indeed, of all factors conducive to*

## F. WISDOM'S TASK FORCE

This heading, Wisdom's Task Force, as well as the expression the 'arena of practice for wisdom', refers to the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*). The enlightenment factors are both a support for developing concentration and a way to apply concentration for achieving higher ends, up to and including the highest goal of true knowledge (*vijjā*) and liberation (*vimutti*). The seven factors are: mindfulness, investigation of truth, effort, bliss, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity.

The Buddha gave a short definition for the enlightenment factors: 'They are called enlightenment factors because they are conducive to awakening.'<sup>101</sup> Based on a literal analysis of the term *bojjhaṅga*, the commentaries translate it as either 'attributes of an awakened person', 'attributes of one about to be awakened', or 'factors of awakening'.<sup>102</sup> {833}

In principle the enlightenment factors are adversaries to the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Most of the time the Buddha mentioned these factors in combination with the hindrances, in the capacity of opposing forces.<sup>103</sup> The attributes of the enlightenment factors are opposite to the attributes of the hindrances:

Monks, these seven factors of enlightenment are not obstructions, are not hindrances, are not corruptions of the mind; when developed and cultivated they lead to the realization of the fruit of true knowledge and liberation.<sup>104</sup>

S. V. 93.

Monks, these seven factors of enlightenment are makers of vision, makers of knowledge, promoting the growth of wisdom, free from distress, leading towards Nibbāna.

S. V. 97-8.

*the realization of Nibbāna, wisdom is supreme. All remaining factors comprise wisdom's retinue* [Mang. 1/152].

<sup>101</sup>S. V. 72, 83.

<sup>102</sup>See: Vism. 678; SA. III. 138.

<sup>103</sup>See: S. V. 91-128; Vbh. 199-201.

As mentioned earlier the hindrances destroy the quality of the mind. The hindrances can be used to measure the level of deterioration of a person's mental health. The enlightenment factors on the other hand enhance the quality of the mind and promote mental health. They can be used as a yardstick to evaluate mental health.<sup>105</sup>

Definitions for the seven factors of enlightenment are as follows:

1. Mindfulness (*sati*): recollection; to recall, reflect, or to hold attention on something with which one is engaged or on a required activity. In the context of the enlightenment factors, *sati* encompasses both the vigilant role of mindfulness – in which attention rests on a specific object of consideration<sup>106</sup> – and the recollection of Dhamma teachings and of necessary activities in order to submit them for inspection by wisdom.<sup>107</sup>
2. Investigation of truth (*dhamma-vicaya*): search for truth; to apply wisdom in order to investigate the object focused on by *sati* or the Dhamma teaching submitted by *sati*. For example: to contemplate the essential meaning and value of the object under consideration; to examine and select those things that are beneficial to one's life or are most suitable to the present circumstances; to discern how the object arises, is sustained, and passes away; to understand the object in the context of the Three Characteristics; and to realize the Four Noble Truths.<sup>108</sup>
3. Effort (*virīya*): energy; fearlessness; persistence; ardent enthusiasm for that under investigation by wisdom; courage to perform good deeds; strength of heart; fighting spirit; perseverance; a hastening

<sup>104</sup>At S. V. 97 the clause 'are not corruptions of the mind' is changed to 'do not overwhelm the mind'.

<sup>105</sup>Trans.: for more information on the five hindrances and the seven factors of enlightenment, see Appendix 2.

<sup>106</sup>I.e. mindfulness as found in the general practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (see: M. III. 85; S. V. 331).

<sup>107</sup>S. V. 67-8.

<sup>108</sup>MA. IV. 142 and SA. III. 274 provide a broad definition, stating that *dhamma-vicaya* is profound knowledge (*ñāṇa*) which accompanies mindfulness.



to improve; an ability to uplift the mind; an ability to prevent despondency and discouragement.

4. Bliss (*pīti*): delight; joy; contentment; deep pleasure; rapture; exhilaration.
5. Tranquillity (*passaddhi*): mental and physical ease, relaxation, serenity, calm; an absence of stress and agitation.
6. Concentration (*samādhi*): one-pointed focus on an object of attention; steady and consistent attention to an activity; an absence of distraction, vacillation, and mental disturbance.
7. Equanimity (*upekkhā*): objectivity; impartiality; to observe equanimously and calmly when the mind is focused on an activity and when things progress according to plan or according to how they ought to be, or when it is not yet time to strive or be busily engaged; an absence of interference and intrusion. {834}

The Buddha mentioned the nourishment (*āhāra*) and the ‘denourishment’ (*anāhāra*) of the hindrances and the enlightenment factors. The nourishment which spawns, invigorates, and increases the hindrances is a lack of wise reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*); the denourishment, which does not feed or support the hindrances, is wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*). Likewise, the nourishment which generates, promotes, and perfects the enlightenment factors is wise reflection; the denourishment is a lack of wise reflection.<sup>109</sup>

#### 1. Nourishment and Denourishment of the Five Hindrances:

- A. Sensual desire: a lack of wise reflection regarding images of beauty (*subha-nimitta*) is the nourishment;<sup>110</sup> a wise reflection on images of impurity (*asubha-nimitta*) is the denourishment.

<sup>109</sup>S. V. 102-107.

<sup>110</sup>*Subha-nimitta* = those things one considers to be beautiful. When one encounters something, the mind seizes upon pleasing signs and features; one creates a pleasant perception or mental image of this object.

- B. Ill-will: a lack of wise reflection regarding repulsive images (*paṭigha-nimitta*) is the nourishment;<sup>111</sup> a wise reflection on the deliverance of mind (*cetovimutti*) is the denourishment.<sup>112</sup>
- C. Sloth and torpor: a lack of wise reflection regarding sluggishness stemming from overeating, boredom, drowsiness, or despondency is the nourishment; a wise reflection on resourcefulness, improvement, and perseverance is the denourishment.
- D. Restlessness and worry: a lack of wise reflection regarding the state or circumstances of mental agitation is the nourishment; a wise reflection on the state of a peaceful mind is the denourishment. {835}
- E. Doubt: a lack of wise reflection regarding issues giving rise to doubt is the nourishment; a wise reflection on wholesome and unwholesome qualities, beneficial and harmful qualities, is the denourishment.

2. Nourishment and Denourishment of the Seven Enlightenment Factors:

- A. The nourishment for mindfulness is wise reflection on those things acting as a basis for mindfulness.
- B. The nourishment for investigation of truth is wise reflection on wholesome and unwholesome qualities, beneficial and harmful qualities.
- C. The nourishment for effort is wise reflection on resourcefulness, improvement, and perseverance.
- D. The nourishment for bliss is wise reflection on those things acting as a basis for bliss.

<sup>111</sup>*Paṭigha-nimitta* = those things one considers to be annoying and offensive. When one encounters something, the mind seizes upon displeasing signs and features; one creates a negative perception or mental image of this object.

<sup>112</sup>*Cetovimutti* = things that liberate the mind, making the mind spacious and free from distress. Usually in the context of ill-will this refers to lovingkindness (*mettā*), but one can effectively apply any of the other unbounded states of mind (*appamaññā*).

- E. The nourishment for tranquillity is wise reflection on physical and mental tranquillity.
- F. The nourishment for concentration is wise reflection on ‘concentrative signs’ (*samādhī-nimitta*) and those things that do not make the mind confused.
- G. The nourishment for equanimity is wise reflection on those things acting as a basis for equanimity.

Conversely, the denourishment of the enlightenment factors is a lack of wise reflection on those things giving rise to each of these factors (the specific nourishment, mentioned above).

The things acting as a basis for mindfulness are the objects focused upon by mindfulness. One commentarial passage describes these as the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) and the nine supramundane states (*lokuttara-dhamma*).<sup>113</sup> From a wider perspective, however, this refers to the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The *Visuddhimagga* and the *Sammohavinodanī* describe four more qualities giving rise to mindfulness:<sup>114</sup> mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), avoidance of people with muddled awareness, association with people well-guarded by mindfulness, and devotion to the enlightenment factor of mindfulness.

The commentaries outline seven qualities that give rise to investigation: (1) to be an inquirer; (2) to make things clean and bright;<sup>115</sup> (3) to balance the spiritual faculties; (4) to avoid the company of fools; (5) to associate with the wise; (6) to contemplate matters requiring deep insight; (7) to devote oneself to the investigation of truth.

The commentaries list eleven qualities that give rise to effort: (1) to reflect on various dangers, e.g. the danger of wickedness (to rouse oneself by recognizing that if one makes no effort one will encounter

<sup>113</sup>SA. III. 154.

<sup>114</sup>The following material is derived from: *Vism.* 133-5 and *VbhA.* 275-88.

<sup>115</sup>To make things clean and bright: to keep one’s hair and nails trim, to wash one’s body, to wash one’s clothes so that they are clean and free from odour, to keep one’s dwelling tidy, etc.

such dangers); (2) to discern the blessings of making effort, which leads to exceptional mundane and supramundane results; (3) to consider that this path of practice was traversed by exceptional people, including the Buddha and his great disciples; if we are lazy and slack in our efforts we will never achieve the goal; (4) to honour almsfood by aspiring to generate blessings for the donor; (5) to consider the greatness of the Buddha and to remember that he praised effort; to consider that we should honour his compassion and kindness through devoted effort; (6) to consider that one should act in a way that is worthy of inheriting the magnificent legacy of the true Dhamma; (7) to reduce sloth and torpor through various means, like switching postures and developing the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*); (8) to avoid indolent people; (9) to associate with industrious people; (10) to reflect on the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*); (11) to devote oneself to making effort.

The commentaries describe eleven qualities that give rise to bliss: (1-3) to recollect the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; (4) to recollect one's own virtuous behaviour (*sīla*); (5) to recollect one's generosity and acts of renunciation; (6) to reflect on divine beings and on the qualities leading to divinity (*deva-dhamma*) inherent in oneself; (7) to reflect on the state of peace (i.e. *Nibbāna*); (8) to avoid gloomy, depressed people; (9) to associate with cheerful people; (10) to reflect on suttas inspiring devotion; (11) to incline the mind towards bliss. {836}

The commentaries describe seven qualities that give rise to tranquility: (1) to consume fine food; (2) to reside in a comfortable environment; (3) to abide in a comfortable posture; (4) to exert effort in a balanced, measured way; (5) to avoid nervous, stressful people; (6) to associate with calm, relaxed people; (7) to incline oneself towards tranquillity.

The commentaries describe eleven qualities that give rise to concentration: (1) to make things clean and bright; (2) to be discerning in regard to mental images (*nimitta*); (3) to balance the spiritual faculties; (4) to restrain the mind when appropriate; (5) to uplift the mind when appropriate; (6) when the mind is unhappy, to gladden it through faith

and a sense of awe (*saṁvega*);<sup>116</sup> (7) when the mind is functioning well, to practise equanimity; (8) to avoid people who lack concentration; (9) to associate with people who are endowed with concentration; (10) to reflect on mental liberation (*vimokkha*); (11) to be devoted to concentration.

The commentaries describe five qualities that give rise to equanimity: (1) to be non-discriminatory towards all living beings (both monks and laypeople); (2) to be objective about conditioned phenomena (both one's internal physical organs and one's personal belongings); (3) to avoid people who are anxious about and jealously guard things (including other people and personal possessions); (4) to associate with people who are unbiased towards living beings and conditioned phenomena; (5) to incline the mind towards equanimity.

The seven factors of enlightenment are mutually connected, as confirmed by the following teaching by the Buddha.<sup>117</sup> In sum, a monk who has studied with and listened to the Dhamma from a wise, virtuous person, who dwells in both physical and mental solitude, has an excellent opportunity for realization:

1. When someone reviews, recollects, and verifies that Dhamma that he has heard or studied ... he develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness.
2. When he bears this Dhamma in mind, he selects it, analyzes it, examines it, and investigates it .... He develops the enlightenment factor of investigation.
3. When he analyzes, examines, and investigates he exerts effort. The more he analyzes, discerns, clearly understands, and grasps the essential meaning, the greater is his energy and will-power, the more he strives and perseveres, undaunted.... He develops the enlightenment factor of energy.

<sup>116</sup>The word *saṁvega* here means a cause for reconsideration or a catalyst for bringing about a sense of urgency in regard to performing virtuous deeds. This corresponds to the term *samuttejana*, which means 'rousing a sense of valour', opposite to apathy (see: Vism. 657-8).

<sup>117</sup>S. V. 67-9. The commentaries claim that the seven factors of enlightenment here exist in a single mind moment (VbhA. 313).

4. When he rouses energy, is diligent and increasingly enthusiastic, there arises bliss independent of sensual desires.... He develops the enlightenment factor of bliss.
5. When the mind is blissful, both the mind and body are relaxed and calmed, and there arise mental and physical tranquillity.... He develops the enlightenment factor of tranquillity.
6. When the body is relaxed and at ease, the mind becomes firmly established and concentrated.... He develops the enlightenment factor of concentration.
7. When the mind is concentrated on an activity and functions well, it becomes steady and composed; a person simply observes at ease and with equanimity.... He develops the enlightenment factor of equanimity.

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha taught how the Four Foundations of Mindfulness nourish the seven factors of enlightenment. When developed and cultivated, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness bring the seven factors of enlightenment to completion; and when the enlightenment factors are developed and cultivated, they in turn bring true knowledge and liberation to completion.<sup>118</sup> The development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness thus acts as a basis, enabling the group of enlightenment factors to enter the arena of practice. {837}

When developing contemplation of the body, feelings, the mind, or mind objects, one is endowed with unremitting mindfulness. When one is attentive in this way, one applies wisdom to examine, inquire, and analyze according to the principle of Dhamma investigation. From this point the gradual development of the other enlightenment factors proceeds as described above, eventually leading to true knowledge and liberation.

Likewise, when one is listening to the Dhamma, if one firmly establishes the mind, reflects, devotes oneself with all one's heart, and listens

<sup>118</sup>He normally said this after describing the meditation on in- and out-breathing (see: M. III. 82; S. V. 329, 334).

carefully, at that time the hindrances will be absent and the seven factors of enlightenment may reach completion.<sup>119</sup>

The seven factors of enlightenment can be developed along with other spiritual qualities. For example, they can be developed along with the meditation on breathing, along with the four unbounded states of mind (*appamaññā*), or along with recollections, e.g. the perception of impermanence, the perception of foulness, the contemplation on dispassion, and the contemplation on cessation. The enlightenment factors assist these other qualities to be of supreme benefit, to be conducive to true safety, conducive to a sense of urgency and an ardent striving towards wholesomeness, and conducive to dwelling in peace.<sup>120</sup>

The Buddha encouraged the application of the enlightenment factors in meditation practice. These factors help to support the mind when a person is beginning to meditate and they strengthen concentration.<sup>121</sup>

‘On an occasion, monks, when the mind is despondent, it is untimely to develop the enlightenment factor of tranquillity, the enlightenment factor of concentration, and the enlightenment factor of equanimity. For what reason? Because the mind is despondent and it is difficult to rouse it with those things. Suppose a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws wet grass, wet cowdung, and wet timber into it, sprays it with water, and scatters dust over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘So too, on an occasion when the mind is despondent....’

‘On an occasion when the mind is despondent, it is timely to develop the enlightenment factor of investigation, the enlightenment factor of energy, and the enlightenment factor of bliss. For what reason? Because the mind is despondent and it is easy to rouse

<sup>119</sup>S. V. 95-6.

<sup>120</sup>S. V. 130-34.

<sup>121</sup>See: Vism. 133-4.

it with those things. Suppose a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws dry grass, dry cowdung, and dry timber into it, blows on it, and does not scatter dust over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up?’

‘Yes, venerable sir.’

‘So too, on an occasion when the mind is despondent....’

‘On an occasion when the mind is restless, it is untimely to develop the enlightenment factor of investigation, the enlightenment factor of energy, and the enlightenment factor of bliss. For what reason? Because the mind is restless and it is difficult to calm it down with those things. Suppose a man wants to extinguish a large bonfire. If he throws dry grass, dry cowdung, and dry timber into it, blows on it, and does not scatter dust over it, would he be able to extinguish that large bonfire?’

‘No, venerable sir.’

‘So too, on an occasion when the mind is restless....’

‘On an occasion when the mind is restless, it is timely to develop the enlightenment factor of tranquillity, the enlightenment factor of concentration, and the enlightenment factor of equanimity. For what reason? Because the mind is restless and it is easy to calm it down with those things. Suppose a man wants to extinguish a large bonfire. If he throws wet grass, wet cowdung, and wet timber into it, sprays it with water, and scatters dust over it, would he be able to extinguish that large bonfire?’

‘Yes, venerable sir.’

‘So too, on an occasion when the mind is restless....’ {836}

‘But mindfulness I say is always useful.’



In the Pali Canon the seven factors of enlightenment are described in several ways: as the ‘effort to cultivate (wholesome states)’ – *bhāvanā-padhāna*;<sup>122</sup> as the pinnacle of all forms of effort;<sup>123</sup> as the ‘strength of spiritual development’ (*bhāvanā-bala*);<sup>124</sup> as the means to eliminate the taints by way of spiritual development;<sup>125</sup> as kamma that is neither ‘black’ nor ‘white’, leading to the end of kamma;<sup>126</sup> as ‘conditions of prosperity’ (*aparihāniya-dhamma*), leading solely to growth and not to decline;<sup>127</sup> and as the path leading to the Unconditioned – Nibbāna – similar to the other qualities contributing to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).

### G. UNITY AND HARMONY OF THE PATH FACTORS

As mentioned above, the objective of ‘right concentration’ (*sammā-samādhi*) is to act as the domain of practice for wisdom – to make the mind the most suitable environment for spiritual qualities to work in unison in order to realize the truth, to eliminate mental impurity, and to reach the state that is completely free from suffering. It was described earlier how the eight factors of the Path act in harmony and are mutually supportive, with right view acting as the leader. Here, we can conclude that the first seven path factors help to generate, support, and reinforce concentration, giving rise to ‘right concentration’, which can be applied effectively according to one’s needs. Concentration yields results and furthers one’s practice, leading at the final stage to two more factors: right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā-vimutti*).

The Buddha refers to these first seven path factors as requisites of concentration (*samādhi-parikkhāra*): they are the elements, the accompanying conditions, the supports, and the determinants of concentration. Concentration possessed of these requisites is referred to as ‘noble right concentration’ (*ariya-sammāsamādhi*), which leads to the final goal:

<sup>122</sup>D. III. 226; A. II. 16-17.

<sup>123</sup>D. III. 106.

<sup>124</sup>A. I. 52-3.

<sup>125</sup>M. I. 11.

<sup>126</sup>A. II. 237.

<sup>127</sup>D. II. 78-9; A. IV. 23.

The Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, has well proclaimed the seven requisites of concentration, for the cultivation and the perfection of right concentration. What are these seven? They are right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness. That one-pointedness of mind surrounded by these seven factors is called the noble right concentration with its bases (*upanissaya*; support, foundation) and requisites.

When there is right view, right thought is suitable for action; when there is right thought, right speech is suitable for action; when there is right speech, right action is suitable for action; when there is right action, right livelihood is suitable for action; when there is right livelihood, right effort is suitable for action; when there is right effort, right mindfulness is suitable for action; when there is right mindfulness, right concentration is suitable for action; when there is right concentration, right knowledge is suitable for action; when there is right knowledge, right liberation is suitable for action.<sup>128</sup> {839}

*D. II. 216-7.*

When the Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*) has been developed to the point of completion, an instant occurs in which all of the path factors function in unison, giving rise to profound knowledge and a realization of truth, and eliminating the defilements which overlay and oppress the mind. This occurrence in which the path factors function concurrently is specifically called the ‘Path’ (*magga*), because in this instant all the path factors are truly integrated. When the Path operates in this way, there are resulting fruits (*phala*), namely, knowledge of the truth, release from mental defilement, and a freedom from suffering.

<sup>128</sup> Similar passages are found at M. III. 72 and A. IV. 40. A specific reference to the requisites of concentration is found at D. III. 252. At M. I. 301 there is a reference to the most immediate requisite of concentration, i.e. right effort. The *Nettipakaraṇa* classifies a relaxed and easeful body, or non-agitation, as a requisite for concentration [Nett. 125]. The expression ‘suitable for action’ comes from the Pali *pahoti*, which can also be translated as ‘is thus correct’.

If everything proceeds in order, there are four occasions or stages in which the Path operates in a potent or conclusive fashion, referred to as the four ‘paths’. In the same way, there are four ‘fruits’. Collectively, they are called the four noble paths (*ariya-magga*) and the four noble fruits (*ariya-phala*), i.e.: the path of stream-entry, the fruit of stream-entry, the path of once-returning, the fruit of once-returning, the path of non-returning, the fruit of non-returning, the path of arahantship, and the fruit of arahantship. In reference to its eight factors, this culmination of the Path is called the Eightfold Path; in reference to practical application or to active functionality, which has four stages, it is called the ‘four paths’ (*catumagga*).<sup>129</sup>

The joint operation of spiritual factors in a single mind-moment, bringing desired results to completion, is referred to in the scriptures as ‘harmony of spiritual qualities’ (*dhamma-sāmaggī*).<sup>130</sup> This harmony of spiritual qualities is equivalent to awakening (*bodhi*).<sup>131</sup> It is not only the eight Path factors which act in unison during this single moment of the ‘path’, but the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) do so as well.<sup>132</sup> In any case, the thirty-seven enlightenment factors can all be distilled into the eight factors of the Path.<sup>133</sup> For this

<sup>129</sup>This collective term *catumagga*, specifying the number of stages, is first used in the commentaries and it usually appears as a compound with other terms. See: SA. I. 206; SA. II. 384; SnA. I. 6; PsA. I. 171; Vism. 688-9. It is paired with the term *catuphala* – the ‘four fruits’.

<sup>130</sup>As far as I can discern this term is only used once in this context in the Pali Canon, at Nd. I. 132. It is used more often in the commentaries, e.g.: NdA. I. 66; VbhA. 310. Occasionally, the term *dhamma-sāmaggī* is confused with the term *magga-samaṅgī*, which means someone who is fully endowed with one of the four stages of the noble path (see, e.g.: Pug. 72). At M. III. 9 the term *dhamma-sāmaggī* is used, but with another meaning.

<sup>131</sup>MA. I. 83; KhA. 84.

<sup>132</sup>For the first explanation of the Path factors and other spiritual qualities arising simultaneously in the instant of the Path and in a single mind moment, see: Ps. II. 82-5; and see commentarial explanations at: Vism. 509-10, 680-81; VbhA. 121, 320.

<sup>133</sup>The thirty-seven enlightenment factors: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four roads to success, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eightfold path. For the classification of these factors into the Path, see: Vism. 511-12; VbhA. 88.

reason, when the term ‘Path’ is used, this necessarily incorporates related spiritual qualities.

One may raise the question of how it is that several Path factors can operate in a single instance. Especially, one may ask how the factors related to moral conduct, like right speech and right action, are involved in such a situation. {840} To answer these questions let us look at the comparable example of someone who is able to fire a rifle or shoot an arrow with great accuracy. On the occasion of an archery competition we see this individual gain victory by hitting the bull’s eye, and she accomplishes this deed in a single instant.

A superficial glance may lead to the conclusion that this person simply has a steady hand and one will leave it at that. But a deeper inspection of the causes and conditions for the steady hand and the accuracy of the shot in that instant may reveal a long period of training before this event. This person has trained in developing correct posture, by focusing on the position of the entire body, the feet, the legs, the arms, and the shoulders; she has trained in how to properly grasp the weapon, taking aim, estimating distance, and finding the right balance of strength. She has sharpened her wits, developed resourcefulness and resolve, and strengthened concentration, until there arose skill and proficiency, an ability to shoot instantly, and a feeling that the action happens automatically and effortlessly.

We must take into consideration all of these factors which have reached completion when we witness this person display such accuracy: it is the sum total of physical equipoise and competence, self-assurance, concentration, and mental dexterity. In other words, all the factors of physical fitness, mental preparedness and maturity, understanding, and sound judgement function together when shooting the arrow in that single moment. In retrospect, the physical capability, mental capability, and wisdom capability in that moment are the fruits of a lengthy training. The ability to shoot the arrow accurately is the result of months and years of practice.

This matter is related to the differences between individual practitioners, especially in regard to the level of proficiency or potency of the spiritual faculties. Some people attain results easily with only a little

amount of training. Others train for a long time before attaining results, but their practice proceeds with ease. Others, meanwhile, must train for both a long time and with great difficulty before reaching success. And finally, some people, no matter how much they train, are incapable of attaining success. Besides the inherent differences between people, spiritual attainments and the speed of such attainments depend on other factors, in particular: the correctness of a specific spiritual practice, the presence of a good guide or teacher (referred to as a ‘virtuous friend’ – *kalyāṇamitta*), a person’s physical state of health, and a person’s physical environment. The Buddha classified four different ways of practice (*paṭipadā*) leading to spiritual accomplishment:<sup>134</sup> {841}

1. A person practises with difficulty and gains higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) slowly (*dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
2. A person practises with difficulty but gains higher knowledge quickly (*dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).
3. A person practises with ease but gains higher knowledge slowly (*sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
4. A person practises with ease and gains higher knowledge quickly (*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).

Concentration too is a factor determining the level of difficulty in practice and the speed with which a person attains knowledge. It was mentioned earlier how a Dhamma practitioner may develop insight at once, by relying on only a rudimentary level of concentration, and this person may even realize the final goal of knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). Someone who first develops concentration and attains concentrative absorption (*jhāna*), however, is able to build a firm foundation for the development of insight. This is made more clear

<sup>134</sup> A. II. 149-52, 154-5; D. III. 106, 229; A. V. 63; Vbh. 331-2. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya it states that Ven. Sāriputta followed the way of *sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*, while Ven. Mahā Moggallāna followed the way of *dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*. Note that the Visuddhimagga (Vism. 688) describes Mahā Moggallāna’s practice in a way that is inconsistent with the explanation in the Pali Canon.

in the context of the four ways of practice mentioned above. A person who has attained the four jhānas is described as practising with ease (*sukhā paṭipadā*). As for someone who practises the meditation on foulness, the perception on the loathsomeness of food, or the recollection on death – which only lead to the first jhāna or to access concentration – his practice will be arduous and less cheerful (*dukkhā paṭipadā*).

The following teachings by the Buddha describe ways of practice in which the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment are linked to the eight factors of the Path. From a superficial perspective these practices may appear easy. It is true that for someone who is prepared, they are easy. But for someone who is unprepared, they are difficult, and such a person may have to engage in many other practices before he or she is ready:

Bhikkhus, when one knows and sees the eye as it actually is, when one knows and sees forms ... eye-consciousness ... eye-contact ... the feeling of pleasure, or pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure that arises with eye-contact as condition, then one is not infatuated by the eye [... forms, etc.].

When one abides uninfatuated, unfettered, unbeguiled, discerning danger, then the five aggregates of clinging reach a state of no further growth; and one's craving – which leads to renewed existence, is accompanied by delight and lust (*nandi-rāga*), and pursues various sense impressions – is abandoned. One's bodily and mental troubles, one's bodily and mental torments, one's bodily and mental passions are abandoned, and one experiences bodily and mental pleasure.

The view of a person such as this is right view; his intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his mindfulness is right mindfulness, his concentration is right concentration. And his bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified from the start. In this way the Noble Eightfold Path comes to fulfilment and completion for him.

When he develops this Noble Eightfold Path, the four foundations of mindfulness also come to fulfilment and completion; the four right

efforts ... the four paths to success ... the five spiritual faculties ... the five spiritual powers ... the seven factors of enlightenment also come to fulfilment and completion. {842}

These two things – serenity and insight – occur in him joined evenly together. He fully understands by direct knowledge (See Note 18.7) those things that should be fully understood by direct knowledge. He abandons by direct knowledge those things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge. He develops by direct knowledge those things that should be developed by direct knowledge. He realizes by direct knowledge those things that should be realized by direct knowledge.

And what things should be fully understood by direct knowledge? The answer to that is: the five aggregates of clinging: the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the volitional formations aggregate affected by clinging, the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging....

And what things should be abandoned by direct knowledge?: ignorance and craving for existence....

And what things should be developed by direct knowledge?: serenity and insight.

And what things should be realized by direct knowledge?: true knowledge and deliverance.<sup>135</sup>

*M. III. 289-90.*

In relation to some of the qualities described in this chapter, the following teaching by the Buddha presents a summary of all things:

<sup>135</sup>There are identical passages dealing with the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, and associated factors. The final passages concerning those things that should be fully understood, abandoned, etc., by direct knowledge also occur at: S. V. 51-53; A. II. 247.

Monks, being questioned by those wandering ascetics of another persuasion, you should reply as follows: ‘Friends:

1. All things are rooted in desire (*chanda-mūlakā*).
2. All things have attention as their source for existence (*manasikāra-sambhavā*).
3. All things originate from contact (*phassa-samudayā*).
4. All things converge on feelings (*vedanā-samosaraṇā*).
5. All things have concentration as leader (*samādhi-pamukhā*).
6. All things have mindfulness as governing principle (*satādhipateyyā*).
7. All things have wisdom as pinnacle (*paññuttarā*).
8. All things have liberation as essence (*vimutti-sārā*).
9. All things merge into the deathless (*amatogadhā*).
10. All things culminate in Nibbāna (*nibbāna-pariyosānā*).<sup>136</sup> {843}

A. V. 106-107.

A similar passage states:

Monks, a monk lives the holy life (*brahmacariya*) with the training as its blessing, with wisdom as pinnacle, with liberation as essence, with mindfulness as governing principle.

And how does the holy life have the training as its blessing? Here, I have laid down the training in virtuous conduct for disciples in this Dhamma and Discipline for the sake of instilling faith in those who do not have faith and of increasing faith in the faithful. In whatever way I have laid down the training in virtuous conduct, those disciples practise and train in the training rules so, observing them fully, not in a defective, patchy, or tainted way. Moreover, I

<sup>136</sup>Similar passages are found at A. IV. 338-9, 385-6; the latter passage begins with the conditioning basis for intentions and thoughts, which is described as mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*). On the term *chanda-mūlakā*, cf.: M. III. 16; S. III. 100-101.



## NOTE 18.7: HIGHER WISDOM

The term *abhiññā* is a very important word in the Buddhist teachings. It means ‘higher wisdom’ or ‘supreme knowledge’, equated with *uttama-paññā* at AA. II. 95, and with *adhika-ñāṇa* at: VinA. I. 125; DA. I. 175; PsA. I. 136.

Literally, it can be translated as ‘direct knowledge’, ‘penetrative knowledge’, ‘precise knowledge’, or ‘transcendent knowledge’ (this last expression may be interpreted as ‘knowledge surpassing what is discernible by way of the five senses’).

The Aṭṭhasālinī and the Visuddhimagga explain *abhiññā* as knowledge present from the stage of access concentration to the stage of attainment concentration (DhsA. 182; Vism. 86-7). The Paramatthamañjūsā defines it specifically as knowledge arising in the state of attainment concentration (*appanā-paññā*; VismT.: Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddesaṇṇanā, Samādhicatukkavaṇṇanā). At times it resembles the knowledge of intuition (more research should be done examining the mental state of intuition).

have laid down the training in the principles of the holy life for disciples for the sake of the complete and utter end of suffering. In whatever way I have laid down the training in the principles of the holy life, those disciples practise and train in the training rules so, observing them fully, not in a defective, patchy, or tainted way. In this manner the holy life has the training as its blessing.

And how does the holy life have wisdom as its pinnacle? I have taught the Dhamma to disciples for the sake of the complete and utter end of suffering. In whatever way I have taught the Dhamma, just so, the disciples discern these teachings completely with wisdom. In this manner the holy life has wisdom as its pinnacle.

And how does the holy life have liberation as its essence? I have taught the Dhamma to disciples for the sake of the complete and utter end of suffering. In whatever way I have taught the Dhamma, just so, the disciples contact these teachings by way of liberation. In this manner the holy life has liberation as its essence.

And how does the holy life have mindfulness as its governing principle? Here, disciples are well attentive and inwardly vigilant thus: 'I will cultivate and fulfil the training in virtuous conduct which is yet incomplete, or else by way of wisdom in these respects I will sustain the training in virtuous conduct which is complete.... I will cultivate and fulfil the training in the principles of the holy life which is incomplete, or else by way of wisdom in these respects I will sustain the training in the principles of the holy life which is complete.... I will completely examine and discern by way of wisdom in these respects those things that I have not yet completely discerned, or else by way of wisdom in these respects I will sustain the complete discernment of things.... I will contact by way of liberation those things not yet contacted, or else by way of wisdom in these respects I will sustain the contact with such things. In this manner the holy life has mindfulness as its governing principle. {844}

## 18.6 WAYS OF DEVELOPING CONCENTRATION

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As mentioned earlier, a Dhamma practitioner may use only a basic level of concentration (called 'momentary concentration' – *khaṇika-samādhī*) as a beginning point for applying wisdom in order to investigate reality in line with the teachings on insight, and this concentration develops alongside the development of insight. Although the concentration developed in such a practice will eventually be powerful enough to enable the person to reach the goal of insight meditation – the freedom from suffering, the end of all mental impurity, and the realization of Nibbāna – it will not be strong enough to obtain exceptional psychic attainments: the various mundane psychic powers.

Furthermore, to begin spiritual practice with weak concentration is similar to setting off on a journey in a state of physical weakness: the fitness for travelling is diminished. Even if the person hopes to gradually grow stronger as the journey progresses, he is no match for someone who is fit from the beginning, strong and confident. And if wisdom is not sharp, the path is even more arduous. Conversely, an over-emphasis of

wisdom can lead to restlessness.<sup>137</sup> There is thus a traditional emphasis in Buddhism to train in and develop concentration from the beginning, at least to some degree. Although the aim is not to obtain extraordinary psychic powers, there is a wish to develop a stable foundation of mental composure, adequate for the further development of wisdom.

This matter is made clearer by looking at examples from everyday life. Some people are unable to perform actions requiring deliberation – not to mention applying wisdom and reflecting on things deeply – if there is even a small disturbance of noise or if other people are moving about around them. There are others, however, whose minds are more concentrated and stable. Even though they are surrounded by disturbing sounds or crowds of people, they are able to perform actions requiring mindfulness and wisdom without difficulty.

Some people have great mental strength; although they are in alarming or frightening situations, they are unperturbed and are able to use wisdom to look at and analyze the situation. It is said that the French emperor Napoleon the First had great mental power; he was able to recall any matter at any time he wished, and was able to block out any unwanted thoughts. His mind was like a chest of drawers in which information was stored and well-ordered; he was able to pull out relevant data as he wished. Although he was in the tumult of the battlefield among the noise of guns and loud explosives, the sound of fighting men and neighing horses, he maintained a calm demeanour and was able to think astutely, as if nothing unusual was happening. If he wished to rest he was able to fall asleep immediately.

This is different from most ordinary people who have not trained themselves. When they fall into such situations, not only can they not reflect on what is happening, they often cannot keep their minds still; they tend to be frightened, bewildered, and confused. Although I do not have substantiating evidence for this story, most of us can recognize the difference between those people whose minds are strong and those whose minds are weak.

<sup>137</sup> See: *Vism.* 130 (in reference to: *Vin.* I. 182-3; A. III. 375).

This account of Emperor Napoleon is not so remarkable if we compare it with stories from the scriptures. There is the story, for example, of Āḷāra Kālāma, who while travelling on a long journey was sitting under the shade of a tree.<sup>138</sup> A caravan of about five hundred wagons passed close by to him, but he neither saw nor heard them. The Buddha himself was once staying in the town of Ātumā when a resounding thunderstorm broke out. Two farmers and four cows were struck and killed by lightning close to where the Buddha sat, but the Buddha was dwelling in a tranquil abiding and heard nothing.<sup>139</sup> {795} The Buddha once gave a teaching saying that there are only four beings who are not startled by lightning: an arahant, a well-trained elephant, a thoroughbred horse, and a lion.<sup>140</sup>

Among ordinary people there is a great discrepancy when it comes to the power of the mind, the power of wisdom, and the stability of the mind. For most people the stability and power of the mind is not great and their wisdom is not sharp. Many contemporary teachers therefore say that if a person has not prepared the mind properly as the arena in which wisdom can operate, the opportunity to realize the truth by way of transcendent wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*) is extremely slim. They emphasize the training of the mind through formal meditation ('the cultivation of concentration' – *samādhi-bhāvanā*) as a solid foundation on which an earnest cultivation of wisdom can be established.

Although the essence of the training in concentration can be encapsulated in just a few words, the actual practice of concentration is highly detailed. The subject of concentration becomes even more broad and detailed if one includes the application of a unified mind as the domain of practice for wisdom in order to realize the supreme goal of Buddhism. The entire practice of concentration can be referred to as tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), which could easily be the subject of another book. Here, however, I will only present an outline of the key principles regarding concentration.

<sup>138</sup>Trans.: Āḷāra Kālāma: one of the teachers under which Siddhattha Gotama trained after his great renunciation.

<sup>139</sup>D. II. 130-131.

<sup>140</sup>A. I. 77.

## A. NATURAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION

This heading refers to a spiritual practice conforming to a natural process within which concentration arises automatically – or without requiring a deliberate intention – a process which the Buddha spoke about on many occasions. The essence of this process is for a person to perform virtuous deeds, which are a source of joy. Joy is then followed respectively by delight, relaxation, happiness, and finally concentration. This is illustrated in the following way:

*Pāmojja* (joy) →  
*pīti* (delight; satisfaction) →  
*passaddhi* (physical ease and relaxation) →  
*sukha* (mental ease and happiness) →  
*samādhi* (concentration).

Generally speaking, this process is only possible when virtuous conduct acts as a support. Virtuous conduct here refers to refraining from oppressing or violating others, actions which cause distress, mistrust, fear of retribution, guilt, and remorse. Instead, a person acts in an upright manner, which leads to a sense of inner contentment and self-confidence. There are many actions which give rise to joy and delight, for example: one may recall one's own virtuous acts and meritorious deeds; one may recollect the Triple Gem and other excellent qualities; or one may reflect on a particular teaching and gain insight into it.<sup>141</sup> {796}

The basis or the most closely related factor for the arising of concentration is happiness, as is confirmed by the Buddha's standard teaching: 'For one who is happy the mind becomes concentrated' (*sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati*). The passage in full is as follows:

<sup>141</sup>The recollection of goodness or of one's virtuous deeds, e.g.: Vin. I. 293-4; M. I. 37-8; A. III. 284-5; A. V. 328-9. Reflection on a specific teaching and subsequent insight, e.g.: D. III. 241-2, 288; A. III. 21; Ps. I. 86. Recognition of one's moral impeccability, e.g.: D. I. 73-4, 249-50; M. I. 283. Concentration as a fruit of virtuous conduct, e.g.: S. IV. 78-9, 353; A. V. 312-13; as a fruit of heedfulness: S. V. 398; as part of the practice conforming to the seven factors of enlightenment, e.g.: M. III. 85; S. V. 67-9; Vbh. 227; resulting from an inspiring mental image (*nimitta*), e.g.: S. V. 156.

[When he understands the essence and the principle of the Dhamma] gladness arises. When he is gladdened delight arises; when the mind is delighted the body becomes calm; one calm in body feels happy; for one who is happy the mind becomes concentrated.<sup>142</sup>

*D. III. 241-2; A. III. 21.*

The natural development of concentration mentioned here is in fact the essence of all forms of concentrative meditation up to the stage of attaining *jhāna*. The details of such meditation are described below.

#### **B. DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION IN LINE WITH THE PATHS TO SUCCESS**

The term *iddhipāda* can be translated as ‘factors leading to spiritual power’, ‘factors leading to success’, or ‘paths to success’. There are four such factors: *chanda* (‘enthusiasm’, ‘love’), *virīya* (‘energy’, ‘perseverance’), *citta* (‘focused attention’), and *vimaṃsā* (‘investigation’, ‘wise reflection’).

The Buddha spoke about the paths to success in relation to concentration, because the paths to success give rise to concentration and lead to results which are the goal of concentration. The concentration arising from each of the four paths to success is named after each such factor, as follows:<sup>143</sup>

1. *Chanda-samādhi*: concentration arising from enthusiasm; concentration with enthusiasm as the prominent factor.
2. *Virīya-samādhi*: concentration arising from energy; concentration with energy as the prominent factor.
3. *Citta-samādhi*: concentration arising from focused attention; concentration with focused attention as the prominent factor.

<sup>142</sup>The section in parentheses reveals the source of gladness in this circumstance; in other circumstances other sources are mentioned. The section outside of the parentheses is the standard passage.

<sup>143</sup>E.g.: S. V. 268; referred to at: *Vism.* 88-9.

4. *Vīmaṃsā-samādhi*: concentration arising from investigation; concentration with investigation as the prominent factor.

Moreover, these forms of concentration arise in connection with diligent effort (*padhāna-saṅkhāra*). *Padhāna-saṅkhāra* can also be translated as the ‘volitional formation of effort’, ‘effort as a determining factor’, ‘effort as a creative force’, or ‘supportive effort’. This refers to the four kinds of effort (*padhāna*), which perform the functions of prevention, relinquishment, cultivation, and protection.

Concentration arises from the four factors leading to success in the following ways:

### 1. *Enthusiasm (chanda)*

An enthusiasm for the activity that one is engaged in; a keen interest in the objective of such an activity; a wish to bring this activity to fulfilment and completion; a love for one’s work and for the goal of one’s work. On a deeper level, it is a love and desire for a wholesome, complete state, which is the goal of one’s actions or is accessible through one’s actions; a desire for something to arrive at or be established in the greatest degree of goodness, excellence, precision, and perfection; a desire for this wholesome, complete state to truly manifest; a desire to find success conforming to such goodness. {797}

This desire is different from a desire to consume or to possess something, which is referred to as ‘craving’ (*taṇhā*). The desire of enthusiasm generates happiness and delight when a person witnesses that object or that activity reach completion and fulfilment; indeed, a person already experiences delight when that object or activity moves in the direction of fulfilment. When the object or activity reaches its goal, a person experiences deep satisfaction and unbounded joy. The desire of craving on the other hand gives rise to pleasure when a person obtains an object of enjoyment or obtains something that increases a sense of self-importance. This form of pleasure taints or corrupts a person, is a hindrance and constriction, and tends to leave covetousness, anxiety, grief, regret, and fear in its wake.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup>See Chapter 10 on desire.

Take for example a young child who when alone draws a picture in a loving, painstaking way, determined to have this picture be as pretty and perfect as possible, or a child who carefully puts together a model boat or airplane, aiming for precision. Such a child is happy when this act of painting or building proceeds well and gradually reaches completion. He or she will rejoice even more – perhaps even jump with joy – when the work is completed. This child performs the activity with a steadfast and concentrated mind, zeroing in on the goal. He or she finds happiness through the activity and the completion of the activity. This happiness does not arise from an external object of enjoyment; it is free from material enticements and does not require the praise from other people: it does not rely on any form of reward, either sensual (*kāma*) or connected to the process of becoming (*bhava*).

When the task is completed the child may want to show others the finished product so that they can admire the refinement and skill. In such a case, if an adult who views the finished object expresses admiration for the accomplishment, expresses a suitable appreciation for the quality of the object, or encourages the child to improve his or her skills, this is an appropriate and adequate response. An excessive amount of admiration, however, in which an appreciation for the child's efforts becomes a form of indulging the child, is inappropriate, for this will transform the child's enthusiasm into craving – will transform a wholesome tendency into an unwholesome tendency. This response may even spoil the child and create bad habits. Whenever wholesome enthusiasm arises, craving will then arise too; enthusiasm becomes a fuel for craving. Training children in this way is common. If a society supports this form of training the number of people who find happiness through wholesome enthusiasm will decrease, while the number of people who find pleasure through the gratification of craving will increase; and the overall state of the society will become more troubled.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Although I have no solid scientific evidence for this, I have made an observation that people from Southeast Asia are rather lax when it comes to *chanda*. Westerners on the contrary appear to have a great deal of *chanda*, but it is regretful that they use this enthusiasm and resolve as a fuel for craving; Westerners thus tend to achieve greater success in many areas, but they also tend to create more serious problems.



Children do not only wish to have other people admire the things that they themselves have created; they also want people to admire other things that they encounter, regardless of whether these things are manmade or objects in nature. They wish to share the inherent goodness and perfection that they witness even in such things as rocks and pebbles, leaves, and insects. {798} In fact this is a universal experience: when people witness and recognize the beauty of nature or an outstanding human achievement, they often want to encourage others to share this wholesome feeling. By encouraging others they do not seek personal reward nor do they seek gratification by way of the senses. A person who sees the true value of the Dhamma has a similar experience; this appreciation provides the Dhamma with the characteristic of *ehipassiko*: inviting one to come and see.

If one is able to rouse ardent enthusiasm and to generate a deep love for the goodness of an object or the fulfilment of a goal, one will devote one's life to this thing. If one's love is true one will surrender oneself completely, perhaps even sacrificing one's life for that thing. During the Buddha's time many princes, wealthy merchants, influential brahmins, and young men and women relinquished their palaces, wealth, and considerable worldly possessions to go forth and be ordained, because they developed a love for Dhamma after hearing the teachings of the Buddha. People who love their work are similar; they wish to perform and accomplish their work in the best possible way. They are not distracted by other alluring things or concerned about some form of reward; their mind is focused, concentrated, and stable, and they proceed in a steady, consistent way. Concentration arising from enthusiasm (*chanda-samādhi*) thus arises, accompanied by supportive effort (*padhāna-saṅkhāra*).

## 2. Energy (*virīya*)

Courage, bravery, effort, perseverance, pressing forward, fighting spirit; not getting discouraged or intimidated by obstacles and difficulties. When one recognizes something as valuable and worthy of attainment, if energy has been roused, even if one hears that this thing can only be achieved with extreme difficulty, the path to its fulfilment is fraught with

obstacles, or it will require months or years to realize, one is not disheartened; rather, one sees victory and success in this task as a challenge.

There are many stories in the scriptures of renunciants at the Buddha's time who belonged to other sects and who asked for ordination as a bhikkhu after gaining faith in the Buddha's teachings. When they discovered that a candidate who has previously been ordained in another religious tradition must undergo a form of initiation or test (to live under 'probation' – *titthiya-parivāsa*) for four months, they were not discouraged. On the contrary, some of them valiantly submitted themselves to this examination for four years!<sup>146</sup>

People lacking energy may also want to achieve success, but when they hear that such success may take years to achieve, they are already exhausted and retreat; it is difficult for their spiritual practice to bear fruit and they tend to be restless and agitated. Energetic people possess a special force; whether they are working or engaged in Dhamma practice, their mind is unified and stable, intent upon the goal. There is concentration arising from energy (*virīya-samādhi*), accompanied by supportive effort.

### 3. *Focused attention (citta)*

The mind is absorbed in and focused on an object or an activity; it does not release the object of attention or become distracted. If one's mind is intensely focused on something, one will pay no attention to anything else. If someone else mentions another subject one will take no interest in this discussion, but if one's favoured subject is brought up one will immediately take a special interest. Occasionally one will be so immersed in an activity that one pays no attention to one's physical needs and attire, loses track of time, and forgets to eat and sleep. Things may happen in one's surrounding environment of which one is completely unaware. {799} This focused attention gives rise to concentration, which is called concentration arising from focused attention (*citta-samādhi*). The mind

<sup>146</sup> See the stories of: Acelakassapa (D. I. 176-7; S. II. 21); Subhadda-paribbājaka (D. II. 152-3); Acelaseniya (M. I. 391-2); Vacchagotta-paribbājaka (M. I. 493-4); and Māgaṇḍiya-paribbājaka (M. I. 512-3). The origin story to this rule is found at: V. I. 69.

is established on an activity, possesses power to engage with it, and is accompanied by supportive effort.

#### **4. Investigation (*vimāṃsā*)**

The application of wisdom; contemplation, reasoning, and reflection; an examination of the imbalances, shortcomings, or defects of one's actions; an ability to experiment and to search for ways to adjust and improve oneself. Here, wisdom guides concentration. Inquisitive people like to analyze and try things out. Their examinations are of this nature: 'What is the cause for this result?' 'Why have things happened in this way?' 'This factor has produced this result; if we remove this factor the result will differ; if we add this other factor instead things should unfold in this way; if they don't happen as planned why is this so? – how can we adjust this?'

In Dhamma practice they reflect in the following manner: 'What is the meaning and purpose of this spiritual quality? On which occasions should it be applied? How is it connected to other qualities?' 'My spiritual practice is not progressing; which spiritual faculties are too weak and which in excess?' 'People in today's age live under these conditions. Which spiritual qualities are they lacking? How can I instil these qualities in them? What aspects of these qualities should I emphasize?'

Such analysis and examination helps to compose the mind, which constantly keeps close track of the matter at hand. This leads to concentration, which is called concentration arising from investigation (*vimāṃsā-samādhi*). The mind is absorbed in that activity; it is strong; it does not wander or waver. This concentration is accompanied by supportive effort, similar to the other factors leading to success.

These four paths to success are mutually supportive and tend to arise in unison. For example, one may be very enthusiastic about something and be very energized; with such energy the mind is focused and one pays close attention; there is then the opportunity for wisdom to be used for investigation. The separation of these four factors aims to highlight in different situations which factor is prominent, acting as a catalyst for the others.

For example, several people may be listening to a Dhamma talk. One person likes to study the Dhamma and listens with delight in the truth; she wants to deepen her understanding of the Dhamma (or perhaps simply takes pleasure in that particular talk or she likes the speaker) and listens with one-pointed attention. *Chanda* is thus the predominant factor and induces concentration along with other virtues. Another person has a disposition, or simply has a conviction in that moment, that when facing a necessary task, one must fight and gain victory – one must confront the task and bring it to completion. He thus sees the subject matter of the talk as a challenge, as something that must be understood. In this case *virīya* is the prevailing factor. Another person has the disposition of being attentive and responsible; whatever she engages with she responds and pays attention to. She is thus determined to follow the presentation of the talk; in this case *citta* is the predominant factor. Finally, a fourth person wishes to examine whether the Dhamma being propounded is true or not, wholesome or not, or he looks at the logic of the presentation. While listening he investigates and his mind is one-pointed on the subject of the talk. In this case *vīmaṃsā* is chief.

There are passages that refer to the four paths to success as the four governors (*adhipati*) or the four kinds of sovereignty (*adhipateyya*), and they describe the prominent or leading factor in specific circumstances.<sup>147</sup> {800}

The gist of developing concentration in line with the four paths to success is to take one's work, activity, or desired goal as the object of attention, and then to muster enthusiasm, energy, focused attention, or investigation as a primary support. This will give rise to strong concentration, which leads to both joy and success.

In Dhamma practice, in the act of studying, or while performing any other activity, when one wishes for concentration in order to accomplish the task, one should generate one of the four paths to success as a leading spiritual factor. Concentration, contentment, and success in one's work can then be expected to arise naturally. Moreover, part of a person's

<sup>147</sup>Dhs. 56-7; Vbh. 288.

meditation and spiritual practice will take place in the classroom, at home, in the fields, at the office, and indeed everywhere.

For example, when a teacher teaches a subject of study, she makes herself a 'virtuous friend' (*kalyāṇamitta*), by helping the pupils see the value of this branch of knowledge and by revealing how this knowledge may be beneficial to their lives, say as an aid to finding work in the future, as a way to move ahead in life, or as profitable in some other way (here she uses ambition as a means for generating enthusiasm). Or better than that, she points out the benefits for everyone, say as a way of helping all human beings (this is 'pure' enthusiasm), until the pupils develop a love for learning because they want to gain this knowledge. This is a way of rousing *chanda*.

Alternatively, she may speak of this knowledge as something which tests a person's awareness, discernment, and capability, stimulating an ardour for learning, or she discusses the accomplishments of others, producing a fighting spirit in the pupils. This is a way of rousing *virīya*.

She may stimulate a sense of responsibility in the pupils, so that they see the connection and importance of this knowledge to their lives and to society as a whole, say by pointing out issues of danger and safety. This way, although the students may not be particularly passionate about the subject of study, they will take an interest and give their undivided attention. This is a way of rousing *citta*.

She may teach using methods of inquiry, experimentation, or reasoning, say by posing questions or conundrums, which requires the pupils to apply investigation. Thus the pupils will study in a concentrated way. This is a method of applying *vīmaṃsā*.

It is even better if the teacher is able to recognize the disposition of individual students and rouses the specific factor leading to success which is compatible with his or her disposition; or she may rouse several factors simultaneously. At the same time, students (or anyone else engaged in work) who are clever may apply wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*) to rouse the paths to success by themselves.

On this subject of success, consider the following passages from the Pali Canon defining the term *iddhi*:

*Iddhi* as ‘success’:

‘Iddhi’ means success, fulfilment, special accomplishment, gain, to succeed, to succeed well, to accomplish, to attain, to realize, to bring a specific quality to completion. {801}

*Vbh.* 217.

*Iddhi* as ‘spiritual power’ (‘psychic power’; often as *iddhi-pāṭihāriya*):

Monks, what is spiritual power? Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline performs various kinds of supernormal power: having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one; he appears and vanishes; he goes unhindered through a wall, through a rampart, through a mountain as if through space; he dives in and out of the earth as if it were water; he walks on water without sinking as if it were earth; he flies through the air like a bird; with his hand he touches and strokes the sun and the moon, so powerful and mighty; he exercises mastery with his body even as far as the Brahma world. This is called spiritual power.<sup>148</sup>

*S. V.* 276.

And what is the path to spiritual power (*iddhipāda*)? Whatever way, whatever practice, leads to gaining spiritual power, to realizing spiritual power, this way and practice is called the path to spiritual power.

And what is the development of the path to spiritual power? Here, a bhikkhu develops the path to spiritual power that consists of concentration due to desire and volitional formations of striving. He develops the path to spiritual power that consists of concentration due to energy ... consists of concentration due to focused attention ... consists of concentration due to investigation and volitional formations of striving. This is called the development of the path to spiritual power.

*S. V.* 276.

Monks, if a monk gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based on enthusiasm, this is called concentration due to enthusiasm. He generates enthusiasm, makes an effort, arouses energy, sustains attention, and establishes the mind for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states. He generates enthusiasm ... for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states. He generates enthusiasm ... for the arising of unarisen wholesome states. He generates enthusiasm ... for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their non-decay, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development. These are called volitional formations of striving (*padhāna-saṅkhāra*). This enthusiasm, and this concentration due to enthusiasm, and these volitional formations of striving together are referred to as ‘the path to success endowed with concentration due to enthusiasm combined with supportive effort.’

If a monk gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based on energy, this is called concentration due to energy.... This energy, and this concentration due to energy, and these volitional formations of striving together are referred to as ‘the path to success endowed with concentration due to energy combined with supportive effort.’

If a monk gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based on focused attention, this is called concentration due to focused attention.... This focused attention, and this concentration

<sup>148</sup>The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* mentions ten types of spiritual power. The spiritual power mentioned here by the Buddha comprises the first of these ten. The tenth type in this list refers to success resulting from a proper engagement with a particular activity, and the final example of this tenth type of power is the utter abandonment of mental defilement through the path of arahantship (Ps. II. 205-214). The *Visuddhimagga* explains *iddhi* especially in terms of psychic powers (Vism. 385-406), but it also offers some alternative definitions, for example: the success resulting from a specific trade or profession, even from ploughing and sowing, is an example of the tenth type of *iddhi* mentioned above (Vism. 383-4). We can thus conclude that the paths to success can be applied in the context of all human activities. [Trans.: for more on the subject of psychic powers see chapter 9 on the supernatural and the divine.]

due to focused attention, and these volitional formations of striving together are referred to as ‘the path to success endowed with concentration due to focused attention combined with supportive effort.’

If a monk gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind based on investigation, this is called concentration due to investigation.... This investigation, and this concentration due to investigation, and these volitional formations of striving together are referred to as ‘the path to success endowed with concentration due to investigation combined with supportive effort.’<sup>149</sup> {802}

S. V. 268-9.

And what is the way leading to the development of the path to spiritual power? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view ... right concentration. This is called the way leading to the development of the path to spiritual power.

S. V. 276.

Monks, these four paths to spiritual power, when developed and cultivated, lead to going beyond what is not the shore (i.e. what is not the goal) to what is the shore.

S. V. 254.

### C. STANDARD DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION: MEDITATION GUIDED BY MINDFULNESS

In many situations, say in formal study or while working, it is possible to develop concentration by applying the four factors leading to success (*iddhipāda*). Progress or accomplishment in such work or study is set as the goal of these four factors. Irrespective of whether one applies the factor of protection, removal, development, or preservation, one generates an accompanying ‘power of striving’ (*padhāna-saṅkhāra*), which

<sup>149</sup>The Abhidhamma presents a slightly different definition for *chanda-samādhi*, e.g.: *A monk makes enthusiasm predominant; thus his mind is concentrated and one-pointed. This is called concentration due to enthusiasm* (see: Vbh. 216-26).



propels one towards this goal and supports the establishment of concentration.

But in everyday life, in which we experience passing sense impressions and engage with things that are either impassive or existing independently on their own, it is nearly impossible to establish the four factors leading to success, or for these factors to operate. In such situations, the basic quality of the mind required to prepare for or induce the arising of concentration is mindfulness (*sati*), because mindfulness draws and holds attention to sense impressions, those things a person engages with and those activities which must be performed. Mindfulness is the mind's refuge. Once mindfulness has been established to a suitable degree, wholesome enthusiasm follows automatically.

There are two main methods for developing concentration that rely primarily on mindfulness:

1. To train mindfulness for wisdom practice; to aim for the benefits ensuing from wisdom practice; to use mindfulness as the vanguard for wisdom; to coordinate mindfulness with wisdom, by having mindfulness seize specific sense impressions and submit them to wisdom for contemplation and understanding. In this method of practice, concentration is not emphasized, but is automatically developed as a by-product. Moreover, this concentration makes the application of wisdom more fruitful. This method comprises the main part of the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which was described earlier in the section on right mindfulness, and it can be referred to as an everyday or universal meditation.
2. To train mindfulness in order to generate pure concentration; to give an exclusive emphasis on deep concentration; to hold onto a sense object with mindfulness, so that attention on that object is steady and undeviating; to fix attention on an object continuously. This method of practice gives direct emphasis to concentration. Although wisdom may sometimes be used it is an accessory to the process, for example one may simply know that which is being observed, but one does not intend to penetrate the truth of that object. This method is the essence of the systematic development of concentration, discussed below. {803}

#### D. SYSTEMATIC DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION

The systematic development of concentration here refers to meditation techniques that have been handed down in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, as recorded and explained in various commentarial texts, especially in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>150</sup> These techniques are practised by Dhamma practitioners with earnestness and devotion, by aiming exclusively at ‘pure’ concentration, within the confines of mundane levels of concentrative attainments.<sup>151</sup> They are set down and classified as a gradual system of practice, beginning with preliminary preparations, followed by specific techniques of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), progressive stages of training, and finally specific results of practice, including the concentrative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*) and the mundane higher psychic attainments (*lokiya-abhiññā*).

This systematic development of concentration presented in the commentaries begins with pure or faultless moral conduct. From here, the main stages of this system can be outlined as follows:

1. To remove the ten obstructions or causes for anxiety (*palibodha*).
2. To seek out a ‘virtuous friend’, a teacher, who possesses the suitable attributes for bestowing a meditation technique.
3. To take up one of the forty meditation techniques, suitable to one’s disposition.
4.   A. To go and stay in a monastery, quiet dwelling, or place of practice suitable for meditation.  
      B. To completely eliminate trifling worries and concerns.
5. The development of concentration (*samādhi-bhāvanā*): to practise in accord with this meditation technique.

<sup>150</sup>Vism. 84-435; some of these techniques are referred to at, e.g.: VinA. II. 414.

<sup>151</sup>Transcendent concentration is concentration linked to the ‘noble path’ and is referred to as ‘Path concentration’ (*magga-samādhi*). The development of transcendent concentration is part of wisdom development; when a person develops wisdom, Path concentration is developed simultaneously; therefore, it need not be distinguished as a separate factor (Vism. 89).

When presenting the details of these five main stages, the commentators had monks in mind who make a serious, determined effort to practise meditation, perhaps for months or years. Laypeople or those who only intend to practise for a short period should select those aspects relevant to their circumstances.

### **E. ELIMINATING THE TEN IMPEDIMENTS**

The term *palibodha* refers to mental attachments or impediments, which cause anxiety and worry. This anxiety obstructs spiritual progress and makes it difficult for concentration to arise; therefore it should be dispelled. The scriptures mention ten kinds of *palibodha*:

1. Dwelling or monastery (*āvāsa*): one has accumulated many personal belongings or one has unfinished business, which are a cause for worry. If one is not overly attached to these things, there is no problem.
2. Family (*kula*): one's family of intimate relatives or one's 'family' of supporters; if one is separated from these people one is concerned about them. One should come to terms with such separation and dispel the worry.
3. Gain; acquisitions (*lābha*): one is worried, for example, about one's many devoted and generous followers, and thus neglects to pursue one's Dhamma practice. In such a case one should separate oneself from these people and seek solitude.
4. Group (*gaṇa*): one is, for example, responsible for a group of disciples; one is preoccupied by teaching them and dispelling their doubts. In this case one should attend to any unfinished responsibilities or find someone to act as a replacement and go off on one's own.
5. Work (*kamma*), especially building work (*navakamma*). One should complete these projects oneself or appoint someone else to do so.

6. Travelling (*addhāna*): to travel long distances for business matters, say in order to ordain monks and novices. One should complete these affairs so as to be free from worry. {804}
7. Relatives (*ñāti*), both blood relatives and ‘relatives’ in the monastery (e.g. one’s preceptor, teachers, and disciples). If these individuals are ill one ought to nurse them and try to restore them to good health, so that one is relieved of worry.
8. Illness (*ābādha*): one is ill oneself; one should hasten to find a cure and regain good health. If the illness appears to be incurable one should muster an inner strength, by thinking: ‘I am not willing to be a slave to this illness; I am determined to maintain my spiritual practice!’
9. Scriptures (*gantha*): formal study (*pariyatti*); scholarly subjects. Such study is an obstacle for those who are anxious about securing knowledge, for example through frequent recitation. If there is no anxiety, such study is not a problem.
10. Psychic powers (*iddhi*), which are a burden for an unawakened person to protect. They are an obstacle for someone who is developing insight, not for someone who is developing concentration and for whom such powers have not yet manifested.

#### F. SEEKING A VIRTUOUS FRIEND

When one has removed these obstacles and there are no lingering concerns in the mind, one should seek out a competent meditation teacher, who is endowed with virtuous qualities and devoted to helping others. Such a person is called a ‘virtuous friend’ (*kalyāṇamitta*). He or she possesses the seven qualities of a virtuous friend:

1. Endearing.
2. Venerable.
3. Inspiring.
4. A skilful speaker.

5. A patient listener.
6. Able to describe profound subjects.
7. Does not lead others to useless ends.<sup>152</sup>

Ideally, this virtuous friend should be the Buddha; if this is not possible, then he or she should be an arahant, an awakened being of a subordinate level, someone who has attained jhāna, one who has memorized the Tipiṭaka, or someone who is of great learning (*bahussuta*), respectively.

The commentaries claim that occasionally an unawakened person of great learning is able to teach more effectively than an arahant who is not of great learning. This is because such arahants are only skilled at the way of practice that they themselves have passed through and can only describe their own unique path. Moreover, some arahants are not skilled at teaching. Those people of great learning have done much research and have questioned many teachers; they are able to offer a comprehensive view of practice, are familiar with alternative methods of practice, and can make suggestions suitable to different individuals. Of course the optimum is to have an arahant of great learning. When one has found a ‘virtuous friend’, one should approach him or her, perform the appropriate duties in relation to this person, and then ask for the opportunity to learn meditation.

### G. RECEIVING A MEDITATION TECHNIQUE SUITABLE TO ONE’S DISPOSITION

To begin with let us take a look at the meanings of the Pali terms *kammaṭṭhāna* (‘meditation technique’) and *cariya* (‘disposition’):

*Kammaṭṭhāna* literally means ‘foundation for mental activity’ or ‘that which facilitates mental activity’. Technically it means ‘something used as an object for developing meditation’, ‘means of training the mind’, or ‘method for inducing concentration’. Simply speaking, it is a focus for the mind (i.e. a focus for mindfulness – *sati*). When the mind has such a focus it is seriously engaged but also tranquil; it does not run off out of control; it is not distracted or disturbed. The term *kammaṭṭhāna* refers to an object of attention inducing concentration, or to anything that is the

<sup>152</sup>See Chapter 13 on virtuous friendship.

focus of the mind and helps to establish one-pointedness in the quickest and most stable way.

The commentaries describe forty kinds of meditation techniques:

1. *Kasiṇa* meditations: ‘meditation objects inducing concentration’. This is a way of using external objects for unifying the mind. There are ten such objects:

- A. Four great elements (*bhūta-kasiṇa*): earth (*paṭhavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). {805}
- B. Four colours (*vaṇṇa-kasiṇa*): green (*nīla*), yellow (*pīta*), red (*lohita*), and white (*odāta*).
- C. Meditation on light (*āloka*) and meditation on space (*ākāsa*; *paricchinṇākāsa*).<sup>153</sup>

With these ten meditation objects it is possible to use either objects found naturally in nature or objects designed specifically for such an exercise; the latter is more common.

2. Ten meditations on foulness (*asubha*): to contemplate a corpse in ten stages of decay, beginning with a bloated corpse and ending with a bare skeleton. (See Note 18.8)
3. Ten recollections (*anussati*): virtuous objects of attention which should be frequently called to mind:<sup>154</sup>
  - A. Recollection of the Buddha and the Buddha’s virtues (*buddhānussati*).

<sup>153</sup>These ten *kasiṇa* meditations are mentioned in the Visuddhimagga. Note that in the Pali Canon there is no mention of *āloka-kasiṇa*; instead, as the tenth factor there is a meditation on consciousness (*viññāṇa-kasiṇa*), and *ākāsa-kasiṇa* is mentioned as the ninth factor (e.g.: D. III. 268, 290; M. II. 14-15; A. I. 41-42; A. V. 46, 60-61; Ps. I. 95).

<sup>154</sup>These ten recollections are found as a group in the Pali Canon at: A. I. 30, 41-2; Nd. I. 6-7, 9-10, 491-92; Ps. I. 95; individually, they can be found in many other locations. The two factors which often occur individually or as a part of another group in the Pali Canon are *kāyagatā-sati* and most notably *ānāpānasati*, which is the most prominent of the ten.

- B. Recollection of the Dhamma and the Dhamma's virtues (*dhammānussati*).
  - C. Recollection of the Sangha and the Sangha's virtues (*saṅghānussati*).
  - D. Recollection of virtuous conduct (*sīlānussati*): to reflect on one's own pure moral conduct.
  - E. Recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*): to reflect on the gifts one has donated and to recognize one's own virtuous qualities of generosity and renunciation.
  - F. Recollection of divinity (*devānussati*): to reflect on divine beings (*devatā*) which one has encountered or about which one has heard, and to discern one's own inherent virtues which lead to a celestial rebirth.
  - G. Recollection on death (*maraṇassati*): to reflect on one's own inescapable mortality; such reflection gives rise to heedfulness.
  - H. Recollection of the body (*kāyagatā-sati*); mindfulness of the body: to reflect on the body and to see that it is comprised of various organs, notably the thirty-two parts, which are unclean, unattractive, and loathsome. This recollection leads to a knowledge of the true nature of the body and prevents infatuation with it.
  - I. Mindfulness of in- and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*).
  - J. Recollection on peace (*upasamānussati*): recollection on Nibbāna; to reflect on the attributes of Nibbāna, as a state free from agitation, defilement, and suffering. {806}
4. Four unbounded states of mind (*appamaññā*): the qualities to be radiated outwards towards all beings without exception, in an unlimited, immeasurable way. Most often these states are known as the four 'divine abidings' (*brahmavihāra*; 'excellent abidings', 'pure abidings', 'qualities of person with an expansive, noble mind'):<sup>155</sup>

<sup>155</sup>The four *appamaññā* occur very frequently in the Pali Canon, e.g.: D. I. 250-51; D. III. 223-4. These qualities are referred to as the four *brahmavihāra* at, e.g.: D. II. 195-6; M. II. 82.

- A. Lovingkindness (*mettā*): well-wishing, friendliness, the desire for all beings to experience happiness.
  - B. Compassion (*karuṇā*): the desire to help others be free from suffering.
  - C. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*): a matching joy and delight when another person is well and happy, prosperous and successful.
  - D. Equanimity (*upekkhā*): to make one's mind steady, calm, and unbiased, like a set of scales; to discern how all people receive good and bad results according to relevant causes and conditions; to not be prejudiced by likes and dislikes.
5. Perception of the loathsomeness of food (*āhārepaṭikūla-saññā*).<sup>156</sup>
  6. Analysis of the four elements (*catudhātu-vavaṭṭhāna*): to discern one's own body as consisting solely of the four main elements: earth, water, fire, and air.<sup>157</sup>
  7. Four absorptions of the formless sphere (*arūpa; āruppa*): to take one of the formless states as one's object of attention. This meditation is only possible for someone who practises one of the first nine *kaṣiṇa* meditations and who has achieved the fourth *jhāna*.<sup>158</sup>
    - A. To focus on infinite space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*), which is achieved by withdrawing attention from the *kaṣiṇa* object.
    - B. To focus on infinite consciousness (*viññāṇaṇcāyatana*); to stop paying attention to space and instead to pay attention to consciousness, which pervades space.

<sup>156</sup>In the Sutta Piṭaka this reflection accompanies the five meditations on foulness (*asubha*) contained in the group of ten perceptions (*saññā*): e.g.: A. I. 41-42.

<sup>157</sup>This reflection is sometimes abbreviated to 'analysis of the elements' (*dhātu-vavaṭṭhāna*), 'reflection on the elements' (*dhātu-manasikāra*), or 'meditation on the elements' (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāna*); it occurs at D. II. 294; M. I. 57-8 (i.e. it occurs in the context of the foundation of mindfulness in regard to the body – *kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*).

<sup>158</sup>In the Pali Canon, see, e.g.: D. III. 224; S. IV. 266. The Visuddhimagga explains that in regard to *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*, a person in fact focuses on *ākāśaṇcāyatana* as the object of attention; he does so not in order to enter the state of *ākāśaṇcāyatana*, but rather to pass it over (see: Vism. 335, 337-8).



- C. To focus on the sphere of nothingness (*ākāṅkṣāññāyatana*), by setting aside consciousness as the object of attention.
- D. To enter the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*), by ceasing to focus even on the sphere of nothingness.

Occasionally, the aforementioned meditation techniques are classified into two groups:<sup>159</sup>

1. Meditations applicable to all situations (*sabbatthaka-kammaṭṭhāna*; ‘beneficial to all situations’): meditations which all people should practise regularly: that is, lovingkindness (*mettā*) and recollection on death (*maraṇassati*). Occasionally, the contemplation on foulness (*asubha-saññā*) is also included.
2. Meditations requiring supervision (*pārihāriya-kammaṭṭhāna*): meditations suitable to an individual’s unique disposition; when one undertakes such a meditation technique, one needs to continually safeguard it so that it acts as the foundation for higher levels of spiritual practice. {807}

The commentaries state that these forty meditation techniques are distinguished by how suitable they are for different individuals. People should select a technique appropriate to their character and inclination, referred to here as disposition (*cariya*). If one chooses an appropriate technique, meditation practice will be swift and successful; if one chooses an inappropriate technique, practice may be slow and ineffective.

*Cariya* literally means ‘ordinary behaviour’. It refers to a person’s normal temperament, underlying character, and proclivities. The term *carita* (‘character’, ‘demeanour’) is used in reference to a person who possesses such behaviour and temperament. A person whose behaviour

<sup>159</sup>Vism. 97; VinA. II. 416; SnA. I. 53. The Visuddhimagga states that some groups of teachers also classify the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) as *sabbatthaka-kammaṭṭhāna*.

## NOTE 18.8: ASUBHA MEDITATIONS

In today's day and age it is obviously difficult for people to practise these ten contemplations. In full, they are as follows:

1. *uddhumātaka* (a bloated corpse);
2. *vinīlaka* (a bluish, discoloured corpse);
3. *vipubbaka* (a festering corpse);
4. *vicchiddaka* (a corpse split into two);
5. *vikkhāyitaka* (a corpse gnawed by animals);
6. *vikkhittaka* (a severed and scattered corpse);
7. *hatavikkhittaka* (a hacked and mangled corpse);
8. *lohitaka* (a blood-stained corpse);
9. *puḷuvaka* (a worm-infested corpse); and
10. *aṭṭhika* (a skeleton).

In the Pali Canon these contemplations are classified as 'perceptions' (*saññā*): Ps. I. 95; Dhs. 55.

In the Sutta Piṭaka only five (combined with other factors, e.g.: S. V. 131; A. I. 41-42; A. V. 106-107) or six (e.g.: D. III. 226; A. II. 16-17) of these contemplations are mentioned; the closest resemblance to these ten contemplations are the nine cemetery contemplations (*nava-sīvathikā*) in the teaching on the Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) or in the teaching on mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatā-sati*) – e.g.: D. II. 295-6; M. I. 58; M. III. 91; A. III. 324.

is dictated by greed, for example, is labelled as having a 'greedy character' (*rāga-carita*). There are six major character types:<sup>160</sup>

1. *Rāga-carita*: people whose normal behaviour is governed by greed, whose temperament is predominantly greedy, who incline towards beauty and elegance. Such people should use the counter meditation on foulness – *asubha* – as well as recollection of the body – *kāyagatā-sati*.

<sup>160</sup>The original sources from the Pali Canon exist at: Nd. I. 359-60, 453; Nd. II. 42. The original order in the Pali Canon is as follows: *rāga-carita*, *dosa-carita*, *moha-carita*, *vitakka-carita*, *saddhā-carita*, and *ñāṇa-carita*. The passages in parentheses are added material from the commentaries. For more detail, see: Vism. 101-110.

2. *Dosa-carita*: people whose normal behaviour is governed by anger, whose temperament is predominantly angry, who are acutely hot-headed and irritable. The appropriate meditation technique for such people is lovingkindness – *mettā* (and including the other three pure abidings – *brahmavihāra*). Also apt are the *kasiṇa* meditations, especially those using colours – *vaṇṇa-kasiṇa*.
3. *Moha-carita*: people whose normal behaviour is governed by delusion, whose temperament is predominantly deluded, who are primarily influenced by ignorance, listlessness, confusion, and credulity. Such people believe whatever they are told by others. This tendency should be rectified through study, inquiry, listening to Dhamma, Dhamma discussion, or living with a teacher. A supportive meditation is mindfulness of breathing.
4. *Saddhā-carita*: people whose normal behaviour is governed by faith, whose temperament is predominantly devout, who are primarily influenced by inspiration, delight, and devotion. Such people should be directed towards truly noble things and towards meaningful reflections, for example a recollection on the virtue of the Triple Gem and on their own moral rectitude. Also suitable are the first six of the ten recollections – *anussati* – see above.
5. *Buddhi-carita* (or *ñāṇa-carita*): people whose normal behaviour is governed by knowledge, who are predominantly inclined towards contemplation and discernment of the truth. These people should be encouraged to engage in reflections on nature or on virtue which increase wisdom, for example to reflect on the Three Characteristics. Appropriate meditation techniques include recollection on death, recollection on peace, analysis of the four elements, and perception on the loathsomeness of food.
6. *Vitakka-carita*: people whose normal behaviour is governed by thinking, who are predominantly inclined towards convoluted thinking and incoherent reasoning. This should be rectified by using methods, e.g. mindfulness of breathing (or the *kasiṇa* meditations), which restrain this tendency.

The behaviour of these different character types differs:

- When those of a greedy character (*rāga-carita*) encounter something, their mind seizes onto its good or admirable qualities; they are impressed by these qualities and overlook any faults.
- The mind of angry character types (*dosa-carita*), on the other hand, collides with any minor fault or deficiency, even if the object at hand possesses many good qualities; they get caught up in aversion before considering the merits of the object. {808}
- Those whose character is governed by contemplation (*buddhi-carita*) are similar to angry character types in so far as they tend not to become infatuated with anything. Contemplative types look for faults that exist but are able to dismiss them; angry character types, however, look for faults or discredit an object, even if these faults are nonexistent, and turn away from the object with aversion.
- Those of deluded character (*moha-carita*) see things with a lack of clarity and tend towards apathy; instead of understanding things for themselves, they follow the opinions of others.
- Those governed by thinking (*vitakka-carita*) reflect in a desultory way: they first think of the merits of something, then think of the faults, but are confused and indecisive, not knowing which way to go.
- Those with a devout character (*saddhā-carita*) are similar to greedy characters in so far as they tend to see the merits of an object, but having recognized these merits they rejoice in them rather than become infatuated like a greedy person.

In any case, people tend to possess a mixture of these character types, for example greed mixed with excessive thinking, or anger mixed with a contemplative streak. Besides choosing a meditation object that is appropriate to one's character and disposition, the scriptures also encourage people to choose suitable and supportive conditions (*sappāya*) in regards to other things, like dwelling, climate, food, personal belongings, and resort.

Besides the factor of suitability in relation to various character types, the forty meditation techniques also differ in regard to results: they lead to different levels of concentration (see the diagram below).

In regard to taking up a meditation practice the commentaries suggest following a formal procedure. After the student approaches a teacher or ‘virtuous friend’:

- The student should make a declaration dedicating himself to the Buddha, in such a manner: ‘Blessed One, I relinquish myself to you.’<sup>161</sup> Or he surrenders himself to a teacher: ‘Venerable teacher, I relinquish myself to you.’<sup>162</sup> This self-surrender is a way of generating a sense of sincerity and determination in practice. It dispels anxiety, creates a feeling of warmth between teacher and pupil, and allows the teacher to assist in the best way possible. The student should establish the qualities of non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion, renunciation, desire for solitude, and desire for liberation in the mind, as well as aspiring to concentration and to Nibbāna. At this point he should ask for a meditation technique.
- If the teacher possesses the ability to read minds, he should use this power to determine the student’s disposition. If he does not have this ability he should make inquiries, for example: ‘What sort of character are you?’ ‘What are your predominant traits, emotions, and thought patterns?’ ‘What sort of contemplations make you feel at ease?’ ‘What meditation techniques do you incline towards?’ The teacher then selects a meditation technique suitable to the student’s disposition, explains how to begin meditating, how to sustain the focus, and how to develop the meditation, explains the nature of mental ‘signs’ (*nimitta*), the various stages of concentration, and the way to protect and to empower concentration. (See Note 18.9) {809}

<sup>161</sup>*Imāhaṃ bhagavā attabhāvaṃ tumhākaṃ pariccajāmi.* This can also be translated as: ‘I offer my life....’

<sup>162</sup>*Imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ tumhākaṃ pariccajāmi.* This can also be translated as: ‘I offer my life....’

## NOTE 18.9: FIVE LINKS OF MEDITATION

In the section on the development of mindfulness of breathing, the commentaries mention five ‘links’ (*sandhi*) of meditation: five factors or divisions of meditation that should be studied:

1. *uggaha*: to study the systematic or scriptural principles of meditation;
2. *paripucchā*: to make comprehensive inquiries about the purpose of meditation and to clear any unresolved doubts;
3. *upaṭṭhāna*: to study how mental signs appear in meditation;
4. *appanā*: to study how meditation leads to the unification of mind as found in states of *jhāna*;
5. *lakkhana*: to discern the nature of meditation, i.e. to know the attributes of a specific kind of meditation and to know how it is brought to completion.

*Vism.* 277-8; *VismṬ.*: *Anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddesavaṇṇanā*,  
*Ānāpānassatikathāvaṇṇanā*

Table 18.1 illustrates the relationship between these meditation techniques and character types, as well as showing the levels of concentration attainable by these techniques.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>163</sup>In reference to *kasiṇa* meditation, the commentaries say that using a small *kasiṇa* disc is suitable for a thinking character, while a large disc (of unrestricted size) is suitable for a delusion character. They also warn that one should not be rigid about these matching techniques for various character types; generally speaking, every one of these meditation techniques is useful for restraining unwholesome qualities and supporting virtuous qualities (see: *Vism.* 114-15).

Table 18.1: Meditation Techniques and Character Types

Meditation Technique ( <i>kammaṭṭhāna</i> )	Suitable Character Type						Limits of Attainment						
	Greed character ( <i>rāga-carita</i> )	Anger character ( <i>doṣa-carita</i> )	Delusion character ( <i>moha-carita</i> )	Faith character ( <i>saddhā-carita</i> )	Knowledge character ( <i>buddhi-carita</i> )	Thinking character ( <i>vitakka-carita</i> )	Conceptualized image ( <i>paññihāga-nimitta</i> )	Access concentration ( <i>upacāra-samādhi</i> )	First jhāna	Second jhāna	Third jhāna	Fourth jhāna	Formless jhāna
Ten <i>kaṣiṇa</i> meditations													
• Four meditations on colour		×					○	○	○	○	○	○	
• Other <i>kaṣiṇa</i> meditations	×	×	×	×	×	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Ten meditations on <i>asubha</i>													
	×						○	○	○				
Ten recollections ( <i>anussati</i> )													
• First six recollections				×				○					
• Recollection on peace					×			○					
• Recollection on death					×			○					
• Recollection of the body	×						○	○	○				
• Mindfulness of breathing			×			×	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Four unbounded states of mind													
• Lovingkindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy		×						○	○	○	○		
• Equanimity		×						○				○	
Perception of the loathsomeness of food													
					×			○					
Analysis of the four elements													
					×			○					
Four absorptions of the formless sphere													
• Meditation on infinite space	×	×	×	×	×	×		○				○	1
• on infinite consciousness	×	×	×	×	×	×		○				○	2
• on the sphere of nothingness	×	×	×	×	×	×		○				○	3
• The state of neither-perception- nor-non-perception	×	×	×	×	×	×		○				○	4

The commentaries offer many additional observations on these forty meditation techniques. Readers who are interested in these subtleties of practice should refer to the commentarial sources. {810}

## H. FINDING A FIXED ABODE

To live in a monastery suitable for meditation practice. Ideally, one should live in the same monastery as one's teacher, but if this is inconvenient one should find a residence that is suitable and supportive to meditation.

The commentaries mention eighteen unfavourable monasteries or dwellings, with the following features: it is large (a monastery in which monks have divergent interests and opinions, in which there are many troubles, and which is not peaceful); it is new (a monastery in which one gets caught up in building projects); it is dilapidated (it requires a lot of upkeep); it is next to a road (where there are many visitors); it has a stone-lined pond (where many people congregate); it contains plants with edible leaves; it contains flowering bushes; it contains fruit trees (in the case of these last three factors, people will likely be a disturbance, by say cutting flowers or asking for fruit); it is famous (e.g. people believe there is an exceptional monk residing here and will gather in large numbers); it is near a city; it is situated among timber trees; it is near arable fields (i.e. it is near where people work); the monastery contains incompatible, troublesome people; it is near a pier or transport station; it is in a remote area (where people have no faith in Buddhism); it is on the frontier (between two powerful nations; it may be dangerous); it has unsuitable features (it contains disturbances); it is absent of virtuous companions.

An appropriate monastery or dwelling contains five attributes: (1) it is neither too close nor too far; it is convenient to come and go; (2) during the day it is not crowded; during the night it is not noisy; (3) it is free of biting insects, intrusive creatures, and extreme weather conditions; (4) it is a place where one does not lack the four requisites; (5) there is an elder residing there who is well-versed in the Dhamma and is able to offer guidance.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>164</sup> See: A. V. 15-16. The Pali Canon describes the attributes of a Dhamma practitioner who is able to realize liberation of mind in a short period of time as possessing the following five qualities: (1) faith in the Tathāgata's wisdom and awakening; (2) good health; few illnesses; a good metabolism (balanced fire element); (3) he is candid with the Teacher (the Buddha) and with his companions in the holy life; he is not deceptive; (4) earnest perseverance; and (5) wisdom which penetrates the nature of the defilements.



To dispel minor worries and concerns regarding one's body and one's everyday personal belongings; to not allow these things to disturb the mind. For example, one gives attention to shaving, clipping one's nails, sewing and dying one's robes, and keeping one's lodging clean. {811}

## I. GENERAL PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

In regard to practising a specific meditation technique, each technique has unique details and methods of practice. It is possible, however, to give a general outline for the development of concentration. One such outline found in the scriptures is the classification into three stages of training or development: initial development (*parikamma-bhāvanā*), access concentration development (*upacāra-bhāvanā*), and attainment concentration development (*appanā-bhāvanā*).<sup>165</sup>

Before describing these three stages of development, it is important to explain the Pali term *nimitta*. A *nimitta* is a mental sign used for concentration, or it is a mental image representing the object used in meditation. There are three such signs, classified in order of level of achievement (see the diagram above):

1. *Parikamma-nimitta*: preparatory or initial sign. Any object that is used as the focus of meditation, for example: to gaze at a *kasiṇa* disc, to focus on the breath, or to reflect on the Buddha's virtues and to recognize that some of these virtues exist in one's own mind.<sup>166</sup>
2. *Uggaha-nimitta*: a 'learning sign'; a sign taken up by the mind or impressed on the mind. This refers to the preparatory sign (*parikamma-nimitta*) – the meditation object – which has been focused or reflected on to the point of precise discernment, where a person develops a vivid mental impression of the object. For example, one focuses on a *kasiṇa* disc until this impression is imprinted in the mind and visible even with the eyes shut.

<sup>165</sup>On the three stages of development and on the three kinds of mental images (*nimitta*), see: Comp.: *Kammaṭṭhānaparicchedo*, *Gocarabhedo*.

<sup>166</sup>Trans.: the Buddha's virtues (*buddha-guṇa*) here refer to: wisdom (*paññā*), purity (*visuddhi*), and compassion (*karuṇā*).

3. *Paṭibhāga-nimitta*: a virtual, counterpart, or approximate sign. This image is similar to the ‘learning sign’, but is more deeply impressed on the mind, to the point where it arises out of the perception (*saññā*) of the person in a state of concentration. It is pure (for example, free from any colour) and stainless, and the person is able to expand or contract any aspect of this image at will.

The first two kinds of *nimitta* are accessible through all meditation techniques, but the third kind (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) is only accessible through the twenty-two techniques which have a material object as a focus, that is: the ten *kaṣiṇa* meditations, the ten meditations on foulness, recollection on the body, and mindfulness of breathing.

The term *bhāvanā*, meaning ‘cultivation’, refers to practising a meditation technique or to developing concentration. The three stages of concentration development are as follows:

1. Initial stage of development (*parikamma-bhāvanā*): to focus on and obtain a preliminary image of a meditation object; for example, one gazes at a *kaṣiṇa* disc, focuses on the in- and out-breathing at the tip of the nose, or reflects on the Buddha’s virtues inherent in oneself. Simply speaking, one focuses on the preparatory sign (*parikamma-nimitta*) – on the meditation object. When one sustains this focus to the point of gaining an accurate mental impression of the object, a ‘learning sign’ (*uggaha-nimitta*) arises. The mind attains an initial stage of concentration, which is called ‘preparatory concentration’ (*parikamma-samādhi*) or ‘momentary concentration’ (*khaṇika-samādhi*).
2. Access development (*upacāra-bhāvanā*): one relies on preparatory concentration to sustain one’s focus on the learning sign, until this sign becomes firmly established in the mind and there arises a counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*). The mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) subside (with meditation techniques not focusing on a material object, there is no counterpart sign; one simply reflects on the meditation object and concentrates on it until the hindrances

## NOTE 18.10: SEVEN SUPPORTING CONDITIONS

There are seven *sappāya* (suitable, favourable, and supportive conditions):

1. dwelling (*āvāsa*);
2. resort for finding food (*gocara*);
3. speech (*bhassa*);
4. person (*puggala*);
5. food (*bhojana*);
6. climate, environment (*utu*);
7. and posture (*iriyāpatha*).

As *sappāya* are the (same) seven factors which are unsuitable and unfavourable (Vism. 127-8; VinA. II. 429; MA. IV. 161).

subside). The mind is established in access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*). This is the highest stage of ‘sense sphere concentration’ (*kāmāvacara-samādhi*).

3. Attainment development (*appanā-bhāvanā*): one continually cultivates the counterpart sign while in access concentration, protecting it so that it does not fade or disappear, by avoiding unsuitable places, people, and food, and by associating with suitable things. (See Note 18.10) One knows which methods help to generate attainment concentration, for example by sustaining one’s focus in an optimal way.<sup>167</sup> In the end a person reaches attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*) and enters the first *jhāna*, which is the initial stage of ‘fine-material concentration’ (*rūpāvacara-samādhi*). {812}

With many meditation techniques the object of meditation is extremely subtle. There is no material object to focus on or to contact physically and thus the image of this object does not become clear enough: the mind is unable to be concentrated and absorbed for long. Such techniques do not give rise to a counterpart sign and only lead to the level of access concentration. With techniques using a coarse

<sup>167</sup>These methods are referred to as the ten skills in absorption (*appanā-kosalla*); Vism. 128-37.

meditation object, which can be seen clearly and physically contacted, on the other hand, the mind can be concentrated for a long period of time. These techniques give rise to a counterpart sign and lead to attainment concentration. An exception to this is the meditation on the four unbounded states of mind (*appamaññā*) – the divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*). This meditation does not use a distinct material object as a focus for attention, and thus does not give rise to a counterpart sign, but because sentient beings are the focus of attention, this meditation provides a clear enough image to lead to attainment concentration.<sup>168</sup>

With the attainment of the first *jhāna*, the next step is to develop proficiency in regard to the first *jhāna*,<sup>169</sup> and to make effort in order to attain the other *jhānas* in turn, within the limits of attainment possible by each specific meditation technique. In this way a person realizes the appropriate fruits of tranquillity meditation (*samatha*).

<sup>168</sup>The commentaries explain that although the meditation on the four unbounded states of mind does not generate a counterpart sign, as occurs for example in the case of *kaṣiṇa* meditation, it has ‘breaking down of barriers’ (*sīma-sambheda*; the way in which unconditional lovingkindness, for example, is utterly free of discrimination and spreads love towards all living creatures) as its mental image (*nimitta*), which is developed to the stage of attainment concentration (see: *Vism.* 307).

<sup>169</sup>In this context, there are five kinds of proficiency (*vasī*): (1) proficiency in reflecting on the state of *jhāna* one has exited from (*āvajjana-vasī*); (2) proficiency in entering a state of *jhāna* immediately – anytime, anywhere – at will (*samāpajjana-vasī*); (3) proficiency in determination (*adhittjhāna-vasī*): to be able to establish the mind and stay in *jhāna* for as long as one wishes, preventing the mind of *jhāna* (*jhāna-citta*) from falling into a state of subliminal consciousness (*bhavaṅga*); (4) proficiency in exiting *jhāna* (*vuṭṭhāna-vasī*): to be able to exit *jhāna* at a predetermined time or whenever one wishes; (5) proficiency in reviewing *jhāna* (*paccavekkhaṇa-vasī*): this is the same as *āvajjana-vasī*, applied on subsequent occasions. See: *Ps.* I. 99-100. Cited and explained at: *Vism.* 154; *PsA.* I. 316; *CompT.*: *Manodvāravithi*, *Javananiyamavaṇṇanā* and *Kammaṭṭhānaparicchedavaṇṇanā*, *Gocarabhedavaṇṇanā*. The commentators state that one should gain full proficiency in regard to a specific level of *jhāna* before developing subsequent states of *jhāna*; otherwise, one may fall away from both states of *jhāna* already attained and those yet to be attained. On this subject of proficiency the commentators refer to *A.* IV. 418.

## J. MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING AS AN EXAMPLE OF MEDITATION PRACTICE

Having described general principles of meditation practice, it seems appropriate now to give an example of how to develop a specific technique. Of the forty meditation techniques, the one chosen here is the meditation on in- and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*).

### 1. Special Attributes of Mindfulness of Breathing

There are many reasons for choosing the meditation on breathing:

- It is a very convenient method for developing concentration as it uses the breathing, which is a natural part of every person's life. This meditation can be practised at any time and in any place; it is not necessary to prepare any meditation tools as is the case for *kaṣiṇa* meditation. It uses a material object (the breath) as its object of attention, which is adequately clear for the mind's focus; the breath is not as subtle as those immaterial phenomena used in other meditation techniques which must be brought to mind by way of perception (*saññā*). This practice is also very simple and does not require an analysis of phenomena as is the case with say a meditation on the elements; all a person needs to do is be mindful and focus on the breath. Those people whose minds are tired from thinking a lot can practise mindfulness of breathing without difficulty.
- A person derives benefits from this practice from the very start; one needs not wait until one achieves specific levels of concentration. The body becomes relaxed and rested, and the mind experiences progressively deeper levels of peace. Unskilful mental states are eliminated and skilful states are enhanced. {813}
- This meditation is not detrimental to physical health, as confirmed by the Buddha's own experience: *When I dwelled frequently in this abiding [of concentration by mindfulness of breathing] my body was not fatigued, my eyes were not tired.*<sup>170</sup> This is unlike other meditation

<sup>170</sup>S. V. 317.

techniques which entail standing, walking, or gazing at a meditation object. On the contrary, meditation on breathing improves a person's physical health, by providing the body with an opportunity to rest, and by balancing, regulating, and refining the entire system of breathing.

Think of someone who is running or climbing a hill, or someone who is frightened or angry – his breathing will be more rapid than normal. Sometimes breathing through the nose is not enough and the person needs to breathe through the mouth as well. On the other hand, the breathing of someone whose body is relaxed and whose mind is at ease is more subtle and fine.

Mindfulness of breathing calms the body and mind and gradually refines the breath, to the point where the breath becomes almost imperceptible. The body then is in a state of wellbeing and relies on a minimal amount of energy consumption. The body is refreshed, the aging process is slowed down, and a person is able to work more while at the same time requiring less rest.

- It is one of only twelve types of meditation which result in the highest level of concentration – the fourth *jhāna* – and lead to the formless *jhānas*, up to the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). Mindfulness of breathing is considered a cardinal and complete form of meditation; one does not need to worry about finding another technique to alternate or combine with it. This is confirmed by the Buddha:

Therefore, if a monk wishes: 'May I enter and dwell in the fourth *jhāna*' ... he should closely attend to this same concentration by mindfulness of breathing. If a monk wishes: 'May I completely transcend the base of nothingness, and enter and dwell in the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception'.... 'May I completely transcend the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception and enter and dwell in the cessation of perception and feeling', he should closely attend to this same concentration by mindfulness of breathing.<sup>171</sup>

- It can be used for both tranquillity meditation (*samatha*) and for insight meditation (*vipassanā*). One can practise mindfulness of breathing with the sole wish of reaching concentrative attainments, or one can use it as a basis for developing all four foundations of mindfulness. It fully enables a concentrated mind to be the ‘field of practice’ for wisdom.<sup>172</sup>
- It is a way of developing concentration highly praised by the Buddha, who often encouraged the monks to practise mindfulness of breathing. The Buddha himself often applied this practice as a mental abiding (*vihāra-dhamma*), both before and after his awakening:

Monks, this concentration by mindfulness of breathing when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, a refreshing, pleasant abiding, and it dispels and quells right on the spot evil unwholesome states whenever they arise. Just as in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing ... dispels and quells on the spot evil unwholesome states whenever they arise.  
{814}

Vin. III. 70; S. V. 321-2.

<sup>171</sup>Trans.: the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) = *nirodha-samāpatti*. See the diagram illustrating the limits of concentrative accomplishments, above. Note that according to the commentators, *ānāpānasati* is not able to lead to the formless jhānas, for they claim that the formless jhānas are dependent on *kaṣiṇa* meditation (e.g.: Vism. 324-5).

<sup>172</sup>*Ānāpānasati* as one aspect of *kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*: D. II. 291; M. I. 56. A description in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* of a way of practice incorporating all four foundations of mindfulness: M. III. 83-4; S. V. 323-40. Other descriptions of the core of practising the sixteen stages of *ānāpānasati*: Vin. III. 70; M. I. 425; S. V. 311-23; A. V. 111-12. A detailed explanation exists at Ps. I. 162-96. *Ānāpānasati* also occurs frequently in lists of recollections (*anussati*) and elsewhere.

Monks, speaking rightly, one should say that concentration by mindfulness of breathing is a noble abiding (*ariya-vihāra*), a divine abiding (*brahma-vihāra*), the Tathāgata's abiding (*tathāgata-vihāra*). Those monks who are trainees, who have not attained the fruit of arahantship, who aspire to unsurpassed security and wellbeing (*yogakkhema*): for them concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, leads to the destruction of the taints. Those monks who are arahants, whose taints are destroyed ...: for them concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, leads to a pleasant abiding in the present moment and to mindfulness and clear comprehension.<sup>173</sup>

S. V. 326.

Monks, it so happened that before my awakening, while I was still a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, I frequently dwelled in this abiding [of concentration by mindfulness of breathing]. While I frequently dwelt in this abiding, neither my body nor my eyes became fatigued and my mind, by not clinging, was liberated from the taints. Therefore, monks, if a monk wishes: 'May neither my body nor my eyes become fatigued and may my mind, by not clinging, be liberated from the taints', this same concentration by mindfulness of breathing should be closely attended to.<sup>174</sup>

S. V. 317.

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling in the *Ikchānaṅgala* Wood near the town of *Ikchānaṅgala*. There the Blessed One addressed the monks thus: 'Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for three months. I should not be approached by anyone except for the monk who brings me almsfood....' Then, when those three months had passed, the Blessed One emerged from seclusion and addressed the monks thus: 'Monks, if wanderers of other sects ask you: 'In what abiding did the ascetic Gotama primarily dwell during the rains residence?' – being asked thus, you should answer those wanderers thus: 'During the rains residence, friends, the Blessed One dwelt primarily in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing.'

S. V. 328.



Concentration by mindfulness of breathing, Ānanda, is key; when developed and cultivated, it fulfils the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the seven factors of enlightenment. The seven factors of enlightenment, when developed and cultivated, fulfil true knowledge and liberation. {815}

S. V. 329; M. III. 82.

Rāhula, when mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated in this way, even the final in-breaths and out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown.<sup>175</sup>

M. I. 425-6.

<sup>173</sup>Note that the term ‘divine abiding’ (*brahma-vihāra*) does not always refer to lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (the exclusive term for that group of virtues is *appamaññā*).

<sup>174</sup>According to the scriptures, when Prince Siddhattha as a young boy attained the first jhāna while sitting under the Jambolan tree during the king’s ploughing ceremony, this concentrative attainment resulted from his focusing on the breath (see: M. I. 246; MA. II. 290; JA. I. 58).

<sup>175</sup>The Visuddhimagga explains that at the time of dying a person is able to know the final in- and out-breath, from beginning to end, along with the passing away (*cuti*) of the *citta*. It also says that only some monks who attain arahantship by developing other forms of meditation are able to determine the length of their lifespan, while those who attain arahantship by developing the complete sequence of *ānāpānasati* are able to determine their lifespan (they are able to determine how much longer they will live and to determine their time of death); see: Vism. 292.

## 2. *Buddha's Words Describing Mindfulness of Breathing*

To begin with, here is the method of practising mindfulness of breathing as taught by the Buddha:

And how, bhikkhus, is mindfulness of breathing developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit?

Here, a monk in this Dhamma and Discipline:

- (a) Goes to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut.<sup>176</sup>
- (b) Sits with legs folded crosswise, straightens his body, and establishes mindfulness in front of him. [That is, he makes effort in meditation and focuses on the breath.]
- (c) Mindfully he breathes out, mindfully he breathes in.<sup>177</sup>

The first group of four factors can be used for developing the foundation of mindfulness regarding contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*):

- 1. Breathing out long, he knows: 'I breathe out long.'  
Breathing in long, he knows: 'I breathe in long.'
- 2. Breathing out short, he knows: 'I breathe out short.'  
Breathing in short, he knows: 'I breathe in short.'
- 3. He trains thus:  
'Being aware of the whole body, I will breathe out.'  
He trains thus:  
'Being aware of the whole body, I will breathe in.'
- 4. He trains thus:  
'Calming the bodily formation, I will breathe out.'  
He trains thus:  
'Calming the bodily formation, I will breathe in.'

The second group of four factors can be used for developing the foundation of mindfulness regarding contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*):

5. He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing delight, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing delight, I will breathe in.'
6. He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing happiness, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing happiness, I will breathe in.'
7. He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing the mental formation, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing the mental formation, I will breathe in.'
8. He trains thus:  
 'Calming the mental formation, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Calming the mental formation, I will breathe in.' {816}

The third group of four factors can be used for developing the foundation of mindfulness regarding contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*):

9. He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing the mind, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Clearly knowing the mind, I will breathe in.'
10. He trains thus:  
 'Gladdening the mind, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Gladdening the mind, I will breathe in.'
11. He trains thus:  
 'Concentrating the mind, I will breathe out.'  
 He trains thus:  
 'Concentrating the mind, I will breathe in.'

12. He trains thus:

‘Liberating the mind, I will breathe out.’

He trains thus:

‘Liberating the mind, I will breathe in.’

The fourth group of four factors can be used for developing the foundation of mindfulness regarding contemplation of mind objects (*dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*):

13. He trains thus:

‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe out.’

He trains thus:

‘Contemplating impermanence, I will breathe in.’

14. He trains thus:

‘Contemplating detachment, I will breathe out.’

He trains thus:

‘Contemplating detachment, I will breathe in.’

15. He trains thus:

‘Contemplating cessation, I will breathe out.’

He trains thus:

‘Contemplating cessation, I will breathe in.’

16. He trains thus:

‘Contemplating relinquishment, I will breathe out.’

He trains thus:

‘Contemplating relinquishment, I will breathe in.’ (See Note 18.11)

*M. III. 82-3; S. V. 311-12.*

<sup>176</sup>‘Empty hut’ is translated from *suññāgāra*. The Visuddhimagga interprets this term as ‘empty place’ (a place void of any buildings), i.e. the seven kinds of dwellings apart from a forest and the foot of a tree (see: Vism. 270).

<sup>177</sup>The Vinaya commentaries translate *assāsa* as ‘exhalation’ and *passāsa* as ‘inhalation’. The Sutta commentaries, however, translate these terms in an opposite way: *assāsa* as ‘inhalation’ and *passāsa* as ‘exhalation’ (see: Vism. 271). Here, the preferred translation in Thailand is presented, in accord with the Vinaya commentaries. Those who prefer the Sutta commentary interpretation should make the switch themselves.

## NOTE 18.11: FURTHER ON MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

For passages explaining how to use mindfulness of breathing to further develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, see e.g.: M. III. 83-4; S. V. 323-5. The commentaries refer to this complete sequence of *ānāpānasati* as ‘mindfulness of breathing meditation with sixteen factors’ (*soḷasavattthuka-ānāpānasati-kammaṭṭhāna*), dividing it into four tetrads, as seen above. See: Vism. 266-7.

Some scholars point out the difference between *ānāpānasati* and ways of training the breath as found in other doctrines, for example the yogic control of the breath called *pranayama* (*prāṇayāma*), showing that these are completely distinct.

In particular, *ānāpānasati* is a way of cultivating mindfulness, not a way of training the breath; the breath is merely an instrument for cultivating mindfulness. Some of the methods of controlling the breath fall under the practice of extreme asceticism, which the Buddha performed before his awakening and later renounced.

See: P. Vajirañña Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena and Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 235-6; and Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London: Rider and Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 61.

Here, I will explain the practice in brief, limited to the development of tranquillity (*samatha*) within the first tetrad – the first group of four factors.<sup>178</sup> {817}

<sup>178</sup>The opinion of the commentaries is that beginners of meditation should only practise the first tetrad – the four factors of the first group; the subsequent tetrads can be practised when one has attained *jhāna*. Furthermore, the first three tetrads can be used for both tranquillity and insight meditations; the fourth tetrad, however, can only be used for insight meditation. See: Vism. 275-6, 290.

### 3. *Method of Practice in the Context of Tranquillity Meditation (Samatha)*

#### Preparation

- Location: if one wishes to practise meditation in earnest one should first seek out a quiet and secluded place, which is free from loud noises and other disturbing sense impressions. (See Note [18.12](#)) Finding such a supportive environment for practice is especially important for beginners of meditation. This is similar to someone who is learning how to swim – one will begin by using flotation devices and swim in still, non-turbulent water. If one faces unavoidable disturbances, however, or if one is engaged in a specific activity requiring a certain level of disruption, then one should do one's best under the circumstances.
- Sitting posture: the main principle here is to find a sitting posture affording the greatest degree of physical relaxation and ease. One should choose whichever posture leads to a minimum level of fatigue, even when sitting for long periods of time, and which allows the breathing to be smooth and comfortable. The sitting posture which countless meditation masters have verified to be the best is the lotus posture. This posture is very stable and balanced: the upper body is held erect and the ends of the eighteen vertebrae are aligned. Body tissues and tendons are not twisted and breathing is smooth. The body of a person skilled at this posture feels light and unburdened; he or she can remain in this position for exceptionally long periods without feeling discomfort. This is conducive to concentration; a person's meditation does not falter but rather progresses steadily.

The traditional way of explaining this posture is to place one's ankles up against the lower abdomen. One can either overlap both legs (full lotus) or lift one's right leg on top of one's left leg (half lotus). One places one's hands by one's lower abdomen, with the right hand on top of the left, either touching the tips of one's two thumbs together or touching one's right index finger to the tip of one's left thumb. Many of these details depend on the physical

## NOTE 18.12: DIFFICULTY OF ĀNĀPĀNASATI

The commentators consider *ānāpānasati* to be a hard and difficult practice. They add that *ānāpānasati* is the apex of meditation techniques, the exclusive meditative domain of Buddhas, Silent Buddhas, and ‘sons of the Buddha’ (*buddha-putta*; bhikkhus or arahants) who are considered ‘great men’ (*mahāpurisa*). It is not a trifling matter nor can inferior people develop it. If one does not leave noisy places it is very difficult to practise *ānāpānasati* because loud noise is the adversary to jhāna. Moreover, formidable mindfulness and wisdom is required for advanced stages of this meditation. The commentators cite the Buddha’s words at M. III. 83-4 for corroboration: *Bhikkhus, I do not recommend the meditation on breathing for those with addled mindfulness and a lack of clear comprehension* (see: Vism. 268-9, 284). The commentators’ remarks on the distinction and difficulty of *ānāpānasati*, however, raise the question of why they also recommend this meditation for people possessing a delusion character (*moha-carita*).

balance of individual people. It is to the advantage of beginners if they can train in this posture, but if it is too uncomfortable they can sit upright in a chair or choose another suitable posture. The teachings reiterate that if one is sitting with chronic tension and physical stress, then something is wrong, and one should rectify the situation before proceeding. In regards to meditating with one’s eyes open or closed, it depends on what gives a sense of ease and does not lead to distraction. If one keeps one’s eyes open, then one can look down at the ground or perhaps at the tip of one’s nose, depending on what feels comfortable. (See Note 18.13) {818}

When one is sitting at ease, before starting to meditate, many teachers recommend breathing in deeply and slowly, filling one’s lungs two or three times and generating a sense of inner spaciousness and clarity. Then one is ready to focus on the breath.

## NOTE 18.13: POSTURE FOR ĀNĀPĀNASATI

*Ānāpānasati* is the only meditation technique of all the different techniques mentioned in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta in which there is a specific instruction on posture – on how to sit (see also: Kāyagatāsati Sutta – M. III. 88-99; Girimānanda Sutta – A. V. 108-12).

In relation to the other meditation techniques, the posture is determined suitable for the circumstances. If sitting is recommended, then this is because sitting is suitable for that activity, and when the specific posture of sitting cross-legged is deemed optimal for that practice then this posture becomes the accepted norm. This is the case say for *kaṣiṇa* meditation and lengthy reflections on mind objects.

It is similar to the activity of writing a book – generally speaking, sitting is more suited to this activity than standing or lying down. One should avoid the misunderstanding that sitting is somehow equivalent to developing concentration. In other words, the lotus posture is the best posture for maintaining good health and for engaging in meditation. When one needs to sit in order to perform an activity the Buddha recommended the lotus posture (this is also true for sitting in order to contemplate, rest, converse with others, or develop self-restraint; see, e.g.: M. II. 139-40; M. III. 238; A. II. 38; Ud. 21). Similarly, the Buddha recommended to lie down in the ‘lion posture’, to lie down on the right side, or, when one is alone, to do walking meditation (*caṅkamaṇa*: walking up and down).

### Commencing Meditation on the Breath

The commentators present some additional meditation methods to supplement the Buddha’s instructions described above:

**A. Counting (*gaṇanā*):** when beginning to pay attention to the long and short in- and out-breaths, the commentators recommend counting the breaths as well, for this will help keep the mind focused. Counting is separated into two stages:

In the first stage one counts slowly and in a relaxed way. The recommended tactic or strategy here is to count to not less than five and to not more than ten, and to count the numbers in order. (If one counts to less than five the mind is agitated by the short interval of time; if one counts to more than ten the mind is anxious about counting rather than staying with the breath; and if one counts in a disconnected manner the mind



gets confused.) One counts the in- and out-breaths in pairs: out-breath 1, in-breath 1, out-breath 2, in-breath 2, until one reaches 5-5. Then one begins again: 1-1, until one reaches 6-6, and begins again. One keeps adding another pair until one reaches 10-10, and then one returns to the original five pairs, in a repeated cycle:<sup>179</sup>

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, 7-7

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10

1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5

etc. {819}

In the second stage one counts in quicker succession: when the in- and out-breaths are clearly evident (when attention rests with the breathing and does not get dispersed outwards) one ceases to count using the same number twice as described above and one begins to count single numbers. Here, one does not need to pay attention to the entire process of breathing – one focuses only on the breath as it reaches the tip of the nostrils. First, one counts from one to five, then from one to six, adding another number in each sequence until one reaches ten; then one returns to counting from one to five. Counting in this way, one's meditation will be more connected, as if it has no gaps. One keeps one's attention solely on the spot where the

<sup>179</sup>The passage explaining this method of counting in the Visuddhimagga is too brief, which has led to divergent interpretations. The explanations in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and the West tend to vary. For simplicity sake I have illustrated the way that is taught in Thailand. (It does not matter whether one begins with the in- or the out-breath – whichever one is more clear is acceptable.) In order to show the original system, I have described the way of practice as found in the Visuddhimagga. Practitioners can modify this system as they wish, similar to how modern meditation centres teach the mantra *buddho* or use other methods besides counting to keep attention on the breath (the essential factor is to find a skilful means for keeping the mind focused).

breath makes contact, either at the tip of the nostrils or at the upper lip (wherever there is a clear sensation).<sup>180</sup> The counting can be illustrated thus:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

etc.

One counts in this way until one reaches a point where, although one has ceased counting, mindfulness is still firmly established on the breath. (Firmly established mindfulness is the objective of counting – to sever the stream of restless, incoherent thoughts.)

**B.** Taking note (*anubandhanā*): when attention is established on the breath, one stops counting and mindfully takes note of the breath in an uninterrupted stream. ‘Taking note’ here does not mean following the breath with attention through its various stages of beginning, middle, and end: as it passes through the nose, travels through the upper chest, and reaches the navel, and then returns from the belly area to the chest and finally out through the nose. If one does this the body and mind will become agitated and the practice will be ineffective. The correct way to take note is to mindfully observe the breath at the point of contact (at the tip of the nostrils or at the upper lip).

<sup>180</sup>The commentators say that for those people with long noses the breath is more evident at the tip of the nostrils; for those with short noses it is more evident at the upper lip. They also say that if one follows the breath as it enters the body one will experience a stifled feeling in the chest, while if one follows the breath outwards one will get distracted by various other sense impressions.

It is similar to cutting a log with a long saw: one keeps attention fixed on the point where the teeth of the saw meet the wood and one thus witnesses the coming and going of the saw. One does not glance from one end of the saw to the other as it moves. Although one keeps attention only at the point of contact, one is fully aware of the complete motion of the saw and by these means one succeeds in the task. This is the same for a meditator: when one establishes attention at the point of breath's contact, and refrains from following the complete circuit of the breath, one is fully aware of the cycle of breathing and one's practice bears fruit. {820}

At this stage, some people will soon have a mental image (*nimitta*) arise and they will quickly reach attainment concentration. For others the process will be more gradual: from the time of counting the breath, the breath will become increasingly refined, the body will become exceptionally relaxed, and both the mind and body will feel light, as if one is floating in space. When a coarse level of breathing ceases, the person will retain a mental image of the refined breath as an object of attention. And even when this mental image fades away, new mental images of successively more refined levels of breath remain in the mind. This is similar to when a person strikes a bell or a gong with a rod and produces a loud noise: a long-lasting, reverberating sound remains as a mental impression or 'mental sign' (*nimitta*). At first this 'sign' is coarse, and then becomes gradually more faint.

At this point, however, a difficulty arises specific to the meditation on breath: unlike with other meditation techniques, in which the more one focuses the clearer the meditation object becomes, here, the more one develops this meditation the more refined the breath becomes, until the sensation of breathing completely disappears. There is thus no longer an object on which to focus. When this phenomenon occurs the commentaries advise against getting worried and breaking off the meditation, but rather to retrieve the breath. Retrieving the breath is not difficult. One need not go off in search of it; simply establishing mindfulness at the usual point of contact is enough. One reflects: 'The breath makes contact with the body here; soon it will reappear.' By continuing this focus in an uninterrupted way a mental image will soon appear. (See Note [18.14](#))

Mental images or signs (*nimitta*) appear differently for different people. Some people experience it as similar to cotton wool or kapok, others like a slightly rough cotton cloth or notched wood. Some say it is like a gentle breeze. For others it appears as a star, a jewel, a pearl, a necklace, a garland, smoke, a spiderweb, a cloud, a lotus, a disk, or even like the moon and sun. These differences exist because a *nimitta* arises from a person's perception (*saññā*), which is different for each individual.

When a *nimitta* arises the meditator should first go and inform the teacher (as a way to verify the experience and to avoid misunderstanding), and then steadily establish attention on that image. With the arising of this counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) the hindrances are quelled, mindfulness is strong, and the mind reaches access concentration. Here the meditator should try and protect this image (i.e. to protect the state of concentration), by avoiding the seven unsuitable conditions and engaging in the seven suitable conditions. (See Note 18.10) He or she should meditate diligently in order to develop the image, by following the practices leading to attainment concentration (the 'ten skills for attainment' – *appanā-kosalla*), for example by making consistent effort, until eventually attainment concentration is reached and the person achieves the first jhāna. (See Note 18.15) {821}

## NOTE 18.14: STAGES OF ATTENTION

According to the commentaries, this interval between taking note (*anubandhanā*) and the appearance of a *nimitta* contains two additional stages:

1. *phusanā* (a focus on the point of breath's contact at the tip of the nostrils by a meditator who is establishing the mind in attainment concentration); and
2. *ṭhapanā* (a fixed attention on an object until the mind reaches attainment concentration).

'Pure' *ṭhapanā* is specifically the subsequent stage of establishing attention on the *nimitta*, protecting the *nimitta*, and sustaining attention until one reaches attainment concentration. After attaining *jhāna*, if one then uses this meditation in order to develop insight, this is called the stage of *sallakkhaṇā* (reflection, specifically on the three characteristics). Eventually one reaches path (*magga*), which is referred to as 'turning away' (*vivaṭṭanā*), and fruit (*phala*), which is referred to as 'purity' (*pārisuddhi*, i.e. freedom from defilement). The final stage is 'review' (*paṭipassanā*): to reflect upon the path and fruit that one has realized (this is the same as 'reflection' – *paccavekkhaṇa*). Altogether there are eight stages of attention (beginning with *gaṇanā* and ending with *paṭipassanā*).

## NOTE 18.15: TEN SKILLS FOR ABSORPTION

Trans.: the ten skills for meditative absorption are:

1. cleanliness of body and utensils;
2. harmonizing the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*);
3. proficiency in the object of attention;
4. controlling the exuberant mind;
5. uplifting the depressed mind;
6. making the 'dry' mind pleasant;
7. composure towards the balanced mind;
8. avoiding persons who do not possess concentration;
9. associating with persons who possess concentration; and
10. having a mind that is always bent towards meditative absorption.

See the section General Practice of Meditation, above.

### 18.7 APPENDIX 1: DEVELOPING THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS: A LIFE FREE FROM SUFFERING

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From one perspective, the life of a human being can be described as a struggle for survival, stability, and safety. From another perspective, however, each person searches for happiness and satisfaction. It is not only prosperous people who seek happiness; those people who struggle with all their might for survival do so as well. No matter if one looks at a long period of time, say of developing a career and engaging in various activities, or if one looks at brief intervals of time, say of momentary movements and actions, the search for happiness is always an inherent part of life. This is true even if one is occasionally faced by challenging matters of conscience or ethics.

In truth, the search for happiness over a long period of time extends from the search for happiness in each moment. In one's own daily life, one must take an interest in finding a way to experience happiness in every moment; one's search for happiness will thus be successful. If one is unable to experience happiness in every moment, the possibility of happiness in the long run will remain a vague hope. But if one is able to experience happiness in each moment one's wish will immediately become fulfilled. And when external, surrounding conditions are favourable, one's happiness will only increase.

The ordinary human process of seeking happiness, which is evident even in short-term or momentary periods of time, is such: desire arises (or is made to arise) and the person then acts in various ways to satisfy that desire. When there is gratification, the desire abates and the person experiences happiness. The more the desire is stimulated, the more intense is the gratification and pleasure. Happiness is thus the gratification of desire.

We can then ask the question: 'What is desire?' This question need not be answered directly. What is clear is that when desire arises, there are two significant manifestations: first, is a sense of lack and deficiency, an absence of a desired object, either a true lack or one that is created in the mind. Second, is a feeling of agitation or suffering because one is hindered

or one is pulled away from how things exist in that moment. One is unable to be at peace, and one must struggle to find a way to still the agitation.

Only when desire is gratified does one feel back to normal and does the agitation abate or stop. During this period of time one experiences happiness. But if the desire is not gratified one experiences a sense of loss, agitation, oppression, and affliction.

Suffering in fact begins with the onset of desire, because desire is accompanied by agitation. Thus, the ordinary search for happiness is equivalent to inducing suffering and then looking for a way to momentarily alleviate it: here, happiness is equivalent to the quenching of suffering. The more one induces the suffering, the greater the happiness when this suffering abates.

Generally speaking, the time that elapses during the onset of desire, the subsequent lack and agitation, and the period of unfulfilled gratification is long, whereas the time of gratification and alleviation is fleeting. The life of human beings, which is a mixture of pleasure and pain, is thus full of suffering and nourished by hope. {845} What is of graver concern is that there are many desires which remain unfulfilled and for which there is no hope of fulfilment. There is thus a chronic and deepening suffering. When people grow impatient or when they feel hopeless, many of them will struggle in every way possible. If their suffering is not alleviated, they often vent this suffering outwards, creating greater problems for themselves and others.

The matter does not end here. When people desire and act in order to fulfil this desire, they encounter obstacles, and in relation to others who have similar desires they face competition. A life of desire necessarily includes irritation, anger, resentment, persecution, oppression, and distress, and is beset by problems stemming from such anger and oppression. The greater and more frequently one desires, the greater and more frequent is one's irritation and affliction. (Please note here that 'desire' here refers to the desire of craving. If one possesses wholesome desire – *chanda*, obstacles may even turn out to be fun.)

Worse than this, when one habitually entrusts one's happiness to desire and its gratification, later on, when one sees nothing worthy of

desire or desirable objects lose their appeal, and one is not actively searching for gratification, one is left feeling bored, apathetic, and disillusioned. Life becomes insufferable and meaningless. This is another form of suffering, but one which is insipid and wearisome; it may even be more discomforting than the suffering of waiting for sensual gratification. When people take refuge in desire and in pleasurable objects, entrust their happiness to gratification of desires, and create elaborate ways to fulfil desire, their suffering thus becomes more refined and complex. Such is a course of life based on suffering.

There is an alternative way of life which is completely free from these problems mentioned above. Here, a person truly lives in the present moment. One is aware of and fully awake to the things presently experienced. One knows and understands those things which must be engaged with in the present moment, and one deals with them accordingly. This is a way of living with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), or with mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*), in line with the teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness described earlier. Here, mindfulness keeps pace with the present moment; one lives in the present. A person who follows this way of life is truly alive. (Many people are not truly alive, because they either live in the past or in the future.)

When one lives fully in the moment, there is no sense of lack or deprivation and there is an absence of stress from the constrictions and strains of desire. One experiences sense impressions in a full and complete way, and thus there is satisfaction in each moment. One does not rely on the happiness resulting from temporary gratification of desire and the alleviation of suffering. No suffering arises which must be brought to an end; it is a life free from suffering – an inherent happiness existing at all times. From a life based on suffering, one lives a life based on an absence of suffering – a life based on happiness.

When one's life is based on an absence of suffering, if one wishes to experience a form of happiness that is within the limits of one's ability, one can enjoy this happiness to the fullest. Even if one occasionally seeks pleasure through the fulfilment of desire, this is not a problem, despite at that time there being a lack of gratification, because the latter



happiness of non-suffering prevails and acts as a surety. Moreover, due to the absence of conditions giving rise to suffering and hindering the mind, such persons are ready to effectively solve problems externally, either those of an individual or of society, to the utmost of their ability.

Technically speaking, the material in the preceding paragraph is a definition for ‘cessation (of suffering)’ – *nirodha*. A correct definition for this term is ‘to bring about the state in which there is no suffering that must be extinguished’, that is, ‘to bring about a freedom from suffering’. This term does not merely refer to eliminating already arisen suffering. This corresponds to the appendix in chapter 4, discussing the difficulties of translating this term. The meaning of *nirodha* in the early texts is the non-arising of suffering, not a cessation of already arisen suffering. {846}

## 18.8 APPENDIX 2: THE FIVE HINDRANCES AND THE SEVEN FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

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Each one of the hindrances and enlightenment factors are subdivided into two subsidiary factors, resulting in ten hindrances and fourteen enlightenment factors:<sup>181</sup>

### **Ten Hindrances**

1. Internal sensual desire (in reference to one's own body).
2. External sensual desire (in reference to someone else's body).
3. Internal ill-will (directed at oneself).
4. External ill-will (directed at others).
5. Despondency (*thīna*).
6. Sluggishness (*middha*).
7. Restlessness (*uddhacca*).
8. Anxiety (*kukkucca*).
9. Doubt concerning internal phenomena.
10. Doubt concerning external phenomena.

### **Fourteen Enlightenment Factors**

1. Mindfulness of internal phenomena.
2. Mindfulness of external phenomena.
3. Investigation of internal phenomena.
4. Investigation of external phenomena.

<sup>181</sup>S. V. 110-11.

5. Physical effort.
6. Mental effort.
7. Bliss accompanied by initial and sustained thought.
8. Bliss unaccompanied by initial and sustained thought.
9. Physical relaxation.
10. Mental relaxation.
11. Concentration accompanied by initial and sustained thought.
12. Concentration unaccompanied by initial and sustained thought.
13. Equanimity in relation to internal phenomena.
14. Equanimity in relation to external phenomena.



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## CHAPTER 19

# FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

### 19.1 INTRODUCTION

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The teaching of the Four Noble Truths encompasses the Buddhist teachings in their entirety. The entire subject matter discussed in *Buddhadhamma* is encapsulated in the Four Noble Truths, and therefore this teaching acts as the summary and conclusion to this book. There are some important points to understand in reference to the Four Noble Truths:

### 19.2 ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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Friends, just as the footprint of any animal that walks can be placed within an elephant's footprint, and so the elephant's footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size; so too, all wholesome states can be included in the Four Noble Truths.

*M. I. 184-5.*

So long, monks, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment....

*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Vin. I. 11; S. V. 422-3.*

Monks, it is through not understanding, not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that I as well as you have for a long time run on and wandered round [the cycle of birth-and-death].

*D. II. 90.*

Then the Blessed One gave the householder Upāli a gradual instruction, that is, talk on giving, talk on virtue, talk on the heavens; he explained the danger, degradation, and defilement in sensual pleasures and the blessing of renunciation. When he knew that the householder Upāli's mind was ready, receptive, free from hindrances, delighted, and confident, he expounded to him the teaching special to the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path.<sup>1</sup>

*M. I. 379-80.*

A person lives the holy life under the Blessed One in order to know, to see, to realize, to experience for himself, to attain that which is not yet known, seen, realized, experienced, and attained, [that is]: this is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the end of suffering, this is the path leading to the end of suffering. {847}

*A. IV. 384-5.*

One of the unique characteristics of Buddhism is that it only teaches those truths which can be applied to benefit one's life. The Four Noble Truths are of direct benefit to people's lives. Buddhism does not concern itself with abstract truths that have no practical value. For this reason, the Buddha did not concern himself and waste time with metaphysical debates:

If anyone should say thus: 'I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me "the world is eternal or not eternal, the world is finite or the world is infinite,

<sup>1</sup>See also: A. IV. 209-10. *Sāṃukkaṃsikkā-dhammadesanā* ('teaching special to the Buddhas') means 'eminent Dhamma teachings', 'teachings extolled by the Buddhas', or 'Dhamma teachings revealed and explained by the Buddhas themselves' – they are unlike the teachings ordinarily given when people answer questions or when they converse with others.

the life principle and the body are the same or the life principle is one thing and the body another, a being exists after death or does not exist, a being both exists and does not exist after death, or a being neither exists nor does not exist after death”’ that would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata and meanwhile that person would die.

Suppose, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives brought a skilled surgeon to treat him. The man would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble or a brahmin or a merchant or a labourer; until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me, whether he was tall or short or of middling height; whether he was dark, fair-skinned, or swarthy; and whether he lives in such a village or town or city. I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the bow that wounded me was a long bow or a crossbow; whether the bowstring that wounded me was made with fibre or bamboo or sinew or hemp or bark; whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated; until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted – whether those of a vulture or an adjutant stork or a hawk or a peacock or a sithilahanu bird; until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound – whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a langur or a monkey; and until I know what kind of arrowhead it was that wounded me.’ Before being able to know all of this that man would surely die. So too, if anyone should say thus: ‘I will not lead the holy life’ ... meanwhile that person would die.

Mālunkyaputta, if there is the view ‘the world is eternal’, the holy life cannot be lived; and if there is the view ‘the world is not eternal’, the holy life cannot be lived. Whether there is the view ‘the world is eternal’ or the view ‘the world is not eternal’, there is still birth, there is still aging, there is still death, there are still sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; it is the destruction of these [forms of suffering] I prescribe here and now....

Therefore, remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared. And what have I left undeclared? ‘The world is eternal’, ‘the world is not eternal’.... Why have I left that undeclared? Because it is unbeneficial, it does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have left it undeclared.

And what have I declared? I have declared: ‘This is suffering’, ‘this is the origin of suffering’, ‘this is the cessation of suffering’, ‘this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ And why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared it. {848}

*M. I. 428-31.*

On another occasion the Buddha said that the things he has realized are numerous, but the things he has taught are few. This is because he only teaches those things that are of benefit and can be used to solve problems. Specifically, these beneficial things are the Four Noble Truths:

The Buddha was once staying in the Siṃsapā grove near the city of Kosambī. At that time he picked up a small handful of Narra tree leaves and said to the monks:

‘What do you estimate, monks, which is more numerous: these few narra leaves that I hold in my hand or those in the Siṃsapā grove overhead?’

‘Venerable sir, the few narra leaves that the Blessed One holds in his hand are of a small amount, while those in the Siṃsapā grove overhead are much more numerous.’

‘So too, monks, the things I have directly known but have not taught you are numerous, while the things I have taught you are few. And why, monks, have I not taught those many things? Because they are



unbeneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

‘And what, monks, have I taught? I have taught: “This is suffering”; I have taught: “This is the origin of suffering”; I have taught: “This is the cessation of suffering”; I have taught: “This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.” And why have I taught this? Because it is beneficial, relevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. Therefore I have taught this.

‘Therefore, monks, you should make effort in order to understand according to the truth: “This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.”’<sup>2</sup>

*S. V. 437-8.*

The Four Noble Truths are a vital teaching for both renunciants and laypeople. The Buddha therefore urged the monks to give teachings to the laypeople so that they understand these truths:

Monks, those to whom you ought to give assistance or those who are receptive to the teachings – whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen – these you should encourage and exhort to be settled and established in a realization of the Four Noble Truths as they really are.

*S. V. 434-5.*

<sup>2</sup>Trans.: the author uses the spelling *Sisapā grove*.

### 19.3 THE MEANING OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

These Four Noble Truths, monks, are actual, unerring, and constant. Therefore they are called noble truths....

S. V. 435.

Monks, the Tathāgata is the Noble One in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. Therefore they are called noble truths (because they are realized and revealed by the Buddha, the Noble One).<sup>3</sup> {849}

S. V. 435.

Monks, it is because he has fully awakened to these Four Noble Truths as they really are that the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One, is called the Noble One.<sup>4</sup>

S. V. 433.

Referring to passages in the Pali Canon, the Visuddhimagga presents four definitions for the Four Noble Truths (See Note 19.1):

1. Truths realized by the ‘noble ones’ (see preceding footnote).
2. Truths belonging to the Noble One (Pali definition B, above).
3. Truths leading to the state of being a Noble One (Pali definition C, above).
4. Truths that are actual and certain (Pali definition A, above).

<sup>3</sup>The passage in parentheses is from the commentarial interpretation at: SA. III. 299.

<sup>4</sup>This translation accords with the quotation in the Visuddhimagga at Vism. 495. In the Thai Pali edition the term *ariya* is not found; with this omission the passage is translated as: ‘It is because he has fully awakened to these Four Noble Truths as they really are that the Tathāgata is called the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One.’ [Trans.: this is how it is translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Sāmyutta Nikāya*; Wisdom Publications; © 2000.]

## NOTE 19.1: NOBLE TRUTHS

Vism. 495. For the first definition the Visuddhimagga quotes the following passage: ‘Monks, because the “noble ones” (i.e. the enlightened ones) penetrate these truths, they are called noble truths’, but I am unable to find this passage in the Tipiṭaka as it remains today. As for the fourth definition, the term *ariya* is normally translated as ‘noble’ or ‘excellent’, and thus *ariya-sacca* is translated as ‘noble truth’, but the commentators here interpret *ariya* according to the passage quoted above, as ‘actual’ or ‘sure’.

The canonical explanations for the four truths are as follows:

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; encounters with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for annihilation.

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless elimination and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonattachment to it.

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>E.g.: in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Vin. I. 10; S. V. 421-22; and at: Ps. II. 147-150; Vbh. 99-104.

Further explanations are as follows:

1. *Dukkha*: suffering; conditions that are difficult to endure; human predicaments. On a more profound level, this truth refers to the state of all conditioned things, which are subject to the natural laws of impermanence, *dukkha*, and nonself. Conditioned phenomena are accompanied by pressure, stress, conflict, and obstruction. They are inherently flawed and imperfect; they lack true substance and stability; they are unable to provide lasting satisfaction and contentment; they are constantly prone to cause problems and to create suffering for someone who attaches to them with clinging (*upādāna*). {850}
2. *Dukkha-samudaya* (abbreviated as *samudaya*): the origin or source of suffering; i.e. craving (*taṇhā*), which seizes onto a belief in ‘self’, establishing an ‘I’, which is presumed to experience and acquire, exist and cease to exist in different circumstances. Attaching to this sense of self subjects a person to continual agitation, anxiety, yearning, possessiveness, hatred, fear, suspicion, boredom, and other forms of mental affliction. One is thus unable to truly feel at ease, free, and joyous; one does not know happiness that is immaculate and secure.
3. *Dukkha-nirodha* (abbreviated as *nirodha*): the cessation of suffering; the state reached when one completely eliminates ignorance and craving, when one is not influenced or compelled by craving, and when one is not oppressed by anxiety, boredom, or any other form of mental affliction. One is liberated, peaceful, bright and at ease; one experiences pure happiness. In short, *nirodha* is equivalent to Nibbāna.
4. *Dukkhanirodhagāmini-paṭipadā* (abbreviated as *magga*: the Path): the path leading to the cessation of suffering or the mode of practice for reaching the end of suffering, i.e. the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*; the supreme path consisting of eight factors), i.e. right view ... right concentration. This path is known as the Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*) because it proceeds in a balanced way to the end of suffering, without getting stuck at or veering towards

either of the two extremes: indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāma-sukhallikānuyoga*) or self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*; practices of self-torment).

#### 19.4 THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND DEPENDENT ORIGATION

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Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths are both central Buddhist teachings.

In answer to the question, ‘What did the Buddha realize at his enlightenment?’ it is equally accurate to say that he realized Dependent Origination and that he realized the Four Noble Truths. There are passages in the Pali Canon to substantiate both of these claims.

This is because these two teachings are essentially the same and point to the same truths: Dependent Origination is an essential element of the Four Noble Truths, and the Four Noble Truths incorporates Dependent Origination. Let us look at the scriptural evidence for this assertion:

The Vinaya Piṭaka describes the story of the Buddha’s enlightenment, beginning with the time immediately after his enlightenment, when for an entire week he experienced the bliss of liberation and contemplated Dependent Origination, both the forward sequence (the arising of suffering) and the reverse sequence (the cessation of suffering).<sup>6</sup> After seven weeks of experiencing the bliss of liberation, the Buddha considered proclaiming the Dhamma to others and he had this thought:

‘This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, difficult to see, difficult to realize.... [It is difficult] for such a generation delighting in attachment to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, Dependent Origination. And it is hard to see this truth, namely ... Nibbāna. {851}

*Vin. I. 1-5.*

<sup>6</sup>Vin. I. 1-5.

The Sutta Piṭaka presents a similar description of the Buddha's life story, beginning with the thoughts that led him to go forth and leave the palace, followed by accounts of his going forth as a renunciant, studying with the ascetics Āḷāra and Uddaka, undertaking and relinquishing the practices of extreme asceticism, resuming eating food, and then attaining the jhānas and realizing the three forms of knowledge at the time of his awakening:

Now when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna ... the second jhāna ... the third jhāna ... the fourth jhāna, which has neither pleasure nor pain and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity....

When my mind was concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, malleable, wieldy, steady, and imperturbable, I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*; the first knowledge – *vijjā*). I recollected my manifold past lives.... I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings ... I saw beings passing away and reappearing (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*; the second knowledge).... I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*; the third knowledge). I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is suffering', 'this is the origin of suffering', 'this is the cessation of suffering', 'this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'These are the taints', 'this is the origin of the taints', 'this is the cessation of the taints', 'this is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.' When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of becoming, and from the taint of ignorance.

*M. I. 163-73, 240-49; M. II. 93, 211-12.*

Following these passages is a description of the Buddha's considerations on proclaiming the Dhamma, identical to the passage in the Vinaya Piṭaka quoted above.

The Vinaya Piṭaka describes the period immediately following the Buddha's awakening, when the Buddha experienced the bliss of liberation (which the commentaries say lasted for seven weeks). The description begins with the Buddha's review of Dependent Origination and ends with the Buddha's thoughts on refraining from teaching the Dhamma due to the complexity and profundity of Dependent Origination and of Nibbāna. The Sutta Piṭaka describes the circumstances leading up to the Buddha's awakening until he realizes the three forms of knowledge (*vijjā*). It passes over the period of experiencing the bliss of liberation and goes directly to the Buddha's inclination to refrain from teaching.

Those people who focus on the passages in the Vinaya in which the Buddha contemplates Dependent Origination, and the passages in both the Vinaya and the suttas in which the Buddha considers teaching the Dhamma, will claim that the Buddha realized Dependent Origination. Those people, on the other hand, who focus on the sutta passages, especially those describing the realization of the three forms of knowledge, and who consider primarily the third knowledge, which is the true essence of awakening (the first two forms of knowledge cannot be considered equivalent to awakening and are not essential for realizing Nibbāna), will claim that the Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths, resulting in liberation from the taints.

Although these two answers are both correct, the two teachings have different features and a varying scope of application, and thus should be recognized as distinct from one another.

In regard to the similarity between these two teachings, let us review the two distinct cycles of Dependent Origination and then compare these to the Four Noble Truths:

1. Cycle of origination (*samudaya-vāra*): ignorance arises → volitional formations arise → ... birth arises → aging and death, sorrow, lamentation ... despair arise.
2. Cycle of cessation (*nirodha-vāra*): ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → ... birth ceases → aging and death, sorrow, lamentation ... despair cease. {852}

- A. The origination cycle of Dependent Origination is equivalent to the first and the second noble truths: suffering (*dukkha*) and suffering's origin (*samudaya*). In the Four Noble Truths, the final section of Dependent Origination (birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, etc.), which is the result of craving and clinging, is designated as the first noble truth: it refers to the problems that people encounter and that must be rectified. The teaching then returns to the preceding factors (ignorance to becoming) and designate them as the second noble truth: the source of human problems.
- B. The cessation cycle of Dependent Origination is equivalent to the third noble truth (*nirodha*). It reveals how problems, when they are properly solved at their root, cease according to the law of cause and effect. Although the cessation cycle is directly associated with the third noble truth, it also includes the fourth noble truth, because the eradication of problems refers indirectly to the conduct or practice involved in solving these problems; it points to the particular actions required to resolve problems.

It is thus possible to condense the Four Noble Truths, resulting in two truths: the existence of suffering (truths 1 and 2) and the end of suffering (truths 3 and 4).

In some suttas, these two cycles of Dependent Origination are used as definitions for the second and third noble truths: the origination cycle is a definition for the second truth, and the cessation cycle is a definition for the third.<sup>7</sup>

In these definitions, however, only craving (*taṇhā*) is revealed as the cause for suffering (*samudaya*); and similarly, the end of craving is the definition for cessation (*nirodha*). This is because craving is the most obvious defilement; it plays a dominant role and is thus highlighted for investigation. Despite this abbreviated presentation, the entire process of Dependent Origination is implied.

The teachings on Dependent Origination and on the Four Noble Truths are distinct from each other in the following ways:

<sup>7</sup>See, e.g.: S. II. 104-105.



These two teachings reveal the same truth, but in different ways and with different objectives. Dependent Origination describes an automatic, natural process. The Four Noble Truths, on the other hand, presents a model for wise inquiry and investigation, leading to practical results.

The Four Noble Truths corresponds to the Buddha's own search for truth, beginning with his encounters with suffering and his consequent search for its cause. He discovered that this search is not in vain; there is indeed a solution. He thus determined the specific points which need to be attended to and set himself a clear goal. Finally, he carried out the necessary measures to solve the problem until he reached his desired goal. The Four Noble Truths is thus used as a systematized teaching for generating understanding, profiting both the person who presents the teaching and the person who receives it. {853}

Dependent Origination is the essential dynamic inherent in the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha contemplated immediately after his awakening. It is the key teaching which a person must study in order to understand the gist of the Four Noble Truths.

The main distinction between these teachings is found in relation to the cessation cycle of Dependent Origination which corresponds to the third and fourth noble truth. When one compares the cessation cycle with the third noble truth (*nirodha*), one sees that it focuses primarily on the process leading to cessation rather than on the state of cessation – Nibbāna – itself. For this reason, following the Buddha's awakening, while he was considering whether to teach the Dhamma, he distinguished the two truths that he had realized. His first consideration was:

This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, difficult to see, difficult to realize.... [It is difficult] for such a generation delighting in attachment to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, Dependent Origination.

This was followed by a second consideration:

And it is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the abandonment of all foundations for suffering, the end of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.

The third noble truth, on the other hand, refers principally to the state of cessation, although the process leading to cessation is inherent in it.

The cessation cycle of Dependent Origination incorporates the fourth noble truth (*magga*), but it does not clearly mark out a path of practice. It does not clearly specify the details or methods of practical application: what needs to be done for the process to reach completion. This is similar to a doctor who knows how to treat an illness but neither prescribes medicine nor sets down a treatment plan.

In the Four Noble Truths, however, the Buddha specifically distinguished the fourth truth for the purpose of practical application: it is a way of practice that has been tested and proved, and leads with certainty to the goal of complete and utter freedom.

The fourth noble truth (*magga*) describes spiritual practice in a detailed, balanced, and comprehensive way; it comprises the entire Buddhist system of practice. It is called the ‘middle way of practice’ or the ‘Middle Way’, which is to be undertaken by people in order to generate results within themselves. Dependent Origination, on the other hand, is referred to as an ‘impartial teaching of truth’ (*majjhena dhammaṃ deseti*), or a ‘middle teaching’, which accords with the inherent laws of nature. It encompasses the first three noble truths. Because the Middle Way (*magga*) has distinctive features it is important to distinguish it as a unique teaching. {854}

In sum, the Buddha made a distinction between the truths that he realized at the time of his awakening: on the one hand there is Dependent Origination and Nibbāna, and on the other hand the Four Noble Truths. All of these truths are essentially the same, but viewed from different perspectives.

The Buddha referred to Dependent Origination and Nibbāna when he was considering whether to teach the Dhamma, acknowledging how profound these things are and how difficult it is for beings to understand them. Nibbāna and Dependent Origination are the essential qualities realized by the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment; they are the true and pure essence of the Dhamma, extremely difficult to realize. And they lie at the heart of the teaching on the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha referred to the Four Noble Truths when he described his own practice culminating in his awakening and when he gave teachings to others, beginning with the First Sermon, on setting the wheel of Dhamma in motion. The Four Noble Truths comprise the entire range of truths realized by the Buddha. They are organized into a gradual system of coherent and effective teachings, which take into account people's ability to understand these truths and apply them to their lives.

Nibbāna and Dependent Origination are pure, natural phenomena. The Four Noble Truths are those matters directly pertaining to human beings; they are presented in a way that is conducive to understanding and to practical application. The Four Noble Truths embody the entirety of the truth (Dhamma), whereas the essential (and the most difficult to realize) qualities of the truth are Nibbāna and Dependent Origination. A person who truly understands Nibbāna and Dependent Origination understands Buddha-Dhamma in its entirety, including the Four Noble Truths.

### 19.5 ACTIONS TO BE PERFORMED IN RELATION TO THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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It is crucial that one understands and performs the necessary duties in relation to each of the Four Noble Truths. A correct presentation and correct practice of the Four Noble Truths relies on an accurate linking up between each distinct truth and its corresponding responsibility or action. A failure to do this results in misunderstandings and incorrect practice. A lack of understanding about the duties connected to each of the Four Noble Truths also leads to misunderstanding about Buddhism in general, for example the belief that Buddhism is a pessimistic teaching.

The four duties in respect to the Four Noble Truths are as follows:<sup>8</sup>

1. Suffering should be fully understood  
(*dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*).

<sup>8</sup>See the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

2. The cause of suffering should be abandoned  
(*dukkhasamudayo ariyasaccaṃ pahātabbaṃ*).
  3. The cessation of suffering should be realized  
(*dukkhanirodho ariyasaccaṃ sacchikātabbaṃ*).
  4. The way leading to the cessation of suffering should be developed  
(*dukkhanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ bhāvetabbaṃ*). {855}
- A. Thorough knowledge (*pariññā*): the duty in respect to suffering is thorough understanding; one should investigate and understand suffering as it truly is; one should clearly understand relevant problems and determine the extent of these problems. This is a fundamental stage of spiritual practice enabling one to progress to subsequent stages and to understand the heart of the human predicament.
  - B. Abandonment (*pahāna*): the duty in respect to the causes for suffering is to eliminate them – to bring the causes for suffering to an end; one should remove the source of suffering.
  - C. Realization (*sacchikiriya*): the duty in respect to the cessation of suffering is to realize or attain such cessation: to reach a state in which the essential problems have been solved, where one is completely free from these problems and has reached the goal of spiritual practice.
  - D. Cultivation (*bhāvanā*): the duty in respect to the Path is to literally ‘bring into existence’ – to generate and to increase – i.e.: to train oneself according to the factors of the Path; to undertake the practice of the Path, which eliminates the source of suffering; to follow the methods which lead to the goal; to set down the details of spiritual practice and to apply these in order to solve problems.

It is necessary to attend to and accomplish these duties correctly, matching each duty with its appropriate truth. To perform these duties correctly requires knowledge (*ñāṇa*); the knowledge of these duties in Pali is referred to as *kicca-ñāṇa*. Applying this knowledge to link each noble

truth with its matching duty corresponds to different stages of spiritual practice, and it can be used for solving every kind of human problem:

1. Knowledge of the duty in relation to *dukkha*: to know that suffering needs to be thoroughly understood; to understand the nature of suffering, the basis of suffering, and the locus of suffering. This understanding accords with reality, which differs from understanding things according to how we want them to be or according to aversion, for instance. As a particular stage of practice, this refers to the stage of describing or assessing problems, which must be defined and understood.
2. Knowledge of the duty in relation to *samudaya*: to know that the cause of suffering needs to be abandoned; to understand the causes of suffering, which should be eliminated. This is the stage of inquiry and analysis, of diagnosing the source of suffering, which must be completely eradicated.
3. Knowledge of the duty in relation to *nirodha*: to know that the cessation of suffering needs to be realized; to understand the cessation of suffering, which should be realized. This is the stage of focusing on the end of suffering – the goal of spiritual practice – by recognizing that solving the human predicament is possible, worthy, and something that should be accomplished. Moreover, one knows how to reach this goal.
4. Knowledge of the duty in relation to *magga*: to know that the Path needs to be cultivated; to understand the Path or the way of practice leading to the end of suffering, which should be developed and brought to completion. This is the stage of setting down or acknowledging the methods, stages, and details of practice used for eliminating the source of suffering which need to be applied and undertaken.

In sum, we know what our problems are – we know the nature of our suffering, we know the source of that suffering, we know what to aspire to (or what achievement is truly desirable), and we know what must be done – we know how to proceed.

The knowledge of duties (*kicca-ñāṇa*) is one of three kinds of knowledge connected to the Four Noble Truths, which are used as criteria for determining enlightenment: when a person truly knows the Four Noble Truths with these three kinds of knowledge (comprising twelve factors), he or she is said to be awakened. {856}

These three kinds of knowledge are referred to collectively as ‘knowledge and vision’ (*ñāṇa-dassana*). This knowledge and vision is comprised of three cycles or rounds (*parivaṭṭa*), constituting the three kinds of knowledge:<sup>9</sup>

1. Knowledge of the truths (*sacca-ñāṇa*): knowledge of the Four Noble Truths as they really are: ‘this is suffering’, ‘this is the source of suffering’, ‘this is the end of suffering’, ‘this is the way leading to the end of suffering’; ‘suffering is like this’, ‘the source of suffering is like this’, ‘the end of suffering is like this’, ‘the way leading to the end of suffering is like this’. This knowledge completes the first round (*parivaṭṭa*).
2. Knowledge of duties (*kicca-ñāṇa*): knowledge of the required duties apropos of each of the Four Noble Truths: *dukkha* should be fully understood, the cause of suffering should be abandoned, etc., as described above. This knowledge completes the second ‘round’.
3. Knowledge of what has been done (*kata-ñāṇa*): knowledge of having accomplished the duties in respect to the Four Noble Truths. One knows: ‘Suffering, which should be fully understood, has been fully understood’; ‘The cause, which should be abandoned, has been abandoned’; ‘Cessation, which should be realized, has been realized’; ‘The Path, which should be developed, has been developed.’ This knowledge completes the third ‘round’.

These three rounds occur in relation to each of the four truths, resulting in twelve factors (*ākāra*) of knowledge and vision. Knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*) thus has three cycles (*parivaṭṭa*), containing twelve factors.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

The Buddha possessed knowledge and vision of the Four Noble Truths in their three rounds – he realized the twelve factors – and therefore he declared that he had achieved the unsurpassed supreme enlightenment.

Knowledge and vision containing these twelve factors is used as a criterion for verifying all forms of spiritual accomplishment. This knowledge with its rounds and factors can be outlined as seen below, and on Table 19.1.

1. Suffering is like this – it should be fully understood – it has been fully understood.
  2. The cause is like this – it should be abandoned – it has been abandoned.
  3. Cessation is like this – it should be realized – it has been realized.
  4. The Path is like this – it should be developed – it has been developed.
- {857}

Table 19.1: Three Kinds of Knowledge

Four Noble Truths	Knowledge of the Truths	Knowledge of Duties	Knowledge of What Has Been Done
<i>Dukkha</i>	To know that suffering is this way; to know what the problems are.	To know that suffering should be fully understood; to know that one must understand the nature and extent of problems.	To know that suffering has been fully understood; to know that one has understood the nature and extent of problems.
<i>Samudaya</i>	To know that the cause is this way; to know that craving is the cause of suffering; to know what the causes for problems are.	To know that the cause should be abandoned; to know that one must abandon craving; to know that one must solve problems at their source.	To know that the cause has been abandoned; to know that craving has been abandoned; to know that the source of problems has been eliminated.
<i>Nirodha</i>	To know that cessation is this way; to know that Nibbāna is the cessation of suffering; to know what is truly desirable.	To know that cessation should be realized; to know that Nibbāna should be realized; to know that this is the goal.	To know that cessation – Nibbāna – has been realized; to know that the goal has been reached.
<i>Magga</i>	To know that the Path is this way; to know that the Path of cessation has eight factors; to know what methods exist for solving problems.	To know that the Path should be developed; to know that one should cultivate the Eightfold Path; to know that one should undertake and apply the methods for solving problems.	To know that the Path has been developed; to know that one has practised in accord with the Eightfold Path; to know that one has completed and concluded the methods for solving problems.

Note also the following points: {858}

1. *Dukkha* is paired with the duty of clear understanding (*pariññā*) in the sense that suffering should be clearly understood. Therefore, suffering and all things that are classified as problems are collectively referred to as ‘things which should be clearly understood’ (*pariññeyya-dhamma*).
2. *Samudaya* is paired with the duty of relinquishment (*pahāna*) in the sense that the causes for suffering should be abandoned or eliminated. Therefore, craving and all things classified as causes for suffering, e.g.: ignorance, greed, hatred, and grasping, are collectively referred to as things to be relinquished (*pahātabba-dhamma*).
3. *Nirodha* is paired with the duty of realization (*sacchikiriya*) in the sense that the cessation of suffering should be realized. Therefore, Nibbāna and things related to the goal are called ‘things to be realized’ (*sacchikātabba-dhamma*).
4. *Magga* is paired with the duty of cultivation (*bhāvanā*) in the sense that the Path should be developed. The Eightfold Path and all practices and methods for reaching the goal are called ‘things to be cultivated’ (*bhāvetabba-dhamma*).

Everything that exists, without exception, can be classified as and incorporated into one of these four groups.

On the Path leading to the end of suffering – from rudimentary stages to the refined, and from relating to external things to realizing profound phenomena in the mind – it is always possible to associate the things which one experiences with one of these four groups. For example, at the highest level of practice, of contemplating the essence of truth, the Buddha described these four qualities as follows:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>M. III. 290; A. II. 247. Note that in the Pali Canon the term *bhāvetabba-dhamma* (i.e. *saṁatha* and *vipassanā*) is listed before *sacchikātabba-dhamma* (i.e. *vijjā* and *vimutti*).



1. *Dukkha*: things to be understood (*pariññeyya-dhamma*) = the five aggregates of clinging.
2. *Samudaya*: things to be abandoned (*pahātabba-dhamma*) = ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*).
3. *Nirodha*: things to be realized (*sacchikātabba-dhamma*) = true knowledge (*vijjā*) and liberation (*vimutti*).
4. *Magga*: things to be developed (*bhāvetabba-dhamma*) = tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).

### 19.6 SUMMARY OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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The commentaries offer some interesting analogies for the Four Noble Truths:<sup>11</sup>

1. An illness:
  - *Dukkha* is similar to an illness.
  - *Samudaya* is similar to the cause of illness.
  - *Nirodha* is similar to the freedom from illness.
  - *Magga* is similar to the medicine for curing the illness.
2. Famine:
  - *Dukkha* is similar to a famine.
  - *Samudaya* is similar to an absence of rain.
  - *Nirodha* is similar to abundance and plenitude.
  - *Magga* is similar to a good rainfall.
3. Danger:
  - *Dukkha* is similar to danger.
  - *Samudaya* is similar to the cause of the danger.

<sup>11</sup>Vism. 512; VbhA. 88; PsA. I. 198.

- *Nirodha* is similar to an escape from the danger.
- *Magga* is similar to the means for escaping the danger.

4. Burden, a heavy load:

- *Dukkha* is similar to a heavy load.
- *Samudaya* is similar to carrying the heavy load.
- *Nirodha* is similar to putting down the heavy load.
- *Magga* is similar to the procedures for putting down the heavy load. {859}

The *Visuddhimagga*, the *Sammohavinodanī*, and the *Saddhammapakāsinī* offer brief and cogent explanations for why the Buddha arranged the Four Noble Truths in the order that he did.<sup>12</sup>

#### A. **DUKKHA**

*The Focus Commences on Suffering in order to Apply Wisdom*

Suffering is oppressive and affects all human beings. Whenever suffering arises, it is arresting and kindles concern. Even if one looks beyond one's own personal experience, one sees the various afflictions and difficulties that continually beset human beings as the normal state of affairs. Suffering is apparent to all people – it manifests clearly. It impels interest and is thus suitable as a regular subject for contemplation, in particular as the starting point for teaching the Dhamma.

Moreover, suffering is considered displeasing and frightening for most people; although it is unavoidable, they do not want to think about it. If one makes people aware of how they are currently experiencing suffering or generating problems, they may be shaken from their state of complacency. The Buddha taught people about suffering in order for them to begin to contemplate and solve their problems.

By teaching the Four Noble Truths beginning with suffering, one commences with the problems at hand, with things that are clearly evident,

<sup>12</sup>*Vism.* 497-8; *VbhA.* 86; *PsA.* I. 54, 198. The passages are identical in all three texts. Here, I provide only an extract of these teachings.

with things that are arresting, and most importantly, with things that have a direct relevance to people. One does not begin with abstract ideas, fanciful notions, or mere rhetoric. When teaching an individual, one speaks on a subject pertinent to him or her; and when teaching objectively, one speaks on a subject relevant to all people.

The Buddha taught about suffering not to promote suffering, but to act as the starting point for ending suffering. He knew that suffering can be brought to cessation – it is not a compulsory and permanent condition. Life is frustrating when it is still disturbed by suffering. If one is able to bring an end to suffering, or if one becomes skilled at solving problems, then life becomes peaceful and truly happy.

Solving problems is not achieved by avoiding or turning a blind eye to suffering. Just the opposite: it is achieved by acknowledging and facing suffering. This does not mean simply enduring suffering or generating more suffering, but rather it means to gain insight into suffering in order to be able to be free of it. Instead of accumulating suffering, one attends to it with wisdom.

Gaining insight is equivalent to performing the correct duty vis-à-vis suffering, that is, comprehensive understanding (*pariññā*). One understands the nature of suffering, where it arises, and the extent of the problems. Often people avoid suffering and run away from problems; even though they know that problems exist, they only have a vague or confused understanding about them. By understanding suffering, one's responsibility in this area is accomplished. This is similar to a doctor who diagnoses the symptoms of an illness and understands its nature, thus fulfilling one stage in the process of curing it. {860}

It is not our responsibility to eliminate or abandon suffering, because cessation is not found at suffering itself – one must dispel it at its causes. Trying to abandon suffering itself is like treating an illness only at its symptoms, say by taking medicine in order to alleviate the pain. The illness has not been cured and one must continue to search for its causes.

Just as a doctor studying the nature of illness must also study about the human body, which is the home of illness, so too, a practitioner, who studies the nature of suffering in order to bring about its end, must study all aspects of human life which constitute the basis of suffering, along

with the nature of conditioned phenomena which play a participatory role.

The gist of the first Noble Truth is to recognize suffering as it truly is and to discern the true nature of human life and the world around us.

## **B. SAMUDAYA: THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING**

### *Searching for the True Causes of Suffering Rather than Attributing Blame*

If one wishes for the cessation of suffering, one must eliminate its causes. When one recognizes the nature of one's suffering – how and where it manifests – it is time to investigate further for its causes, in order to accomplish the duty of abandonment or elimination (*pahāna*).

In many cases, however, when searching for the source of suffering, people flee from the truth. They tend to look outside of themselves or focus on events removed from what is happening in the present moment. They therefore look for an external agent on whom to lay blame or try to distance themselves from the problem so as to feel that they are not responsible.

Laying blame on external factors leads to three false doctrines:<sup>13</sup>

1. Doctrine of past karma (*pubbekata-vāda*): the belief that all present happiness and suffering results from past actions; the claim that all happiness and suffering is connected to past actions.
2. Doctrine of a supreme God (*issaranimmāna-vāda*): the belief that all present happiness and suffering is created by a supreme God;

<sup>13</sup>E.g.: M. II. 214-23; A. I. 173; Vbh. 367-8; J. V. 232-43; J. VI. 206-211; JA. V. 237-41. *Issaranimmāna-vāda* is also known as *issaranimmita-vāda*, *issarakaraṇa-vāda*, or *issarakutti-vāda*. Especially in relation to *pubbekata-vāda*, it is important to distinguish this doctrine from the Buddhist teachings on kamma, a distinction which it seems that many Buddhists do not pay proper attention to. The scriptures emphasize this distinction and if it is studied well it will lead to clarity on the Buddhist notion of kamma. The commentaries at VbhA. 497 claim that the first doctrine is that of the Nigaṇṭhā, the second of the brahmins, and the third of the Ājīvakas. At J. V. 239-41 the doctrine of annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*) is added as a fourth item to this list of false doctrines.

whether one is escaping ill-fortune or seeking good fortune, one thus relies on the providence of divine beings.

3. Doctrine of fate (*ahetu-vāda*): the belief that all present happiness and suffering is random and pointless, without cause and condition. One believes that neither positive nor negative events can be altered; when their destined time arrives, they will occur automatically.

Buddha-Dhamma rejects these doctrines because they oppose the natural law of causality. The Buddhist teachings encourage people to search for the causes of suffering in conformity with this law of nature, beginning with those causes existing within an individual, i.e. volitional actions (*kamma*) of thoughts, words, and deeds, both good and bad: those already performed, those presently being performed, and those stored up as character traits. And they have people examine their behaviour in relation to things around them, to check if their actions are proper or improper in regard to various environmental factors.

On a deeper level, the Buddha described craving (*taṇhā*) as the source of human suffering. Craving causes one to act, express oneself, and relate to the world incorrectly. One does not act with a knowledge of the truth, but rather one acts influenced by pleasure and aversion, by likes and dislikes, or by shielding oneself with such defilements as fear, conceit, envy, and distrust, which are a consequence of craving. {861}

There are three forms of craving: craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*) – the wish to obtain, to acquire, to consume; craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) – the wish to become, to endure, to have eternal life; and the craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*) – the wish to cease existing, the wish for extinction. And on an even deeper level the Buddha described the process of Dependent Origination, in which ignorance acts as the root of craving, the source from which all suffering flows.

When one eliminates ignorance and craving – the causes for suffering – and one is not subject to the obstructive power of defilements, one is able to relate to the world – to other people, to other creatures, and to nature – with wisdom. One has an understanding of the conditionality of all

things which enables one to solve problems in the optimal way available to human intelligence.

Although some minor suffering remains, it is merely the *dukkha* inherent in nature and is incapable of overpowering one's mind. When one is free from the internal subjugation of craving, the only remaining responsibility is to reflect on the circumstances with which one is engaged, and to respond with wisdom for the happiness and wellbeing of others.

On the contrary, as long as people are still oppressed by corrupting and distorting defilements, they have no chance to truly solve problems or to dispel suffering, both within themselves and outward in society. In most cases, when people try to solve problems, they tend to make matters worse, either by increasing the problem at hand or by creating new ones. When they experience suffering, rather than bringing it to an end or reducing it by way of wisdom, they are coerced by craving to compensate for this situation by increasing the original suffering or by venting the suffering outwards and harming other people and society.

Human suffering arises and exists in this way, subject to the dictates of craving and with the support of ignorance, without end.

### **C. NIRODHA: THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING**

#### *Wisdom Leads to Unrestricted Happiness and Compassion*

Once the Buddha had described suffering and its causes, which are matters of adversity and dissatisfaction, he assuaged the minds of those disciples receptive to his teachings and gave them hope, by teaching the third noble truth of cessation, revealing that the oppression by suffering can cease – the basic problems of life can be solved. A desirable way out exists, because the cause of suffering can be eliminated and brought to an end.

Suffering exists dependent on causes; when these causes are removed, the result of suffering likewise ceases. When suffering ceases, the state of 'no suffering' – a freedom from suffering – arises automatically. Mental disturbance is transformed into a state of freedom, clarity, purity, and ease. For this reason cessation is presented as the third noble truth, both

because of the natural sequence of events, and because of its aptness as a teaching method, which kindles interest, promotes understanding, and encourages practice leading to true realization.

When one eliminates craving along with its companion defilements, which tyrannize and seduce the mind, one is no longer harassed by agitation, yearning, anxiety, fear, animosity, loneliness and boredom. One does not need to rely on the temporary happiness of fleeing from these disturbing mind states, of trying to bury them or replace them with something else, or of venting one's frustration outwards. {862}

By attending to suffering at its causes, the mind is now liberated, independent, peaceful, and possessed of a pure happiness; it is not assaulted by lingering doubts and fears. The normal, constant state of the mind is one of joy, clarity and ease. One has reached spiritual perfection and fulfilled the act of realization (*sacchikiriya*).

Similarly, when the mind is liberated from mental defilements and entanglements, when it is free and bright, ignorance no longer has any manipulative power. As a consequence, wisdom is also purified and freed from the deceptive and corrupting influence of the defilements. One is able to reflect on things correctly and in harmony with the truth, and discern things according to cause and effect.

When ignorance and craving are not present to cause misunderstanding, wisdom is the principal agent to guide behaviour. One then acts, expresses oneself, and relates to the world with a thorough knowledge of the ways of nature. Apart from being the bedrock of internal purity and freedom, outwardly, wisdom helps for applying one's personal knowledge and capabilities to solve other people's problems and to generate true wellbeing. A person's intelligence is used to its fullest extent without impediment or distortion, and it is used only for wholesome purposes. This is to live one's life guided by wisdom.

Moreover, when a person is free, steady, and naturally happy – not self-obsessed, not looking for things to consume, not trying to protect or reinforce the burden of self-importance – the mind becomes expansive and the feeling of freedom pervades outwards. One becomes receptive to the happiness and suffering of fellow creatures and one wishes to provide

assistance. Wisdom is then provided with the power of compassion which helps to guide one's behaviour; one then lives fully for the wellbeing and happiness of others. When one is free from grasping and selfish attachment, one is able to perform virtuous and kindly deeds in a one-pointed, resolute, and devoted way.

Inwardly, one is free, happy, and pure; personal wellbeing has been brought to perfection (*attahita-sampatti*). Outwardly, one acts to support other people (*parahita-paṭipatti*). Together they complete the attributes of one who has realized cessation.

A person who walks the noble path does not need to wait to experience the blessings and benefits of realizing Nibbāna – the heart of cessation. Even while walking correctly along the Path one is able to constantly witness the increasing fruits of practice, both in regard to personal benefits and in regard to those blessings one can bestow on others.

In ascending order, cessation (*nirodha*) is outlined by five stages:<sup>14</sup>

1. *Vikkhambhana-nirodha*: cessation of suffering and defilement through suppression: to use concentration in order to make the mind tranquil, relaxed, free from dullness and anxiety. In particular, this means applying concentration on the level of jhāna. During the entire period that one dwells in jhāna the defilements are stilled and one experiences happiness independent of sensual desires (*nirāmisā-sukha*).
2. *Tadaṅga-nirodha*: cessation of suffering and defilement by way of opposing or opposite qualities. Most importantly, this refers to an ability to reflect wisely, to understand the truth of phenomena – that they exist according to the law of causality and must be attended to by bearing in mind their causes and conditions. They are not subject to people's desires and attachments. With such wisdom a person acts correctly and relates to things with understanding, goodwill, and an inner freedom. {863} Wisdom that clearly discerns things according to the truth is called 'insight wisdom' (*vipassanā-paññā*). Mental impurity and suffering is extinguished as long as

<sup>14</sup>Ps. I. 27; Ps. II. 220.



this wisdom functions: the mind is calm, pure, bright, and joyous. It leads to mental refinement and generates deeper levels of wisdom.

3. *Samuccheda-nirodha*: cessation of suffering and defilement through severance. One realizes transcendent stages of the Path, beginning with the path of stream-entry. Defilements and suffering cease completely and irrevocably, according to the specific stage of the Path.
4. *Paṭipassaddhi-nirodha*: cessation of suffering and defilement through stilling. One realizes transcendent 'fruit' (*phala*); one is a noble being, from stream-enterer upwards. Defilements cease and the mind is pure and free according to the specific stage of being a noble person (*ariya-puggala*).
5. *Nissaraṇa-nirodha*: cessation of defilements through relinquishment; the state of true and perfect deliverance: Nibbāna.

#### **D. MAGGA: THE PATH LEADING TO THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING**

##### *Arrival at the Triple Gem Dispels a Dependence on Fate and Supernatural Powers*

When one knows suffering and its origin, and one recognizes the goal which is the cessation of the suffering, it is then time to engage in practice.

When one sees clearly the goal to be reached – its attributes and its attainability – one practises to realize that goal accordingly. If one does not know what the goal is and in which direction to go, one will not know how to proceed. For this reason, in terms of the relationship between the four truths, it is appropriate for the Path to be put at the end.

Also, in regard to teaching, spiritual practice generally requires a lot of strength and energy; if practitioners do not recognize the value of the goal, they will lack will-power. And if they are convinced the practice is arduous, they may have a loss of heart or even refuse to proceed. Even if they engage with the practice they will do so as if coerced, against their will, or listlessly, and their progress will probably be fruitless.

On the contrary, if one sees the value of the goal one will be happy to put forth effort. The greater is the goal and the desire to reach it, the

stronger is the motivation for practice. When a person sincerely desires the goal, he or she will fight to achieve it no matter how difficult the practice is to reach it.

This is another reason why the Buddha mentioned cessation before the Path: so that the listener sees the value of and develops a wish for cessation, generating an enthusiasm to learn the methods of practice and to apply them. When the Buddha revealed how cessation is truly a worthy goal, the listeners were determined to hear of the Path and committed to applying it to practice. They resolved to follow the Path and welcomed the hardships required to do so.

When people search for the cause of suffering, they tend to attribute blame outwardly or look for things that are as far from their own sphere of responsibility as possible. Similarly, when people look for a remedy for suffering, they tend to look for things externally, to find some protection in order to release them from responsibility or to remove suffering on their behalf.

In both cases people are hiding from the truth, not daring to look at suffering, and avoiding responsibility. This is similar to a person who flees from danger and looks for a place to bury his head in the sand and hide his face; he thinks he has escaped the danger even though he is still surrounded by it. {864}

This behaviour gives rise to a dependence on external things, say by beseeching what is considered holy, making propitiatory offerings, waiting for divine acts of power, or simply leaving things up to fate. Buddhism teaches that depending on such things, or such a resignation to fate, is not the way to security and safety, and it does not lead to a true deliverance from suffering.

The correct way of dealing with suffering is to have firm confidence in the merits of the Triple Gem, to make the mind peaceful and strong, and to apply wisdom by looking at problems objectively: to see them as they truly are and to solve them at their root causes.

In other words, with confidence in the Triple Gem, one knows how to solve problems according to the Four Noble Truths: to know suffering

accurately, to investigate and discover its causes, to recognize the end of suffering which should be realized, and to develop the appropriate methods of dealing with suffering directly at its source which lead to the realization of the goal. In sum, one develops the Eightfold Path. Practising in this way leads to the true end of suffering, as confirmed by the Buddha:

People in large numbers threatened by danger seek refuge in mountains, forests and sacred groves and trees. But no such refuge is safe, no such refuge is supreme. Not by resorting to such a refuge is one freed from all misery.

One who goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; who sees clearly with wisdom the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the origin of suffering, the transcendence of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering. This, indeed, is a safe refuge; this, indeed, is the refuge supreme. By reaching such a refuge, one is freed from all misery.<sup>15</sup>

*Dh. verses 188-92.*

A recollection of the Buddha provides us with the confidence that every person is endowed with an intelligence and capability which can be trained or developed to perfection. We are all able to realize the truth, to arrive at the utter freedom from suffering, to transcend mundane phenomena, and to possess supreme virtues which even the devas and Brahma gods revere. In this respect, the Great Teacher, the Buddha, acted as guide and forerunner.

If those people who depend on the supernatural know how to train themselves well, they will see that there is nothing which the gods or sacred forces are able to do which equals the virtuous deeds stemming from a well-cultivated human mind.

<sup>15</sup>Cited in Chapter 7 on awakened beings. The Triple Gem (*ratanattaya*) comprises the three essential pillars of Buddhism, which Buddhists should constantly bear in mind: the Buddha ('true humanity'; this principle points to the highest potential inherent in all people); the Dhamma ('nature'; the nature of causality, an understanding of which leads to the realization of ultimate truth, which transcends causes and conditions); and Sangha ('community'; the ideal community consisting of noble beings who exist at different levels of Dhamma realization and who follow the Path of the Buddha).

A recollection of the Dhamma provides us with the confidence that the truth is a naturally existing phenomenon and that all things exist according to causes and conditions. If one is able to discern things as they truly are, to apply this understanding in a beneficial way, to relate to things with insight, and to deal with them at their source, then one can solve problems in the best possible way. One will realize the truth and live an excellent life.

A recollection of the Sangha provides us with the confidence that a virtuous community is founded on truth and is comprised of members who are free from suffering. Although they have arrived at varying degrees of spiritual accomplishment, they are united and equal in the face of Dhamma. Every person participates in building this community by understanding and practising in accord with the Dhamma. {865}

If one lacks confidence in the Triple Gem then one must depend on external things, like petitioning sacred forces and praying to divine beings. But if one has confidence in the Triple Gem then one studies the way of bringing suffering to an end through insight into causes and conditions outlined in the Four Noble Truths and one practises spiritual cultivation in accord with the Buddhist path.

#### **E. PATH OF THE NOBLE ONES: SELF-MASTERY AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE**

For people with strong faith, who have complete confidence in the Triple Gem, neither external opinions nor the general vicissitudes of life, colloquially referred to as twists of fate, can make them waver.

Their state of mind is similar to a person in good health and with a strong body: they are self-reliant at all times. (See Note [19.2](#)) They need not depend on external forces. They look to results from kamma: from deliberate effort in line with causes and conditions. They have developed wisdom, clearly understanding the principle of solving problems according to the Four Noble Truths, and they steadfastly follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

Such people are said to have entered the stream of bringing suffering to an end; they have been trained and go in the direction of true liberation. They become members of the community of the noble ones, having

## NOTE 19.2: SELF RELIANCE

Admittedly, according to the Buddhist way of practice, until a person is a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), it is extremely difficult for him or her to be mentally self-reliant at all times. Therefore, the Buddha encouraged people who still depend on sacred and divine forces, and on fate or fortune, to change course and steer towards the truth, by using new methods for solving problems.

Instead of performing ceremonies to avert catastrophe or remove bad luck, or of praying to some external power, the Buddha had people find release in a new way, through acts of wholesome self-surrender and self-sacrifice, for example by acts of public charity and by dedicating one's time and effort to promote the public good.

Even fortune tellers who have faith in Buddhism advise people to improve their fortunes by offering gifts, making merit, keeping moral precepts, and observing the *uposatha* day precepts. Sometimes they recognize that the devas – especially those in Thailand – who are being petitioned and prayed to, have been devoted to Buddhism (most of them are Buddhists ever since they lived as human beings). These devas are delighted to see people do wholesome and beneficial actions, instead of worthless, foolish ones.

reached the first stage of noble beings. Such persons are called stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*).

On the contrary, the minds of those people who are still captivated – who spin around in the deluge of worldly currents, who are shaken by the winds of fortune, whose faith is still unsteady, and whose self-confidence is not grounded in the merits of the Triple Gem – resemble a person who is physically sick and ailing: they are not able to help themselves and must constantly rely on others.

They feel strong when life is calm, but once a tempest sets in they cannot support themselves. They then choose between enduring the mental anguish or else seek out some form of intense pleasure like indulging in an intoxicating substance. Alternatively, they rely on sacred objects, seek help from divine powers, or expect results from auspicious ceremonies or from fate, in order to escape their suffering or to derive some comfort and reassurance. They do not know the correct escape from suffering and they do not possess the wisdom which perceives things as they really are; they are unable to transcend the worldly currents.

When they conduct their lives, they fall into one extreme or another: if they don't veer towards the extreme of sensual indulgence and infatuation, they naively follow an oppressively austere way of life; they do not walk straight on the Middle Way.

In Pali the name for such a person is *puthujjana*: an unawakened person. And if someone is devoid of wholesome qualities, is truly blind, is unable to distinguish between good and evil, lives simply by responding to craving, does not reflect on his actions, and is prepared to exploit others for selfish gain, he is referred to as a 'blind and foolish worldling' (*andhabāla-puthujjana*). {866}

If, however, a person recognizes wholesome qualities, hears the subtle call of the noble ones, begins to live a virtuous life, maintains moral standards consisting of the ten wholesome courses of action (*kusala-kammaṇṇa*), or at least keeps the essential five precepts, he or she is referred to as a 'virtuous, unawakened person' (*kalyāṇa-puthujjana*) or 'one who has heard the teachings of the noble ones' (*sutavanta-ariyasāvaka*). This person is ready to commence the noble path.

The practice for eliminating the causes of suffering is called the Path, because it resembles a road leading to the goal, and although this Path is a single track, it consists of eight factors. In order to reach the goal these eight factors must be mutually supportive and balanced; they must act in unison.

To practise correctly and walk unerringly towards the goal relies on wisdom, which discerns things accurately and acts both to reveal and to guide. For this reason the first factor of the Path is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

Because the Path is balanced and leads straight to the goal, it is referred to as the Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*). It does not deviate towards the two extremes: those persons walking this Path are neither obsessed with seeking things for personal gratification – infatuated with sensuality – nor do they err in the opposite direction, by undertaking severe austerities and deliberately increasing suffering, due to disillusionment or self-hatred.

For practice in line with the Path to commence and develop effectively, it relies on two causes or supports, which are referred to as the conditions for right view.

First, is the external or social factor of having good instruction by others (*paratoghosa*): wholesome opinions, encouragement, and influence by others. In particular this refers to ‘virtuous friends’ (*kalyāṇamitta*) – for instance parents, teachers, monks, and honourable people who have achieved success through honest means – who have attributes worthy of emulation and respect, both those who live nearby and those who live far away. These individuals are able to teach, offer advice, and inspire people to develop an enthusiasm for goodness. By using faith and devotion as a medium they foster correct understanding in people. Moreover, they urge and guide people to reflect on things according to the truth independently of others.

The second is the internal factor of wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*): to be able to think and reflect skilfully, effectively, and methodically; to analyze things in conformity with how they actually exist and in line with their causes and conditions.

When these two factors exist to summon and support right view, one can expect with confidence that one’s spiritual practice will proceed correctly. Other Path factors will develop along with wisdom for one’s own wellbeing and that of others, and one will advance towards the goal of Buddha-Dhamma.

Firm confidence in the Triple Gem, a knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, and practice in accord with the Middle Way – the Eightfold Path – prevents, or at least mitigates, all kinds of incorrect responses to suffering or inappropriate means to solve problems.

These incorrect responses take many forms: one may be deluded and muddled, resigning oneself to suffering and succumbing to despair and grief; one may use a strategy of evasion and self-deception, trying to forget suffering by immersing oneself ever deeper in sensual pleasures; one may depend on supernatural forces, pray for divine intervention, or resign oneself to fate; one may engage in immoral behaviour; one may

vent frustration outwards by violating and disturbing others; or one may oppress or chastise oneself due to self-loathing and disillusionment. {867}

By walking the Path, supported by correct faith and established in probity, one acts favourably, in a way that is beneficial to oneself and others. One responds to circumstances with fortitude and inner peace. One solves problems with clear awareness, intelligence, and effort, dealing with them in line with causes and conditions.

And even in one's most unsteady moments, when one is not able to help oneself, one knows how to find virtuous friends, who can encourage one's wholesome qualities, and who can give advice to foster an understanding of causality so that one can address problems correctly.

Although the responsibility vis-à-vis the Path is *bhāvanā* – cultivation, development, training, bringing into being, undertaking – defining the Path (*magga*) as 'practice' or 'Dhamma practice' can lead to an overly narrow understanding, or even to a misunderstanding of this term.

In fact, the term *magga* encompasses the entire practical dimension of Buddhism; it is equivalent to the term *cariya-dhamma* ('practical application') or it comprises the entire system of virtuous conduct. Another synonym for *magga* is the term *brahmacariya*, which is translated as the 'holy life' or 'sublime life'.

The eight factors of the Path can be separated, elaborated on, and given a new shape depending on one's point of emphasis and consonant with the level of spiritual practice being addressed. Examples of this are the ten wholesome ways of conduct (*kusala-kammaṭṭhā*), which are suitable for laypeople and emphasize external actions more than internal matters, and the seven stages of purity (*visuddhi*), which focus on the highest goal of Buddhism and emphasize insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*).

#### **F. CONFIDENCE IN THE TRIPLE GEM LEADS TO THE THREEFOLD TRAINING**

Of all the groups, classifications, or systems of practice that are derived from the eight Path factors, the one that is considered the most basic or all-inclusive, and which is used as a standard for spiritual practice, is the system of the threefold training (*tisso sikkhā*).



The threefold training is derived from the Path, and in essence they are the same. The Path is a system for living a virtuous life; one can say that it is equivalent to the essence of a virtuous life. The threefold training is a system of study or training for developing people in virtue and for fostering a virtuous life.

These two teachings are connected, because spiritual training and discipline gives rise to a virtuous life. When one practises according to the threefold training, the Path arises; when people develop themselves by the threefold training, their lives are in harmony with the Path. In other words, one practises the threefold training in order to give rise to the Path.

The gist of these two teachings is the same; by practising one, the other prospers. Spiritual training, which is identical to spiritual development, is an integral part of living a virtuous life; a virtuous life springs from spiritual training.

When one has gained confidence in the Triple Gem, possessing faith corresponding to right view, and one is no longer caught up in a reliance on external conditions, the mind is intent on studying the principle of bringing suffering to cessation by way of insight into causes and conditions outlined in the Four Noble Truths. One then undertakes the practice of the Eightfold Path, which is equivalent to undertaking the threefold training. {868}

Faith in the Triple Gem assists in progressing in the threefold training. One then develops the factors of the Path until one reaches the goal.

The threefold training is comprised of the training in higher morality (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), the training in higher mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*). For simplicity and convenience, these factors are normally referred to as moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Training in higher morality: virtuous physical actions, speech, and livelihood, i.e. to develop the Path factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood. In essence, this refers to behaving well in relation

to society, honouring a moral code, and fulfilling one's social responsibilities. One relates to society in a beneficial way and safeguards one's environment – especially the social environment – so that it is conducive for every person to live a virtuous life and practise according to the Path. (See Note [19.3](#))

*Sīla* is the most basic form of training. It has a very wide range of application and can be separated into many levels, encompassing all outward behaviour, all acts of restraint in relation to other people, and all relationships one maintains to one's environment, both social and natural. The most fundamental level of moral conduct is to refrain from harming other people (including not harming oneself) and from damaging a social environment conducive to virtue and the practice of the Path.

From this stage one can train in forms of moral discipline that foster higher virtues. If possible, one then engages in activities that help other people, creates an environment that prevents evil, and increases the opportunity for people to live and practise in order to generate increasing degrees of goodness.

Training in higher mind: to cultivate the quality and capability of the mind; to develop the Path factors of right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Essentially, this means making the mind strong, steady and stable, maintaining self-restraint, and being concentrated and highly motivated. The mind becomes peaceful, bright, joyous, pure, and free from agitation or defilement. It is in the most optimum state for work, especially for the application of profound wisdom.

Training in higher wisdom: to cultivate wisdom in order to generate an understanding of things as they truly are, culminating in liberation, at which time the mind is perfectly free, bright, and happy; to develop the Path factors of right view and right thought. In essence, this refers to cultivating pure wisdom, which clearly understands the truth. It is not the kind of knowledge or intelligence that is warped, impaired, stained, deceived, or confused by the power of defilements, most notably ignorance and craving.

## NOTE 19.3: MORALITY AS PROPER RELATIONSHIPS

It is very unfortunate that people tend to view morality (*sīla*) as something exclusively negative – as a set of prohibitions or as a form of restraint, for example by refraining from transgressing the five precepts.

People do not see the wider meaning of this term as described in the scriptures. For example, in reference to the monastic sangha, *sīla* encompasses the correct relationship between teachers and disciples, as described in the Mahākhandhaka and other sections of the Vinaya Piṭaka.

In reference to the laity, *sīla* includes the proper relationship between parents and children, husbands and wives, friends with friends, etc, and includes the bases of social solidarity (*saṅgha-vatthu*) according to the householder's discipline in the Sīṅgālaka Sutta.

As a basis, developing this higher wisdom requires the training in cleansing and brightening the mind. At the same time, however, when pure wisdom arises, the mind becomes decidedly more tranquil, stable, pure, and bright. Most importantly, wisdom leads to liberation. Wisdom also has an overall effect on one's life, in that one relates to things correctly. One applies this pure, unbiased wisdom, which is unimpaired by covert defilements, to solve problems and to act for the true welfare and happiness of oneself and others. {869}

Using the terminology of contemporary scholars or of Western academics, the trainings in higher morality, mind, and wisdom comprise social development, emotional or mental development, and intellectual development, respectively. These definitions differ only in the range of application, although it should be stated here that the objective of the threefold training is specific to the context of Buddha-Dhamma.

These definitions are basically consistent in that it is necessary to train people to be disciplined (including to have a sense of social responsibility and to have a positive relationship to society), to cultivate their state of mind (to empower and refine the mind), and to develop awakened intelligence and wisdom – *buddhi-paññā* – beginning with the ability to reason.

Modern theories of human development agree that these three levels of training are interrelated and mutually supportive, confirming for instance that reasoned intelligence assists the development of one's overall state of mind, strengthens one's sense of discipline, and increases a sense of social responsibility. These three trainings, or the three forms of human development, must therefore be practised in unison. (See Note 19.4)

Note that the Buddhist teaching on the four kinds of development (*bhāvanā*) contains the extra factor of physical development (*kāya-bhāvanā*).<sup>16</sup> The term 'physical development' in this context, however, differs from how it is used in modern parlance. In Buddhism, this term refers to developing one's relationship to one's environment by way of one's physical body, giving rise to favourable results. It does not refer to actually developing or improving the body. Moreover, this concept is used to evaluate people's spiritual progress. In the context of practical application, physical development is classified as part of the training in higher morality (*adhisīla-sikkhā*).

In sum, the threefold training is a gradual system whereby one focuses first on external, coarse, and relatively easy factors, and then turns one's attention to internal, refined, and difficult or profound qualities.

The beginning stages of training require at least a small trace or seed of correct understanding, which is referred to as right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), enough to know where to commence and where one is heading, and to recognize the Path. The basic meaning of right view is to understand the nature of one's problems and to discern phenomena in accord with truth.

The common, external training on the level of moral conduct acts as a basis for refined, internal practice, preparing people for effective training on the levels of the mind and wisdom.

And conversely, when one has trained at these refined levels, the fruits of this practice help a person's life in the external world, e.g.: honest,

<sup>16</sup>When describing the qualities of an individual (e.g. 'one developed in body') the term *bhāvita* is used.

## NOTE 19.4: PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Note that physical development in the context of Buddhist training is not described as a separate factor, for it is assigned to the stage of moral conduct (*sīla*). A Buddhist way of life is not in conflict with or alienated from nature, but is rather in a healthy, harmonious relationship to it. Furthermore, in the principle of morality consisting in restraint of the senses (*indriyasamvara-sīla*) the Buddha emphasizes the link between the body and one's external environment; moreover, he emphasizes the connection between a person's inner or spiritual life and his or her consumption of material things, as described in the teaching on virtue called conduct related to the four requisites (*paccayasannissita-sīla*), the teaching on consuming things in moderation (*bhojane-mattaññutā*), and the teachings on favourable conditions (*sappāya*).

Buddhism does not separate the development of the body from general virtuous conduct, because on its own developing a strong and healthy body does not comprise an essential training. Moreover, physical training usually inclines towards providing craving with a means for pursuing and indulging in sense pleasures, which is an opposite pursuit to spiritual training. Although physical development is not specified in the Three Trainings, it is part of the Four Cultivations (*bhāvanā*): cf.: A. III. 105-6.

upright behaviour becomes more stable; virtuous conduct becomes automatic and natural – one need not force oneself to keep moral principles; and one reflects on and addresses problems with pure wisdom.

As described earlier, when one fulfils the threefold training, one's entire way of life is consistent with the Path, and all the factors – both those focusing on external things and those focusing on spiritual qualities – function in harmony. {870}

## 19.7 BUDDHIST WAY OF SOLVING PROBLEMS

Some people understand that Buddhism teaches that every kind of problem, including economic and social problems, should be solved exclusively in the mind. They claim that such an attempt to solve problems is unlikely to be adequate or truly effective.

To address this claim, one should focus on two separate issues: key Buddhist principles for solving problems and those teachings on problem-solving which are given emphasis or prominence.

Key principles: there are two important attributes to the Buddhist way of solving problems: to solve problems at their source and to solve problems through human ingenuity. Combining these, people are encouraged to solve problems by themselves, by dealing directly with the causes and conditions for these problems.

Dealing directly with the causes and conditions is non-specific; it refers to both internal and external causes. In light of personal responsibility, the Buddha encouraged people to first focus on themselves when encountering a problem. They should not focus on external causes or solutions, by say focusing on celestial forces or on fate. Rather than depend on praying to a higher power or marking time waiting for destiny, people should actively engage with the causes and conditions lying behind their difficulties.

Prominent teachings: Buddhism teaches to solve both internal and external problems, both social and spiritual problems. The teachings on the level of moral conduct address external matters, while those on the levels of mental development and wisdom address internal matters.

According to the main emphasis of the teachings, or the amount of subject material in the scriptures, it is evident that more attention is given to addressing internal or spiritual problems than to external or social problems.

This is normal and appropriate for the following reasons:

#### **A. THE CONSTANCY OF HUMAN NATURE**

For the most part, internal or spiritual problems are matters connected to human nature. In other words, the basic features of mental problems are identical for people in every place and at every time period. Regardless of different cultures and different eras, the nature of the human mind remains the same. Human beings universally possess greed, hatred, and delusion; moreover, they cherish happiness and are averse to suffering.

In terms of external or social problems, some aspects of these are tied up with human nature – as long as one is human certain kinds of social problems are inevitable. Many kinds of social problems, however, are dependent on environmental factors, the details of which vary greatly according to time and place.

It is for this reason that the Buddha primarily taught about solving internal, spiritual problems. As for teachings on moral conduct – on solving external problems – the Buddha taught general principles that are linked to human nature, e.g.: to abstain from verbally or physically injuring others, and to abstain from violating others' possessions or cherished objects; and to offer mutual assistance and support. Further details of these problems are dependent on various environmental, regional, and temporal factors. It is up to people who understand the general principles of solving problems to then establish moral codes and methods for addressing specific situations, according to attendant causes and conditions. In these cases, is not a matter of laying down fixed rules applicable to all people. {871}

An example of addressing specific circumstances is the Buddha's express system of dealing with social issues in the context of the bhikkhu sangha, which he had established himself. The Buddha laid down the monastic discipline (Vinaya), which is an intricate system of attending to social issues, consistent with the unique aims of the monastic community and suitable for its stability amidst the surrounding conditions at that time.

Contemporary Buddhist scholars tend to overlook the Vinaya. If one comprehends the gist of the Vinaya, however, one will understand the Buddhist notion of attending to social issues. Indeed, if one does not study the Vinaya Piṭaka (especially the subject material distinct from the Pāṭimokkha), it is not possible to properly understand the Buddhist outlook on society.

It is unreasonable to expect the Buddha to have established a comprehensive code of conduct for the general public, disregarding the fluctuations and changes that occur according to time and place. Those people who understand the essential Buddhist teachings on outward conduct are

able to establish a system by themselves for dealing with their particular social questions and problems.

For example, when King Asoka wished to consolidate the Dhammavinaya in his empire, he did not need to meddle with the Buddhist teachings on internal, spiritual matters; he simply propagated the true teachings on these matters in a way suitable to that time period. In relation to external, social matters, however, he drew upon general Buddhist principles and then set down new standards and customs of rulership and enterprise that were effective and appropriate for his time.

Similarly, in Thailand, in relation to traditions of royal governance, general Buddhist teachings on the responsibilities of the monarchy have been determined as the essential principles, and their meaning interpreted to suit the contemporary era. Examples for such teachings include the ten royal virtues (*rāja-dhamma*), the twelve duties of a great ruler (*cakkavattivatta*), the four royal acts of service (*rāja-saṅgahavatthu*), and the five strengths (*bala*) of a king. Likewise, systems of government administration have been formed and established appropriate to the specific time and place.

## **B. PRIORITIZATION AND UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING**

The solving of external, social problems is generally seen as a priority by academics and by various scholarly institutions. On the contrary, spiritual matters and the development of human wisdom gets relatively little attention by scholars, who often do not appreciate its significance.

Buddhism considers spiritual matters to be of vital importance. The more these matters are neglected by general scholarly circles, the more attention they deserve. Moreover, Buddhism offers a unique insight into these matters.

## **C. PROFUNDITY, COMPLEXITY, AND TRUE IMPORTANCE**

Spiritual matters are profound, refined, and much more difficult to comprehend than external problems. In comparison to social issues, it may take ten times longer to explain spiritual matters, which need to be



repeatedly underscored. For this reason it is normal that the scriptures contain more teachings on spiritual matters.

Furthermore, the Buddha considered spiritual wellbeing to be the true purpose of human life. Having been born as a human being, one should try and reach this state of wellbeing and not live one's life in vain. People generally do not recognize the importance and subtleties of spirituality and thus its details need to be reiterated and emphasized. {872}

Moreover, people are already keenly engaged in seeking external or material wellbeing; even if one does not stress this form of wellbeing, it will still be sought after.

#### **D. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ALL FACETS OF LIFE**

All human problems, both internal and external, have an impact on each other, and when solving these problems all areas of a person's life must be taken into account and be in tune with one another.

An understanding of this is especially valuable when one recognizes that a person's spiritual life is of chief and fundamental importance and plays a crucial role in solving external problems. If the mind is infatuated with something, for example, one does not see associated problems accurately. When thinking is dominated by ignorance and craving, or when it is distorted by conceit and fixed opinions, one is unable to reflect on problems correctly. Besides solving problems in a wrong manner, one may intensify them or create new problems.

For this reason, cleansing the mind and purifying wisdom – clearing up distortion and prejudice – is necessary for solving all kinds of problems, internal and external, irrespective of time and place.

If people are unable to address internal, spiritual problems, they will be unable to effectively solve external, social problems. But if they can resolve fundamental spiritual problems, the task of dealing with external problems will be greatly simplified. Their skill and readiness to address all kinds of problems will be enhanced.

### **E. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CONDUCTING ONE'S LIFE**

Buddhism recognizes that human society consists of people at different stages of spiritual development. Moreover, it recognizes distinctions in how people live, for example the difference between the lay community and the monastic sangha, which provides an opportunity for certain individuals to voluntarily live a unique way of life.

The life of a layperson emphasizes social relationships and earning a livelihood; the monastic life emphasizes spiritual practice. Although the Vinaya provides methods for addressing social issues, the monastic life gives relatively more emphasis to a person's internal life. For this reason, it would be inappropriate to use the teachings addressed to monks as a measuring stick for the universal Buddhist outlook on dealing with problems.

### **F. THE NATURE OF ALL SENTIENT BEINGS**

One tenet of Buddhism is that human beings rely on spiritual cultivation. At any one time, it is natural that different individuals are at varying levels of development, in terms of physical development, interpersonal development, mental development, and wisdom development. Different people thus have different needs, both in terms of material needs and spiritual needs; they also have different requirements in relation to happiness.

It is important that one acknowledges the differences between people and recognizes how people exist at varying stages of spiritual development. It is unrealistic and unhelpful to expect people to all be the same.

Individuals in positions of leadership and responsibility should see to the material, social, and intellectual needs of people in their communities, in a way that is fair and just. In this way, all individuals, who are naturally at different stages of development, will abide in peace and happiness. {873}

And vitally, one needs to satisfy the shared need of all human beings – of the need for spiritual development. One needs to establish social frameworks, even on a global scale, that are conducive and favourable to the spiritual development of all people, so that they have the opportunity

to realize the highest goals of the spiritual life, even to the point of cultivating perfect wisdom.

If one fulfils these requirements, one is in harmony with the principles of Buddhism.

### **SUMMARY**

In sum, Buddhism teaches people to solve problems by themselves, by dealing directly with their causes and conditions. And this injunction is non-specific: it covers both internal and external problems, according to the circumstances.

Generally speaking, the formal study of the arts and sciences and other academic pursuits focus solely on solving external problems; they almost completely neglect spiritual matters, which results in incomplete or defective solutions for human dilemmas.

One can say that the Buddhist way of solving problems does not exclusively deal with either internal or external matters, but that it begins its focus inwardly and then moves outward. One must solve all problems – both internal and external – and solve them at their root causes.

### **19.8 OUTSTANDING BENEFITS OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

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Besides incorporating the entire spectrum of Buddhist teachings, both theoretical and practical, the teaching of the Four Noble Truths provides many other benefits, which can be summarized as follows:

- It is a way of wisdom; it promotes the solving of problems according to a systematic and reasoned procedure; it is a classic model: any effective, rational, and practical method for solving problems must proceed consistent with the Four Noble Truths.
- It is a method for people to solve problems and manage their life by way of their own wisdom, by applying and benefiting from truths inherent in nature. One need not depend on divine, sacred or supernatural powers.

- They are truths relevant to everyone; no matter how broadly or extensively people engage with things, if they wish to have dignity and to relate to things effectively, they need to embrace and benefit from these truths.
- They are universal, timeless truths directly connected to human life; no matter what forms of technical knowledge or enterprises people create in order to solve problems and improve their lives, and no matter to what extent these forms of knowledge and activities prosper, decline, pass away, or are replaced by newer forms, the Four Noble Truths endure, are up-to-date, and can be applied to benefit one's life at all times. {874}

### 19.9 DISTILLING BUDDHADHAMMA INTO THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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Although it may appear that in many aspects the content and structure of *Buddhadhamma* differs from other scriptures and texts, in fact it accords with the original system of the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha; it does not diverge in any way. The chapters and sections of *Buddhadhamma* can be classified in accord with the Four Noble Truths, as follows:<sup>17</sup>

Part I: Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*)

*Dukkha*

Section I: Nature of Human Life

Chapter 1: Five Aggregates

Chapter 2: Six Sense Spheres

Section II: Attributes of Life

Chapter 3: Three Characteristics

<sup>17</sup>On the order of chapters in the Thai edition see Appendix 2.

*Samudaya*

## Section III: Process of Life

Chapter 4: Dependent Origination

Chapter 5: Kamma

*Nirodha*

## Section IV: Goal of Life

Chapter 6: Nibbāna: the Supreme Peace

Chapter 7: Awakened Beings

Chapter 8: Calm and Insight

*Supplementary Material:*Section V: A Noble Life (*ariyadhamma-vīthi*)

Chapter 9: The Supernatural and the Divine

Chapter 10: Buddhist Teachings on Desire

Chapter 11: Happiness

Part II: Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*)*Magga*

## Section VI: A Worthy Life

Chapter 12: Introduction to the Middle Way

Chapter 13: Virtuous Friendship

Chapter 14: Faith and Confidence

Chapter 15: Wise Reflection

Chapter 16: Path Factors of Wisdom

Chapter 17: Path Factors of Virtuous Conduct

Chapter 18: Path Factors of Concentration

Chapter 19: Conclusion: Four Noble Truths {875}

Some of the material in *Buddhadhamma* may seem unusual, especially passages explaining unfamiliar terms like external instruction (*paratoghosa*), virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), and wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), or explanations of unique and unfamiliar aspects of common teachings, which are generally not found in other Dhamma books.

These special terms and aspects, however, are frequently mentioned in the Tipiṭaka; it simply happens that in some time periods Buddhist scholars and teachers have no need or reason to emphasize them, and they therefore become less conspicuous.

The reason this subject material has been included in this book is because now seems to be the right time to give special, renewed importance to these terms and meanings.

On the other hand, some people may remark that other teachings that I have emphasized and elaborated on in the past have not been given prominence in this text.

Whatever the case may be, the author of this book is confident that the proportion of subject material in relation to special terms and aspects is close to the proportion contained in the Pali Canon, which is the original source of the principal Buddhist teachings.

#### 19.10 APPENDIX 1:

#### OBSERVATIONS ON THE STUDY OF BUDDHA-DHAMMA

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##### **A. MIDDLE TEACHING (MAJJHENA-DHAMMADESANĀ): THE DYNAMICS OF NATURE**

According to Buddha-Dhamma, regardless of whether a Buddha appears in the world or not, the truth exists in an objective way, following its own nature. The Buddha simply discovered this truth and revealed it to others. The gist of this truth is that things exist according to a natural causal process – a dynamic of causes and conditions.

Those people who discern things as they truly are, rather than according to how they want them to be, gain insight into this objective truth. From this insight they derive a comprehensive understanding of truth and a broad vision of phenomena. They arrive at true liberation, freed both in regard to the mind – the mind is freed from suffering and from oppressive defilements, and is marked by peace and joy – and in regard to wisdom – they are liberated by way of thorough knowledge, gaining insight into pure, unadulterated truth. They are devoid of obstructive,

distorting mental defilements, attaining an awakened, immediate understanding of truth. Their understanding is firsthand; it need not be relayed through someone else.

This natural causal process manifests in many forms, as is outlined in the various laws of nature, e.g.: physical laws (*utu-niyāma*), the law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*), and general laws of nature (*dhamma-niyāma*):

#### **A. Mode of Physical Conditionality; Dynamics of the Natural Environment**

Examples:

- The summit of Mount Kailash is very high → the air is very cold → it snows throughout the year.
- Mr. Harvey gets stuck in the snow for a long time → blood flow is reduced due to the cold temperatures → inadequate blood reaches his fingers and toes → his fingers and toes ache and become numb → he suffers frostbite → he is crippled.

#### **B. Mode of Karmic Conditionality on the Level of the Mind**

Examples:

A Clock Strikes 10am

- Mr. Adams (a prisoner, whose time of execution has arrived) hears it → he experiences fear → he is weak in the knees and unable to stand.
- Mr. Barrington (a relative of the person killed by Mr. Adams) hears it → his thirst for revenge is slaked → he shouts with joy.
- Mr. Chadwick (another relative of the deceased) hears it → he is angry but he reflects on human actions and their results (*kamma-vipāka*), and thus feels sadness → he is reserved and quiet.
- Mr. Dmitry (another prisoner about to be executed) hears it → he was previously afraid, but he considers the just deserts of his actions → he walks peacefully alongside the prison guard.

### C. Mode of Karmic Conditionality on the Level of the Individual

Example:

- Mr. Evans swears at Mr. Fisher → Mr. Fisher whacks Mr. Evans over the head with a stick → Mr. Evans suffers a head wound → Mr. Evans takes a gun and shoots Mr. Fisher → Mr. Fisher is critically wounded, etc.

### D. Mode of Karmic Conditionality on the Level of Society

Example:

- People harvest food that has grown naturally in nature → some individuals hoard up this food → others follow their example → people stake out personal property → people steal from others → mutual accusations and violence → people recognize the need for social governance → a leader is elected → the origin of a king, etc. (this outline follows the content in the *Aggañña Sutta*). {877}

Mode B (karmic conditionality on the level of the mind) has unique characteristics. If one only looks at the external phenomena, without referring to the qualities in the minds of these individuals, one is unable to explain the relationship between the cause and effect, i.e. the connection between hearing the bell from the clock and the consequent behaviour. If the conditions in the mind do not exist, the external behaviour does not arise.

In modes C and D the factors within an individual are also very important, but they are concealed or less conspicuous, and tend to be overlooked. For instance, some people in such circumstances only notice the material or economic factors. Here, mode B has been placed aside these other modes in order to demonstrate the importance of internal factors, which play a participatory role, either in a supportive or a conflicting way, in these natural causal processes.

Mode B is a constant and unavoidable dynamic in people's lives. It is initiated and its results are experienced exclusively by an individual. It is



a vital and urgent matter, which every person should come to grips with and gain mastery over within this lifetime, even if they are simultaneously trying to cope with other dynamics inherent in nature.

#### **B. MIDDLE PATH (MAJJHIMĀ-PAṬIPADĀ): METHODS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

The Middle Path, or Middle Way, refers to a way of living one's life with wisdom. Here, one applies one's understanding of the objective truth outlined in the Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*). Devoid of such understanding, one falls under the power of unhealthy desire, fosters vague ideas about how things should be, and entrusts one's happiness to craving.

At the beginning of one's practice, before one has fully realized this truth, one relies on faith and on those beliefs that are in concord with the principle of causality. One is responsible for acting with reasoned discernment, and one seeks success through one's own volitional actions (this is the stage of mundane right view – *lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*).

On a higher level, when one has fully realized this truth, attained liberation, and been freed from suffering and from the affliction by mental defilements, one abides with a complete and thorough insight into the nature of causality (this is the level of transcendent right view – *lokuttara-sammādiṭṭhi*). Here, one follows the Buddhist way of life (*buddhacariya-dhamma*). One lives the supreme life (*brahmacariya*) and abides in harmony with Buddha-Dhamma. One walks the noble path (*ariya-magga*): the noble way of the awakened ones, of solving life's dilemmas.

There is an important distinction between awakened and unawakened individuals. The regular disposition of awakened beings is one of happiness and a freedom from suffering. Alternatively, one may say that awakened beings are released from suffering and have transcended happiness. Unawakened beings, on the other hand, must constantly pursue happiness, because they possess a shortage of it or they are assailed by suffering.

The Path leading to the end of suffering is comprised of eight factors. These factors are presented as a threefold process of training and spiritual development:

- *Sīla*: training in behaviour that fosters a virtuous society, which is supportive of a good quality of life for people and conducive to mind and wisdom development. Here, one establishes a moral code, cultivates rectitude of body and speech, and engages in right livelihood.
- *Samādhi*: based on such a virtuous and conducive society, environment, and lifestyle, one develops mental refinement, strength, capability, and health.
- *Paññā*: by way of such a favourable state of mind, one is able to cultivate wisdom, giving rise to a comprehensive understanding of cause and effect. One's actions are guided by this understanding until one reaches direct insight and liberation, abiding in constant ease and joy.

This training and development relies on two supportive factors:

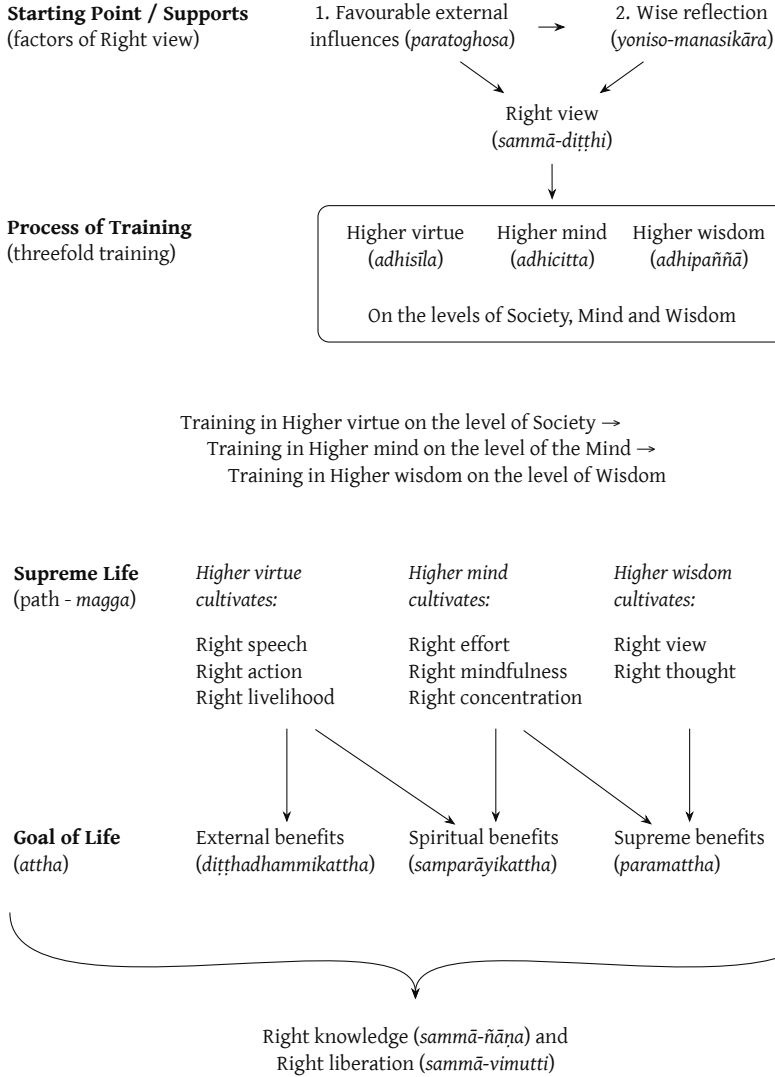
- *Paratoghosa*: external factors linked to faith; favourable environmental influences, in particular virtuous friends (*kalyāṇamitta*).
- *Yoniso-manasikāra*: internal factors linked to wisdom; skilled reflection; wise reflection. {878}

These various factors may be outlined as illustrated on Figure 19.1.

‘Old kamma’ is defined as the six senses – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – which act as the principal agents to start with on the spiritual path.<sup>18</sup> From this point, spiritual training relies on external influences and instruction (*paratoghosa*), which may be summed up by

<sup>18</sup>S. IV. 132-3.

Figure 19.1: Training and Development



the saying: ‘people are shaped and moulded by their environment’, and on wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which may be summed up by the saying: ‘If one is skilled at reflection, one may achieve arahantship even by listening to the words of drunks and madmen.’

When one applies the method of detailed analysis (*vibhajja-vidhi*), those ethical quandaries that are difficult to solve, for instance: ‘Is it moral or

immoral for a child to steal money in order to buy medicine for his sick mother?’ become clear and are no longer a cause for doubt and confusion.

External influence on its own is insufficient for realizing the truth (*sacca-dhamma*); wise reflection is the decisive factor.

The two levels of right view reveal the range of human mental activity, which can be separated into two domains:

1. Wisdom (*paññā*)/insight (*ñāṇa*)/true knowledge (*vijjā*), whereby ignorance (*avijjā*) is severed: this is equivalent to transcendent right view (*lokuttara-sammādiṭṭhi*), and pertains to knowledge, truth, science, the principle of life, and natural laws.
2. Faith (*saddhā*)/wholesome desire (*chanda*)/compassion (*karuṇā*), whereby craving (*taṇhā*) is severed: this is equivalent to mundane right view (*lokiya-sammādiṭṭhi*), and pertains to values, morality, practical arts, human behaviour, individuality, and society.

Note that from a broad perspective the meaning of the term ‘Buddha-Dhamma’ is restricted and does not encompass the entirety of Buddhism. The original term with an all-embracing meaning is ‘Dhammavinaya’.

This volume discusses the Dhamma at length and is thus aptly titled *Buddhadhamma*, but it only briefly discusses the Vinaya. Perhaps there ought to be a companion volume to this text titled *Ariya-Vinaya*.<sup>19</sup>

1. *Dhamma*: teachings on truth and virtue, pertaining to essential truths and principles, to matters discovered and revealed by the Buddha. They emphasize the internal, spiritual life of an individual. (They aim to solve and prevent personal problems and to foster internal growth.)
2. *Vinaya*: codes of conduct and the establishment of such codes. The term *vinaya* pertains to social systems and conventions, ways of

<sup>19</sup>Trans. the author includes an extensive outline and analysis of this ‘noble discipline’ (*ariya-vinaya*) in the book ‘The Buddhist Discipline in Relation to Bhikkhunis’, translated by Robin Moore © 2015.

practice according with the aforementioned principles, disciplinary precepts, and the laying down of laws. A *vinaya* is an instrument for establishing a code of living or a social system that accords with the objectives of the Dhamma. One draws upon the essential principles of the Dhamma to set down a system of practice providing truly effective results amidst the truth of the tangible world. A *vinaya* emphasizes external behaviour, everyday life, one's society and environment, communal interrelationship, and one's responsibility to the common good. (It aims to solve and prevent external problems and to foster communal prosperity.)

19.11 APPENDIX 2:  
ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE  
THAI EDITION OF BUDDHADHAMMA

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**Part I:** Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*)

Section I: Nature of Human Life

Chapter 1: Five Aggregates

Chapter 2: Six Sense Spheres

Section II: Attributes of Life

Chapter 3: Three Characteristics

Section III: Process of Life

Chapter 4: Dependent Origination

Chapter 5: Kamma

Section IV: Goal of Life

Chapter 6: *Vijjā, Vimutti, Visuddhi, Santi, Nibbāna*<sup>20</sup>

Chapter 7: Types and Levels of Nibbāna and Awakened Beings<sup>21</sup>

Chapter 8: Auxiliary Material:

*Samatha-Vipassanā, Cetovimutti-Pannāvimutti*<sup>22</sup>

Chapter 9: Essential Principles of Realizing Nibbāna<sup>23</sup>

Chapter 10: Summary of Nibbāna<sup>24</sup>

**Part II:** Middle Way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*)

Section V: A Worthy Life

Chapter 11: Introduction to the Middle Way

Chapter 12: Forerunner to the Middle Way #1:

Virtuous Friendship<sup>25</sup>

Chapter 13: Forerunner to the Middle Way #2:

Wise Reflection

<sup>20</sup>This material is included in chapter 6 of the English edition.

<sup>21</sup>This material is included in chapters 6 and 7 of the English edition.

<sup>22</sup>This material is included in chapter 8 of the English edition.

<sup>23</sup>This material is included in chapters 7 and 8 of the English edition.

<sup>24</sup>This material is included in chapter 6 of the English edition.

<sup>25</sup>Note that chapter 14 in the English edition on faith is an extract from this chapter.

- Chapter 14: Path Factors of Wisdom
- Chapter 15: Path Factors of Virtuous Conduct
- Chapter 16: Path Factors of Concentration
- Chapter 17: Conclusion: Four Noble Truths

**Part III:** Methods for Realizing the Truth of the Noble Ones or Way of Life  
of Those Endowed with Noble Qualities (*ariyadhamma-vīthi*)

Section VI: A Noble Life

- Chapter 18: auxiliary chapter #1:  
Essential Conduct and Virtues of Noble Beings<sup>26</sup>
- Chapter 19: auxiliary chapter #2:  
Social Objectives of Moral Conduct<sup>27</sup>
- Chapter 20: auxiliary chapter #3:  
The Supernatural and the Divine
- Chapter 21: auxiliary chapter #4:  
The Buddhist Teachings on Desire
- Chapter 22: auxiliary chapter #5:  
Happiness: Doctrinal Analysis<sup>28</sup>
- Chapter 23: auxiliary chapter #6:  
Happiness: Practical Analysis

<sup>26</sup>This material is included in chapter 7 of the English edition.

<sup>27</sup>This material is included in chapter 17 of the English edition.

<sup>28</sup>Note that these two chapters on happiness have been combined into a single chapter in the English edition.



Wat Sri Chum in Sukhothai historical park, Sukhothai province, Thailand.



## Special Appendix: Citta, Viññāṇa, Mano

Translator: during the time that we were looking through the mock-up and making final corrections/amendments to the *Buddhadhamma* text in preparation for publication, Venerable Phra Payutto (Tahn Chao Khun Brahmagunbhorn) sent me an email with the following concise question: ‘In the body of the [original Thai] text is there anything that you feel is inadequately clear or coherent?’ My reply was that there is only one subject that I feel is not thoroughly enough explained, especially for English readers, namely the precise definitions for the Pali words *citta*, *viññāṇa*, and *mano*, including the relationship between these terms, along with some associated terminology, e.g. *viññāṇa-dhātu* (‘element of consciousness’).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, I had already brought this matter up with the author several years ago. My fear has been that these terms may be misunderstood by students of Buddhism, and this misunderstanding consequently may lead to distortions of the teachings. As a result of my reply, the venerable author kindly and diligently put together the following material so that it could be included in this first publication of the English translation of *Buddhadhamma*. Normally, it would be placed as an appendix to chapter 1, but this would have meant completely re-doing the page numbers for the index – a daunting task. It seems sufficient to add it here as an appendix at the end of the book. Please note that this appendix does not exist in the Thai version.

\* \* \*

<sup>29</sup>For Thai people these terms, especially *citta* (Thai: ‘jit’ – จิต), are everyday, household words, and are thus less likely to cause confusion.

## DEFINITION OF THE TERM CITTA

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The definition of *citta* is closely related to the definition of *mano*, as is evident from the following passage:

The term *mano* refers to *citta*, *mano*, *mānasa*, *hadaya*, *paṇḍara*, *mana*, *manāyatana*, *manindriya*, *viññāṇa*, *viññāṇa-khandha*, and *manoviññāṇa-dhātu* arising from sense contact. This is what is called ‘mind’ (*mano*).

*Manoti yaṃ cittaṃ mano mānasaṃ hadayaṃ paṇḍaraṃ mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakhandho tadjā manoviññāṇadhātu ayaṃ vuccati mano.*<sup>30</sup>

Nd1. 3.

In the commentaries, however, *citta* is normally defined as follows:

The term *citta* is defined thus: it is called ‘*citta*’ because it reflects, meaning that it is fully aware of sense objects.

*Cittanti ārammaṇaṃ cintetīti cittaṃ vijānātīti attho.*

E.g.: DhsA. 63.

Note that the term ‘be fully aware of’ (*vijānāti*) is the verb form of *viññāṇa*.

This commentarial definition need not be given too much importance; it is added here simply as supplementary information.

## DISTINCTION BETWEEN CITTA, VIÑÑĀṆA, AND MANO

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As illustrated above, the meanings of these three terms are basically the same. But in their usage or application there is some variation in their scope of meaning.

<sup>30</sup>This passage is frequently quoted in the Abhidhamma, e.g.: Vbh. 144.

The term *viññāṇa* is generally used in a restricted sense, referring exclusively to the factor of knowing a sense object (*ārammaṇa*). (It does not include the various kinds of feelings, perceptions, thoughts, etc. that arise simultaneously with such sense contact.) For this reason it is normally translated as ‘consciousness’. One can say that it is a purely technical term. *Viññāṇa* refers to the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa-khandha*) within the five aggregates; it does not include feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), which the Abhidhamma collectively refer to as ‘mental concomitants’ (*cetasika*).

The term *citta* is used frequently in the scriptures. It was a common, everyday term, and it is used both in restricted, specific connotations and in a general, comprehensive sense in which it intrinsically encompasses other factors.

The Abhidhamma uses the term *citta* in a restricted sense, corresponding to the term *viññāṇa* of the five aggregates. As mentioned above, the Abhidhamma refers to the remaining three mental aggregates (*nāma-khandha*), i.e. *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *saṅkhāra* – attributes of the *citta* arising concurrently with the *citta* – collectively as *cetasika*.

In everyday language or in colloquial speech, however, it is not necessary to make a distinction, separating this factor as the *citta* and that factor as a specific mental concomitant. Instead, one can speak in a collective sense by using the single word *citta*, which inherently encompasses the mental concomitants. For instance, one can say: ‘Develop the mind (*citta*)’, ‘establish the mind (*citta*) in mindfulness’, etc.

In everyday language, the term *mano* (or *mana*) can be used in a broad, wide-ranging sense, similar to the term *citta*. But when this term is used in a technical or restricted sense, it refers to the sense base (*āyatana*) or sense faculty (*indriya*) that cognizes a mind-object (*dhammārammaṇa*). In this context, the complete terms of *manāyatana* and *manindriya* are most often used. Moreover, in the Abhidhamma there is an explication stating that *mano* or *manāyatana* is equivalent to the ‘constituent consciousness of becoming’ (*bhavaṅga-citta*).

## A CITTA OVER AND ABOVE THE FIVE AGGREGATES

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As described above, *citta* in a strict, narrow sense refers to consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as part of the five aggregates. And in a general, broad sense, in the context of everyday language, *citta* refers to both consciousness and to its associated mental attributes, i.e. feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) – the remaining mental factors of the five aggregates. To the question whether a *citta* exists over and above the five aggregates, one can thus respond succinctly: there exists no *citta* over and above the five aggregates.

The only state or reality (*sabhāva*) transcending the five aggregates is what in Pali is called *khandha-vinimutta*, i.e. Nibbāna.

If, however, one includes things that have no inherent existence, one can say that those things beyond or apart from the five aggregates are the state transcending the five aggregates (*khandha-vinimutta*), i.e. Nibbāna, and concepts or designations (*paññatti*). Because designations are contrived and ultimately do not exist, they are outside of the five aggregates.<sup>31</sup>

The Buddha used the expression: ‘The mind reaches the Unconditioned (*visaṅkhāra*)’ (*visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ*; i.e. the mind reaches Nibbāna). Here one must be careful. People may misinterpret this passage as meaning that the mind (*citta*) accessing or realizing Nibbāna transcends the five aggregates. There is an explication of this passage stating that what is meant here is that the mind does not take hold of a conditioned phenomenon (*saṅkhāra*) as an object of attention; instead it cognizes or experiences Nibbāna. When ‘reaching’ Nibbāna, the nature of the mind is transformed; although this is not ordinary attention, the mind does not transform into or become one with Nibbāna. That is all that is meant by this expression.

<sup>31</sup>Trans.: for more on this subject see Appendix 2 of Chapter 3, on the Three Characteristics.

## VIÑÑĀṆA-DHĀTU AND NIBBĀNA-DHĀTU

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[In response to the translator's comment: 'Some people believe that arahants after death simply dissolve into *viññāṇa-dhātu*: into the great ocean of consciousness']:

This belief stems from misunderstanding the Pali term *dhātu* ('element', 'property', 'natural condition'). In fact, the term *dhātu* does not have any mysterious meaning. Its meaning is akin to the term *sabhāva*, which can be translated as 'state of nature', 'condition of nature', 'truth of nature'. Both of these terms refer to that which exists as an aspect of nature, in line with natural laws. No one is truly able to possess, control, or govern these things. They exist neither as an autonomous being nor as a fixed self (*nissatta-nijjīva*).

Let us examine the eighteen kinds of elements (*dhātu*) mentioned by the Buddha:

There are, Ānanda, these eighteen kinds of elements:

1. the eye element (*cakkhu-dhātu*),
2. the form element (*rūpa-dhātu*),
3. the eye-consciousness element (*cakkhuvīññāṇa-dhātu*),
4. the ear element (*sota-dhātu*),
5. the sound element (*sadda-dhātu*),
6. the ear-consciousness element (*sotaviññāṇa-dhātu*),
7. the nose element (*ghāṇa-dhātu*),
8. the odour element (*gandha-dhātu*),
9. the nose-consciousness element (*ghānaviññāṇa-dhātu*),
10. the tongue element (*jivhā-dhātu*),
11. the flavour element (*rasa-dhātu*),
12. the tongue-consciousness element (*jivhāviññāṇa-dhātu*),
13. the body element (*kāya-dhātu*),

14. the tangible element (*phoṭṭhabba-dhātu*),
15. the body-consciousness element (*kāyaviññāṇa-dhātu*),
16. the mind element (*mano-dhātu*),
17. the mind-object element (*dhamma-dhātu*),
18. the mind-consciousness element (*manoviññāṇa-dhātu*).

In virtue of knowing and seeing these eighteen elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

*Aṭṭhārasa kho imā ānanda dhātuyo cakkhudhātu rūpadhātu cakkhuviññāṇadhātu sotadhātu saddadhātu sotaviññāṇadhātu ghānadhātu gandhadhātu ghānaviññāṇa-dhātu jivhādhātu rasadhātu jivhāviññāṇadhātu kāyadhātu phoṭṭhabba-dhātu kāyaviññāṇadhātu manodhātu dhammadhātu manoviññāṇadhātu imā kho ānanda aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo yato jānāti passati ettāvatāpi kho ānanda dhātukusalo bhikkhūti alaṃ vacanāyāti.*

M. III. 62.

Nibbāna, or the state of nature (*sabhāva*) referred to as Nibbāna, is incorporated in the factor of mind-object elements (*dhamma-dhātu*), the objects of attention focused on by mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*): things known by way of mindconsciousness. This is all that the terms *viññāṇa-dhātu* and *nibbāna-dhātu* amount to.

[In response to the translator's comment: some people believe that *nibbāna-dhātu* can be used as a meditation object, as if this is some essential, transcendent element that even unawakened beings can come into contact with]:

There is nothing really to this: Nibbāna or *nibbāna-dhātu*, which is used as a meditation object, is not referring to genuine Nibbāna itself, but rather to a 'concept of Nibbāna' that people have learned and understood on an intellectual level. It is possible to reflect on this concept of Nibbāna and use it as an object of meditation.

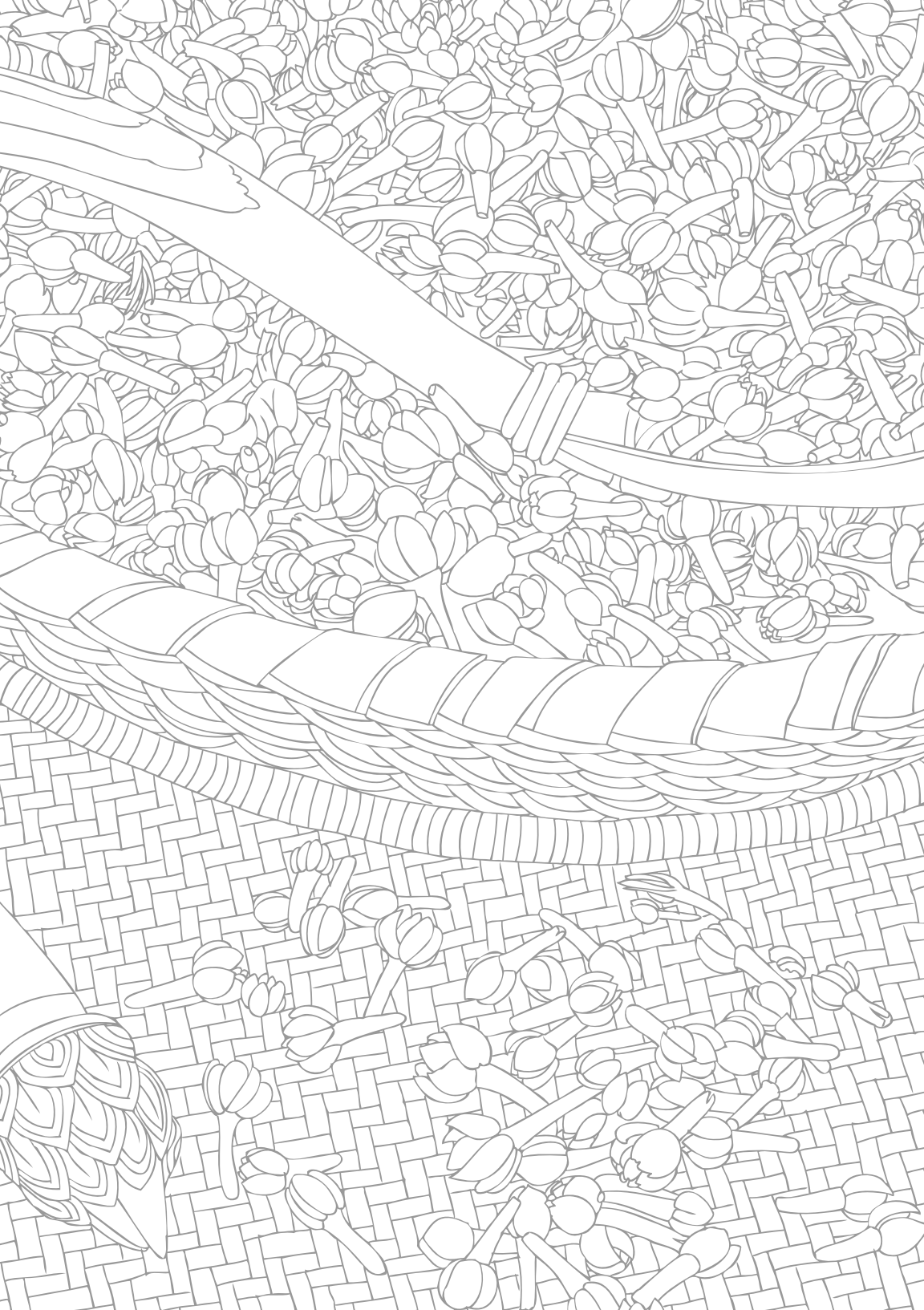
### DISCUSSION OF THE ‘KNOWER’ (PHOO ROO)

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[In response to the translator’s comment: ‘In some traditions the Thai expression ‘phoo roo’ (พู้รู; literally ‘knower’)<sup>32</sup> seems to refer to some kind of mystical state of consciousness or knowledge]:

For the most part, this Thai expression is used as a translation of the Pali term *viññū*. Again, this term does not have any special or extraordinary meaning. It was used in everyday language, referring to a wise person, a learned person, a discreet person, etc.

<sup>32</sup>Trans.: pronounced ‘poo roo’.



Jasmine is a fragrant flower used as an offering of respect to monks or Buddha images



## Author's Postscript

This edition of *Buddhadhamma* is a revised and expanded edition of an abridged version with the same name that was published a decade ago, in 1971, when the author was known as Phra Srivissuddhimoli.

The original version of *Buddhadhamma* was included in a set of volumes titled *Wan Waithayakon*, a collection of academic texts published by The Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project organized by the Social Science Association of Thailand, on the occasion of the 80th birthday of His Royal Highness Prince Vanna Vaidhayakara, the Prince Naradhip Bhongseprabhan, on the 25th August 1971.

The original version of *Buddhadhamma* was published on another two occasions: the monastic community at Wat Plubplachai printed it as a tribute on the occasion of the royal cremation of Phra Silakhandhasobhita (Virach Siridatto) on Saturday 3rd April 1976; and the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education printed it as a tribute on the occasion of the royal cremation of Somdet Phra Vanarat (Sap Ghosaka Mahāthera) of Wat Sangveswitsayaram on 29th November 1987.

This most recent edition of *Buddhadhamma* contains approximately six times more text than the original edition. The original text has been revised and clarified; many passages have been expanded upon while other passages have been newly added. The result is that this edition is almost an entirely new book. In any case, there is much more new text than original text.

A brief background to the publication of the revised and expanded edition of *Buddhadhamma* is as follows: in August 1978 Prof. Rawee Pawilai, on behalf of the Dhamma-Mobilizing Group, contacted the Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities, who held the copyright of the original edition of *Buddhadhamma*, so that he could republish it as a

not-for-profit publication. Prof. Saneh Chamarik, committee chairman of the aforementioned foundation, considerably informed me as the author and asked for my permission.

A little while later, Prof. Rawee Pawilai came to speak with me about this matter. I expressed my appreciation but asked him if he would kindly delay the publication for a short period so that I could use the opportunity to make some revisions to the text. When I first wrote the book I had hurried to meet the deadline; moreover, in the seven years since the first publication I had come up with many new ideas to add to the text. Prof. Rawee Pawilai was graciously obliging even though he had already made preparations, e.g. setting aside the necessary funds, for publishing the book. I estimated that the time required to complete the revisions would take three months.

At that time I had many unfinished book projects. Several months before, I had decided to focus on reviving work on the Buddhist Encyclopaedia, which I had started in 1964. To ensure this book's completion I determined to refuse all speaking and teaching engagements until at least this one book was finished. The revision of *Buddhadhamma* was thus an additional task at the time when I had just finished approximately 190 pages of the Buddhist Encyclopaedia.

In any case, this revision was not completed within the estimated time; indeed this task was drawn out for three years until the present time. Instead of being a supplementary work, it became a primary work. Work on the Buddhist Encyclopaedia was suspended and all of my determinations in regard to that book were transferred to the revision of *Buddhadhamma*. {1144}

This revision which lasted three years instead of three months and became in a sense an entirely new project had several effects and repercussions:

1. Effects on the author: as mentioned above, the principal work on the Buddhist Encyclopaedia was interrupted. This in itself caused no harm, because I had already wanted to continue work on *Buddhadhamma*. It was simply a matter of switching priorities.

2. Effects on the persons wishing to publish the book: the faithful lay-supporters needed to be patient and to wait a long time. They also needed to shoulder the extra burden of finding increased funding, more than they had anticipated for publishing the original version of *Buddhadhamma*. The body of text increased considerably and the cost of publication increased with inflation. I ask forgiveness if this delay caused any hardship or difficulty, and I thank Prof. Rawee Pawilai for his goodwill and willingness to accept these extra burdens.
3. Effects on the book: initially, as a supplementary work, I intended to only make minor necessary revisions to *Buddhadhamma* and had thus estimated a time period of three months. I had not established a formal framework for these revisions. I began simply by making revisions in various places where it seemed appropriate. If some passages seemed too short, I would elaborate on them; if some subjects seemed to be missing I would write new text and insert it in the main text.

As time went by the project continued to expand. Some of the short sections in the original version became very long, while some sections originally considered long became relatively short. Some of the new material was longer than the original material. Some of the added material in later chapters was written before adding material to earlier chapters. Some material which could potentially be expanded upon at length was left unchanged. Chapter 3 on the Three Characteristics was left almost entirely unrevised; this was similarly the case with chapter 4 on Dependent Origination.

Although additions were made dispersed throughout the main text and I had not prepared a new framework for the book before making revisions, a framework was nonetheless preserved. The revisions were all made in the context of a larger comprehensive framework already set down in the original book and held in the author's mind. All the additions were made to fit with this original template.

There may be some minor discrepancies in the text. For instance: some of the chapters may be shorter or longer than the others and thus appear

as lacking symmetry; some subjects may be repeated in different places; and the spellings of some Dhamma terms, although correct, may vary from place to place, thus catching the eye or appearing untidy.

This book is full of source material and scriptural references, which some people will see as excessive. The reason for this is not an attachment to scripture or a clinging to the belief that simply because something is contained in the scriptures it must be invariably true.

Without a doubt, the ancient scriptures, especially the ones written by subsequent generations, contain errors through mistaken or defective recording. Nonetheless, the scriptures are a vital foundation and source of information. Their importance can be measured according to their traditional status and period of origin. (See Note 19.5)

If we acknowledge that personal opinion is important, we cannot deny the importance of the explanations found in the commentarial texts. The compilers and authors of these texts were most likely learned and wise individuals many of whom were representatives of Buddhist scholarly circles in their respective time periods. Moreover, they lived in an era much closer to the Buddha's life than we do. {1145}

Quoting scriptures is a way of acknowledging the importance of that which has value. If the scriptures were compiled by later generations, we show our willingness to listen to the opinions of these authors. For those matters requiring evidence or confirmation, we can often find this evidence in the scriptures, thus ending any further dispute or debate. For those matters in need of a wise person's opinion or perspective, we can find such opinions and analysis in these texts.

Buddhism teaches to refrain from believing in something conclusively and unquestionably simply because it is quoted in the scriptures, i.e. it teaches to refrain from gullible and naive belief in scriptural authority. Some people interpret this to mean that Buddhism teaches to disbelieve or reject scripture.

In fact, both believing and rejecting scripture without applying discriminative knowledge (*vicāraṇa-ñāṇa*) can easily be a form of credulity and gullibility, i.e. one believes naively or disbelieves naively.

## NOTE 19.5: ORDER OF AUTHORITY

To quote the scriptures once more, the elders of the past arranged the order of importance of factual evidence as follows:

1. *āhacca-pada* (the suttas or passages cited from the Pali Canon);
2. *rasa* (texts or material corresponding to the suttas);
3. *ācariya-vaṁsa* (= *ācariya-vāda*: words of the teachers);
4. *adhippāya* (personal interpretations);
5. *kāranuttariya* (rational explanations consisting of the four previous sources of information).

*See: Miln. 148.*

At the time of the commentaries this order of importance was thus:

1. *sutta* (= *Tipiṭaka*);
2. *suttānuloma* (passages or material corresponding to the suttas);
3. *ācariya-vāda* (= *atthakathā*; the commentaries);
4. *attanomati* (personal interpretation).

*see: DA. II. 567.*

See also the principle of the four great standards (*mahāpadesa*): D. II. 124; A. II. 167-8; and as described in the Vinaya: V. I. 250-51.

A thorough and faultless rejection of scripture would include preventing vague and ambiguous repudiation and disbelief. Before judging, or even renouncing, scripture, one should first study these texts comprehensively to see exactly what their authors say. How we want to then perceive or establish a different opinion from these texts is up to us. Those authors who have passed away in the past are at a disadvantage; they are unable to stand up and express their opinions or engage with us in debate. For this reason we should first investigate and allow these authors to speak through their texts in an uninterrupted way. Whether we then agree or disagree with what they have to say, at least we have given them due justice.

Another objective for presenting so much scriptural source material, or using the scriptural references as an anchor and chief support, is for this book to become independent from the author. As much as possible, the

author can also be independent from the book. The author has prepared this book in the capacity of a scholar. My task has been to research and compile the essence of Buddha-Dhamma and submit it to the reader. If the content submitted is correctly analyzed and authentic, the author's duty is finished and he can disappear. The readers no longer need to pay him any attention. They will be absorbed in the content of the book and will be reflecting on how it affects their lives. If, however, aspects of the book lack authenticity or validity, the author is not yet entirely freed from responsibility. Therefore, the degree of distance and independence between the work and the author is one way of gauging the success of this book.

From what I can gather, I have not been able to completely gain such independence, but I simply wish to express my wish and objective. Having presented the essence of Buddha-Dhamma, it is as if the author has led the readers to have an audience with the Supreme Teacher, the Lord Buddha. They can then forget about the author. Instead, they can focus on listening directly to the Buddha's teachings in his own words and reflecting on them.

Because this book gives emphasis to scriptural evidence, it focuses more on general principles and methods of practice than first-hand or direct practical application of the teachings. This is because the precise details of practice depend on various surrounding conditions and are related to the specific requirements and suitable methods for each individual.

Having said this, it is precisely these general principles and methods of practice that are the source and inspiration for detailed aspects of Buddhist spiritual practice. When one clearly understands these principles and methods, one is then able to establish a detailed, well-tailored practice suitable for oneself. Moreover, one possesses the means for confirming the correctness and validity of one's practice.

In the original edition of *Buddhadhamma*, the source material or scriptural references were selected almost entirely from the Pali Canon, i.e. the Tipiṭaka. There are only very few references from later texts, e.g. the commentaries.

In this revised and expanded edition of *Buddhadhamma*, the scriptural references from the Tipiṭaka are still considered the foundation and guideline. But here many scriptural references to later texts have also been included, so that students of Buddhism become aware of them and can use them as food for thought. If one is not careful, however, mixing in these opinions and interpretations contained in later scriptures, e.g. the commentaries, can have detrimental effects. The true and genuine teachings by the Buddha we consider to be the Buddha's words recorded in the Pali Canon – the Tipiṭaka. Later interpretations are seen simply as supplementary teachings providing greater clarity, and only those teachings consistent with the Pali Canon are approved and endorsed. {1146}

Many general books on Buddhism do not provide scriptural references and thus potentially create confusion or misunderstanding for the readers. Readers may assume that the accounts from later scriptures or the commentarial interpretations are the original and authentic teachings by the Buddha. Sometimes even the authors of these books harbour misunderstandings. This matter of providing source material in order to avoid confusion thus requires care.

An interesting example is that some Abhidhamma students understand that the teaching on Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) – or the mode of conditionality (*paccayākāra*) – applies to a long interval spanning over three lifetimes, and they believe that this interpretation accords with the Abhidhamma. The opposite, however, is true: the actual Abhidhamma presentation of Dependent Origination (i.e. from the Abhidhamma Piṭaka) pertains to a single mind-moment occurrence. The interpretation of Dependent Origination as a process spanning three lifetimes relies entirely on a model outlined in the Suttanta Piṭaka.

The explication of Dependent Origination as spanning three lifetimes is found in the commentaries and sub-commentaries of the Abhidhamma, which explains this process according to an analysis conforming to the suttas (*suttanta-bhājanīya*), which is also described in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (this subject is elucidated in chapter 4 of this book).

Although many references to later scriptures have been included in this book, in order to prevent confusion and misunderstanding about

source material, the quotes from the Pali Canon and those from later scriptures – along with the accompanying explanations in the text – are clearly distinguished.

Following are some important points on the subject of citing scriptural source material:

- Those people familiar with Buddhist scripture will recognize from the abbreviations which volumes are from the Tipiṭaka and which ones are later scriptures. One simple guideline is that commentarial texts end with the letter ‘A’ (for *atthakathā*), whereas sub-commentarial texts end with the letter ‘Ṭ’ (for *ṭīkā*).
- In the case where primary source material has been cited, it is unnecessary to quote secondary scriptures unless there is some special reason, for instance the latter texts provide supplementary clarification.
- When drawing on a wide selection of source material, the texts are normally arranged according to category, collection, time of origin, etc. For instance, the quotations from the Tipiṭaka precede those from the commentaries, and the quotations from the commentaries precede those from the sub-commentaries. Quotes from the Vinaya Piṭaka normally precede those from the Suttanta Piṭaka; quotes from the Suttanta Piṭaka precede those from the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. Various quotes from the suttas are arranged according to collection (*nikāya*); quotes from the same collection are arranged according to volume. For example: Vin., D. I., D. II., D. III., M. I., M. II. ... Dhs. (Abhidhamma), Vbh. (Abhidhamma) ... VinA., DA., MA. ... VbhA. ... VinṬ., etc. Exceptions to this are when a later text covers the specific topic at great length and is thus a key scriptural reference; in such a case this text may be placed at the beginning of all the references. Similarly, if the same passage is found in different texts, the references to these texts may be placed together.

Similar to the abundance of scriptural references, this book also contains a great number of explanatory footnotes. Some readers may find



these to be disorderly or irritating, but I simply ask that you take into account those readers who may benefit from them.

The footnotes provide additional information to the content of the main body of text: this information, if one were to add it to the main text, may make the presentation of material too complex; it may be highly technical and only of interest to a small percentage of readers; or it is valuable information but is somehow incongruous with the main text. {1147}

The footnotes are especially helpful for people who wish to engage in more extensive research. Many of the footnotes provide references that are worthy of further study and help guide one's pursuit of knowledge in a more detailed and comprehensive way. It is as if there are many smaller books subsumed within the larger one.

As this book gives great import to scriptural evidence it is normal that it inclines towards an academic approach, or one can say it directly emphasizes Buddhist technical knowledge. It focuses more on a doctrinal analysis than on the personal disposition of the readers.

This book is thus for students of Buddhism – for those people who wish to study Buddhism in depth, who are dauntless and resolute, and who wish to gain mastery of these teachings. It is not seeking out readers or trying to spark interest in people by persuasion or by being exciting and stimulating. It applies scholarly knowledge as a basis, rather than focusing on maximizing readership. Having said this, it is not overly difficult or abstruse for the general reader who is determined and aspires for knowledge.

As a scholarly book *Buddhadhamma* contains many Buddhist technical terms or Dhamma terms derived from the Pali language. This is difficult for those readers unfamiliar with Dhamma terminology or Pali words. But in order to truly understand the Buddhist teachings this is necessary and unavoidable.

With a true understanding of Buddha-Dhamma, if one were to use not even a single Pali word, one's explanations and descriptions would constitute Buddha-Dhamma. Conversely, if one lacks true understanding,

or one harbours misunderstandings, even if one were to speak using only Pali words, one's speech would not constitute Buddha-Dhamma. Instead, it would be an expression of some form of confused or distorted belief.

For those people who share a common understanding, Pali vocabulary acts as a means for conveying ideas in a convenient way. And for those students of Buddhism intent on knowledge, if they have the patience to learn some Pali, this vocabulary helps as a medium for instruction, accelerating their understanding. If one does not use any Pali for instruction, then one needs to come up with some other form of Dhamma terminology using another language. This may create greater confusion.

For this reason language can either be a medium for realizing Buddha-Dhamma or it can act as a barrier blocking realization. Knowing this, one should use Dhamma terminology correctly and discerningly; one is thus able to benefit from it without attachment or obsession.

As mentioned earlier, the author of this book has written it as a scholar and student of Buddhism. I have therefore continually acknowledged and attended to the knowledge and reflections of others. Although I do not read a great number of books, and read quite slowly, this book *Buddhadhamma* is the product of many sources of knowledge and contemplation. Although I have generally not mentioned or specified these sources, I have depended on various things that I have read and listened to. They have prompted new ways of thinking and new frames of reference and have spurred me on to search for true understanding.

Many of the books that I have read, especially by authors outside of Thailand, contain content that one can call an attack or denouncement of Buddhism.

The reasons for these criticisms and attacks are varied: some authors criticize out of misunderstanding; some criticize out of ill-intent; some are well-intentioned but because their own views and opinions are not confirmed they react bitterly with displeasure; and some criticize aspects of Buddhism with good reason and justifiably.

Whatever the reasons are behind these criticisms, if rather than naively acquiescing or becoming indignant, we remain open-minded and

consider these words of criticism carefully – according to the Buddha's teaching on responding to praise and blame<sup>33</sup> – we can benefit from any kind of criticism or slander. In fact, criticism is more useful than praise, because people praise us for things we do or have already done, whereas they criticize us for things that we are unable to do or have not yet achieved. Even if their criticisms are wrong or unjustified we are able to gain from skilful means of reflection. {1148}

Of these various forms of criticism and condemnation, some of them are immediately recognizable as misdirected and resulting from wrong understanding; some lead to new, beneficial perspectives; and some prompt self-examination or lead to an investigation into the truth.

Most often these criticisms, even if they are logical or partially correct, stem from confusion between the behaviour and conduct of Buddhists and the authentic teachings of the Buddha. The critics observe particular harmful or bad conduct by Buddhists and then focus on and criticize some aspect of the Buddhist teachings that seems to correspond with this conduct. It is rare that critics set upon the true, essential Buddhist teachings.

Buddhists can use these criticisms for self-inspection and then adjust their behaviour to accord with the true teachings. In terms of the formal teachings themselves, when one investigates and studies the teachings and one discovers a point of Dhamma that answers or dispels specific criticisms or accusations, one delights and rejoices in the excellence and brilliance of the Dhamma.

At the time of the Buddha one of his disciples uttered the following verse: *Aho buddho aho dhammo aho dhammassa svākkhātātā* ('Oh, the excellence of the Buddha! Oh, the excellence of the Dhamma! Oh, how supremely expounded is the Dhamma!').<sup>34</sup> Similarly, some of the venerable elders exclaimed: *Aho dhammasudhammatā* ('Indeed, the Dhamma is supreme!').<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup>D. I. 2-3.

<sup>34</sup>M. II. 96; cf.: Ap. 392.

<sup>35</sup>Thag. verses 479 and 486; Ap. 399.

When this enthusiasm arises, there is a powerful wholesome desire to proclaim the merits of the Dhamma to others or to encourage others to witness and appreciate the excellence and nobility of the Dhamma, as can be seen in the utterances by faithful disciples in the Pali Canon:

*So ahaṃ vicarissāmi  
gāmā gāmaṃ purā puram  
Namassamāno sambuddho  
dhammassa ca sudhammataṃ*

‘I myself shall travel about from village to village, town to town, tirelessly paying homage to the Awakened One and to the supreme Dhamma.’<sup>36</sup>

*S. I. 215; Sn. 33, 31; Ap. 48, 376; cf.: D. II. 208, 221, 227.*

*Passa dhammasudhammataṃ*

‘Come and admire the righteousness of the Dhamma,’ or ‘Come and behold! The Dhamma is a truly superb teaching.’

*Thag. verses 24, 220, 270, 286, 302, 319, 410, 1039.*

This enthusiasm and inspiration was an important catalyst for writing this book. And having written this book as a student of Buddhism, the act of writing has promoted my own personal studies. I have therefore been happy to respond to suggestions and disagreements, and have made amendments when informed of mistakes in the spirit of mutual kindness and goodwill and a shared love of the Dhamma, in order to bring this book to completion.

A common danger to spiritual development is that people harbour dubious beliefs and views, or unclear understanding, and maintain that it conforms to Buddhism. They then adhere to these beliefs or views in such an extreme or fervid way that they deceive themselves. Sometimes they are unwilling even to listen to the Buddha’s own words, and may

<sup>36</sup>See the related phrase *buddhasubodhiṃ dhammasudhammataṃ saṅghasupaṭipattiṃ* at: Nd. I. 359-60, 453; Nd. II. 42.

even reject or discredit them, claiming that they do not represent true Buddhism.

Maintaining an attitude of scholarship helps to prevent this danger. If one keeps an open mind and remains responsive to others, and one is emotionally and intellectually grounded, when one encounters something that contradicts or conflicts with a cherished view or opinion, one wishes to investigate the matter. One's understanding of things becomes clearer and one gains new forms of knowledge, leading to true progress and development. {1149}

Another important subject to draw attention to is the use of Pali terms whose meaning has changed, deviated, or become obscured over the passage of time.

A key example is the term *dhmma-paṭipatti* ('Dhamma practice'), whose true meaning is 'applying the Dhamma in one's daily life' or 'acting in harmony with the Dhamma'. These days, however, 'Dhamma practice' tends to be defined as a specific step or stage of spiritual training, manifesting as a systematic procedure and followed according to some prescribed method. In this book I have sometimes used this term 'Dhamma practice' in this narrow sense. Readers should be aware of this distinction.

In the Thai language, one amusing example is the word *seuksah* (Pali: *sikkhā*) which is paired with the word *patibat* (= *paṭipatti*). Originally, the term *sikkhā* referred to the essence of spiritual practice (*paṭipatti*), or it referred to spiritual practice itself. *Sikkhā* is comprised of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*), which pertain directly to spiritual training and practice.<sup>37</sup> The development of wisdom in particular is the supreme form of practice, leading to realization (*paṭivedha*). In Thai the word *seuksah* was later used to refer to study or education, even to rote or abstract learning, which can lead to incoherent or aimless thinking. The meaning of *seuksah* has thus been transformed to be equivalent to the term *pariyatti* ('formal learning').

Another important distinction, although this does not have to do with a word whose meaning has become blurred or obscured, is between 'Pali'

<sup>37</sup>See: VinA. I. 225; MA. [3/147, 3/523]; AA. V. 33.

and the Pali language. ‘Pali’ on its own refers exclusively to the content of the Tipiṭaka, to be distinguished from later scriptures, e.g. the commentaries, sub-commentaries, etc.<sup>38</sup> The Pali language refers to the language used to record and preserve the content of the Tipiṭaka; it is also referred to as Magadhi Prakrit (language of Magadha). The Tipiṭaka and the later scriptures, e.g. the commentaries, are recorded in the Pali language.<sup>39</sup>

In the original edition of *Buddhadhamma*, some topics are discussed only very briefly, to simply familiarize the readers with the basic concepts. I did not explain them in depth or point out relevant methods of practice. This revised and expanded edition has attended to these weaknesses and shortcomings. For instance, in the section of the original edition titled ‘Supporting Factors for Right View’, because I had the sense that the subjects of virtuous friendship and wise reflection were widely overlooked by Buddhists, I was preoccupied with underscoring the importance of these principles by quoting a large number of the Buddha’s words bearing witness to their significance. Aspects of these essential principles, including practical methods for applying them, however, were not described. This may have been ineffective because ten years later these subjects still do not seem to receive the attention they deserve. In this new edition of *Buddhadhamma*, more focus has thus been given to the essential principles and methods of practice. The sections dealing with these topics have in turn become more detailed and expansive.

There are many other similar principles, e.g.: aspiration for truth (*dhamma-chanda*), or wholesome desire (*kusala-chanda*), which is opposite to craving (*taṇhā*);<sup>40</sup> mundane and transcendent right view; the middle teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*) which is paired with the middle way (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*); and the three doctrines professing wrong view which run counter to the teaching on kamma.

Although this book was written with modern readers in mind, because of its emphasis on theoretical knowledge and scriptural source material,

<sup>38</sup>See the use of this word ‘Pali’ in e.g. the *Visuddhimagga*: Vism. 107, 450.

<sup>39</sup>Trans.: in this English translation I have used the term ‘Pali Canon’ to refer to the former meaning, as the content of the Tipiṭaka.

<sup>40</sup>I began to discuss *dhamma-chanda* and *kusala-chanda* in earlier works, on education and the philosophy of education, between the years 1973-75.

one can say that it acts as an interface between tradition and modernity. It is not a presentation of Buddha-Dhamma in a completely new format which would give chief importance to the psychological and intellectual disposition of modern people and use primarily modern parlance. For this reason, as mentioned already in the original edition of *Buddhadhamma*, in the future it may be advisable to write a companion volume titled 'Applied Buddha-Dhamma'. {1150}

As mentioned above, this book gives great import to scriptural evidence and is thus full of Pali translations from the Tipiṭaka, the commentaries, the sub-commentaries, and other scriptural texts. As the primary text, I have translated the passages from the Pali Canon, i.e. the Tipiṭaka, directly from the Pali, although I have benefited much from consulting with the translations in the Thai Royal Edition Tipiṭaka. Only few later Pali scriptures have been translated into Thai. Of these, I have consulted with those that are reliable and, when appropriate, I have drawn from them to influence my own translations. In regard to scriptures not yet published in Thailand, or to other scriptural research tools not yet available in Thailand, I have occasionally relied on English or Burmese editions as an adjunct to this work. I wish here to document the benefit and value I have received from these various sources.

As mentioned above, this revised and expanded edition of *Buddhadhamma* came into being as a consequence of the faith and planning of Prof. Rawee Pawilai. As the catalyst for this project and the sponsor for this publication, Prof. Rawee Pawilai has thus been a key benefactor for the success and completion of this book.

This revised and expanded edition of *Buddhadhamma* is a sequel of the original edition of *Buddhadhamma* printed in 1971. The original edition originated from the planning organized by The Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project under the auspices of the Social Science Association of Thailand, with Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa as chief contact and coordinator. Having helped to plan and liaise at that time, he has thus also been greatly supportive for the production of this book.

Although I was already determined to revise and expand the *Buddhadhamma* text, if I had not received the invitation and been notified

of the wish to publish, this project would have been delayed and would certainly not have been finished at this time.

For this reason, besides rejoicing in the pure intention of these two initiators and promoters on these two separate occasions, I also want to thank them for acting as an impetus for hastening me to complete this project.

For this publication, Khun Sunai Setboonsarng has been a vital volunteer for bringing this work to completion. He was the mainstay for coordinating and preparing the artwork, shouldering all responsibility in this area of the publication. He made many sacrifices and was very patient during this drawn out process, before it was finished. I thus wish to express my special gratitude to Khun Sunai Setboonsarng, along with his team of artwork assistants. At the beginning stages of publication, Khun Bancha Chalermchaikit provided useful supervision and helped lay a solid foundation for the present. The Met Sai Company provided generous support with the graphic design.

The devoted person who helped prepare and type the original manuscript of this book remains the same person who typed the manuscript of the original edition of *Buddhadhamma*, i.e. Khun Choldhi Dhammavarangkun, who has typed almost all of my previous manuscripts. I wish to express my gratitude for his considerable support.

I thank Ven. Tahn Chao Khun Visuddhisombodhi, Deputy Secretary-General of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, who helped to proofread the manuscript during the five months that I was abroad.

At Wat Phra Phiren, where this book was written, there were many people who provided assistance on a daily basis, even sharing their food obtained on almsround with me. The result was that this extremely pressing writing project, requiring a complete devotion of time, proceeded smoothly throughout. In particular, I wish to mention Phra Mahā Insorn Cintāpaṇṇo, Phra Thawan Samacitto, Phra Chai Paṇṇāpadīpo, Phra Kamnuan Siddhichando, and Mr. Saman Kongprapan. Besides helping with everyday affairs, Phra Mahā Insorn Cintāpaṇṇo also helped to sort the name and word cards alphabetically to prepare them for indexing.



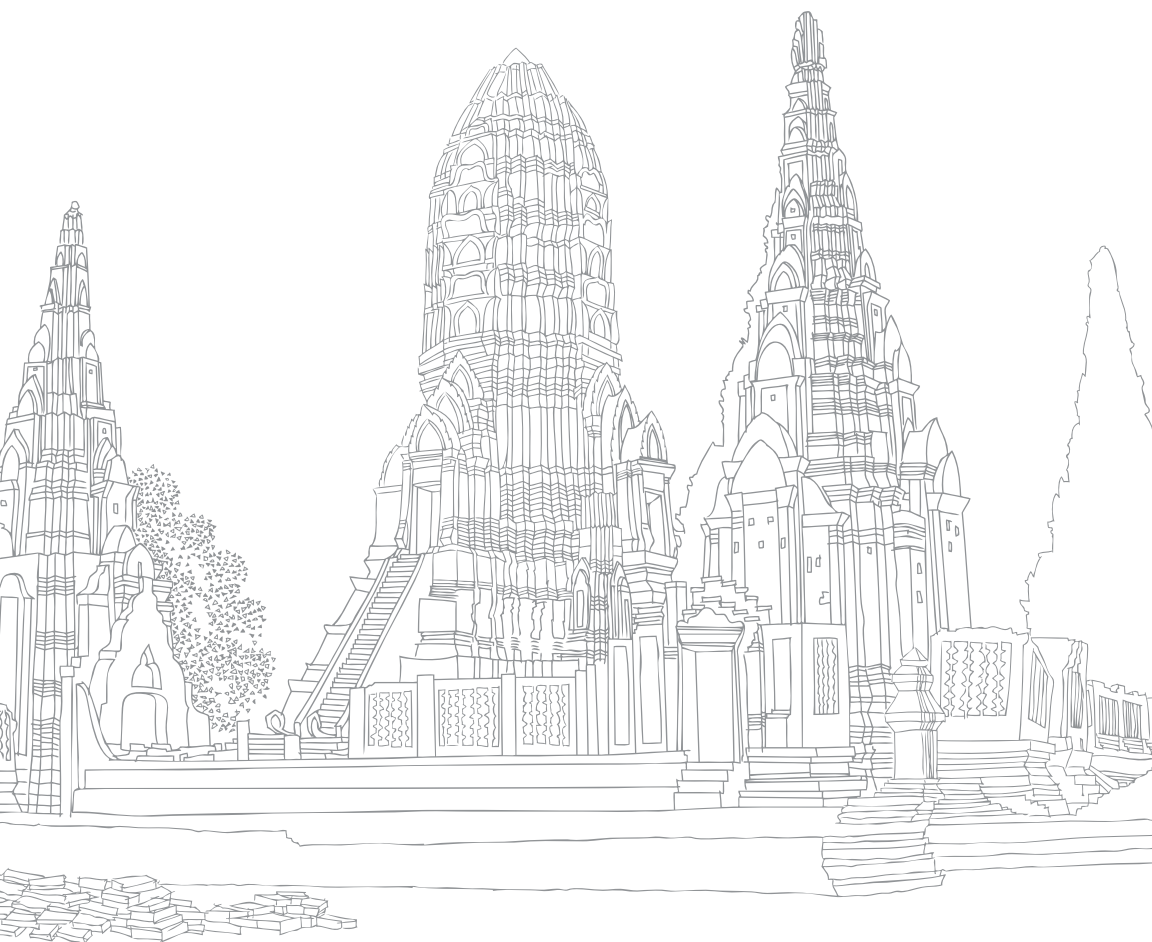
Everyone mentioned here has shared the meritorious deed of assisting in the publication of *Buddhadhamma*, which is intended as a gift of knowledge and truth for the benefit of all. On this occasion, I give my heartfelt thanks for everyone's united spirit and support.

Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayut)<sup>41</sup>

29 December 1981



<sup>41</sup>Now known as Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya (P. A. Payutto).



Wat Chaiwatthanaram in Ayutthaya historical park, Ayutthaya province, Thailand.

# Bibliography

This bibliography is meant primarily as a resource for those readers wishing to have a list of canonical and post-canonical texts, along with available English translations. Although emphasis has been given to those texts cited in *Buddhadhamma*, some of them have not been cited. Moreover, the list of English translations is not exhaustive.<sup>42</sup>

## PALI CANON

The Thai edition of the Pali Tipiṭaka consists of 45 volumes = 21,926 pages (Vinaya Piṭaka, 3,351 pages; Suttanta Piṭaka, 12,077 pages; Abhidhamma Piṭaka, 6,498 pages).<sup>43</sup>

### *Vinaya Piṭaka*

- *The Book of the Discipline*, trans. I. B. Horner, 6 volumes (Oxford: Pali Text Society): Vol. I (1938, 1992, 2014 with hitherto untranslated passages by P. Kieffer-Pülz); Vol. II (1940, 1993); Vol. III (1942, 1993); Vol. IV (1951, 1993, 2014); Vol. V (1952, 1993); Vol. VI (1966, 1993,

<sup>42</sup>Readers who wish to see an English bibliography arranged in a similar fashion can consult *A Buddhist Students' Manual* (Christmas Humphreys, ed., London, The Buddhist Society, 1956), pp. 228-40. [Trans.: this initial paragraph was written by the translator.]

<sup>43</sup>Trans.: the main Thai edition of the Pali Tipiṭaka is the Siam Raṭṭha Tipiṭaka (Syāmrattassa Tepiṭakam), Bangkok, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1925-1930 (first printed by Panich Supaphon Printing House; 2nd printing, beginning in 1955, at Mahamakut Buddhist University Press). The Thai translation of the above Siam Raṭṭha Pāli Tipiṭaka is called the Royal Tipiṭaka, published by the Department of Religious Affairs, 1971 (2nd printing). Second in time sequence to the above Siam Raṭṭha Pāli Tipiṭaka is the Mahācūlā Tepiṭakam, published by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, which also has its own Thai translation (of the Mahācūlā Tepiṭakam).

2014). Vols. I-III: *Suttavibhaṅga*; Vol. IV: *Mahāvagga*; Vol. V: *Cūlavagga*; Vol. VI: *Parivāra*.

### **Sutta Piṭaka**

- Dīgha-nikāya *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, trans. Maurice Walshe, 1986, Wisdom Publications.
- Majjhima-nikāya *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, 2nd ed., trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2002. Pali Text Society; Wisdom Publications.
- Saṃyutta-nikāya *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2002. Pali Text Society; Wisdom Publications.
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- Dhammapada
  - *The Dhammapada: Pali Text and Translation with Stories in Brief and Notes*, trans. Narada Thera, Buddhist Missionary Society, India, 1978; available from Pariyatti Books.
  - *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom*, trans. Acharya Buddhharakkhita, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1996.
  - *The Dhammapada: A New English Translation with the Pali Text and the First English Translation of the Commentary's Explanation of the Verses With Notes Translated from the Sinhala Sources and Critical Textual Comments*, John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawardana, trans. (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1987).
  - *A Dhammapada for Contemplation*, a rendering by Ajahn Munindo (River Publications, 2000).
- Udāna
  - *Udāna: Verses of Uplift* (in the Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part II) trans. by F.L. Woodward (Oxford: Pali Text Society).

- *Udāna*, tr. P. Masfield, 1994, Published with the Itivuttaka (Oxford: Pali Text Society 2013).
- *The Udana and the Itivuttaka*, John D. Ireland, trans. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998).
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  - *Itivuttaka*, tr. P. Masfield, 1994, Published with the Udāna (Oxford: Pali Text Society 2013).
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  - *Itivuttaka: This Was Said by the Buddha*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. (Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2001).
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  - *The Suttanipāṭa*, H. Saddhatissa, trans. (London: Curzon press, 1985).
  - *The Group of Discourses* (2nd ed.) K.R. Norman, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001).
- Vimānavatthu *Minor Anthologies* (Vol IV) – *Vimanavatthu: Stories of the Mansions, and Petavatthu: Stories of the Departed*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1974).
- Petavatthu *Minor Anthologies* (Vol IV) – *Vimanavatthu: Stories of the Mansions, and Petavatthu: Stories of the Departed*, I.B. Horner, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1974).
- Theragāthā *Elders' Verses*, Vol. I, prose translation by K.R. Norman (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1969, 1990, 2nd ed. 2007, 2015).
- Therīgāthā
  - *Elders' Verses*, Vol. II, prose translation by K.R. Norman (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1971, 1992, 1995, 2nd ed. 2007, 2015).
  - *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns*, C.A.F. Rhys Davids and K.R. Norman, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1989).
  - *The Voice Of Enlightened Nuns: The Therigatha*, Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnanananda, trans. (Mahamegha Publications, 2016).

- Jātaka *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, various trans., E.B. Cowell, ed. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, ed. E.B. Cowell, 6 volumes 1895-1907 and Index 1913, all reprinted 1990, now in 3 volumes).
- Niddesa According to legend, this text (Mahāniddesa and Cūḷaniddesa) was composed by the Buddha's foremost disciple Ven. Sāriputta. Availability of English translations: Print: None known.
- Paṭisambhidāmagga According to legend, this text was composed by Ven. Sāriputta. *The Path of Discrimination*, Ven. Ñānamoli, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1982, 1991, new edn. 1997, 2014).
- Apadāna Availability of English translations: Print: Some excerpts are included in various volumes published by the Pali Text Society.
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### **Abhidhamma Piṭaka**

- Dhammasaṅgaṇī *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*, translated from the Pali by C.A.F. Rhys Davids (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1900).
- Vibhaṅga *The Book of Analysis*, translated from the Pali by Ven. U Thittila (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1969).
- Dhātukathā *Discourse on Elements*, translated from the Pali by Ven. U Narada (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1962).
- Puggalapaññatti *A Designation of Human Types*, translated from the Pali by B.C. Law (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1922).
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### PRE-COMMENTARIAL TEXTS

In some Buddhist countries, e.g. Burma, the following texts are included in the Tipiṭaka:

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- Peṭakopadesapakaraṇa (said to be the work of Ven. Mahā Kaccāyana). *Pitaka Disclosure (Petakopadesa)*, Ven. Ñānamoli, trans. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1964, 1979).
- Milindapañha (composed by Ven. Nāgasena Thera, circa 500 BE – 43 CE).
  - *Milinda's Questions*, tr. I.B. Horner, 2 volumes (Oxford: Pali Text Society, Vol. I: 1963, 1990; Vol. II: 1964, 1991).
  - *The Debate of King Milinda*, Bhikkhu Pesala, ed., abridged version, Antony Rowe Ltd., 1990.

### COMMENTARIES, SUB-COMMENTARIES, AND OTHER NON-CANONICAL TEXTS

There are great number of commentaries, sub-commentaries, and other post-canonical texts. Here, only a limited selection of texts are listed, in particular those which have been quoted in this book. The majority of these texts have not yet been translated into English and are preserved as palm-leaf manuscripts. The post-canonical period (the Age of Translation, when these texts were retranslated from Sinhalese into Pali)

is considered to have begun by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya, shortly before 1000 BE (457 CE).<sup>44</sup>

### ***Outstanding Scripture and Associated Text***

- Visuddhimagga Pakaraṇavisesa: composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya (in respect to subject matter the Visuddhimagga is generally classified to be in line with the Abhidhamma). *The Path of Purification*, trans. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Buddhist Publication Society, 1975, 1991).
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### ***Vinaya Piṭaka***

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- Samantapāsādikāya Atthayojanā (composed by Ven. Ñāṇakitti of Chiang Mai, Thailand in circa 2000 BE – 1457 CE).
- Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī Pāṭimokkhaṇṇanā, Mātikaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya).

<sup>44</sup>The commentaries existed in Sri Lanka long before this date. Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya simply translated them from Sinhalese back into Pali.



## Sutta Piṭaka

- Dīgha-nikāya: commentary title: Sumaṅgalavilāsinī  
Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). *The Buddha's Last Days: Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (Mahāparinibbāna-sutta only), translated by Yang-Gyu An (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2003).
- Majjhima-nikāya: commentary title: Papañcasūdanī  
Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya).  
English translations: none known.
- Saṃyutta-nikāya: commentary title: Sāratthapakāsinī  
Saṃyutta-nikāyaṭṭhakathā<sup>45</sup> (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya).  
English translations: none known.
- Aṅguttara-nikāya: commentary title: Manorathapūraṇī  
Aṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya).  
English translations: none known.
- Khuddakapāṭha: commentary title: Paramatthajotikā  
Khuddakapāṭhavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). *The Minor Readings and The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning*, trans. Ven. Ñāṇamoli (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1960, 1991, 2015).
- Dhammapada: commentary title: Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā  
(composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya; translated from Sinhalese). *Buddhist Legends*, tr. E.W. Burlingame, (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1921, reprinted as 3 volumes 1990, 1995).
- Udāna: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī Udānavāṇṇanā,  
Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). *Udāna Commentary*, tr. P. Masefield, 2 volumes (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994, 1995).
- Itivuttaka: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī Itivuttakavaṇṇanā,  
Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). *The Commentary on the Itivuttaka*, tr. Peter Masefield, 2 volumes (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2008 - 2009).

<sup>45</sup>Trans.: PTS spelling: Sāratthappakāsinī.

- Suttanipāta: commentary title: Paramatthajotikā  
Suttanipātavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). English translations: none known.
- Vimānavatthu: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Vimānavatthuvaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). *Vimāna Stories*, tr. P. Masefield (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1989, repr. 2015).
- Petavatthu: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Petavatthuvaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). *Peta Stories*, tr. U Ba Kyaw and P. Masefield (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1980).
- Theragāthā: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Theragāthā-atthavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). English translations: none known.
- Therīgāthā: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Therīgāthā-atthavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). *The Commentary on the Verses of the Theris*, tr. William Pruitt (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1998).
- Jātaka: commentary title: Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya; translated from Sinhalese). *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, various trans., E.B. Cowell, ed. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, ed. E.B. Cowell, 6 volumes 1895-1907 and Index 1913, all reprinted 1990, now in 3 volumes).
- Niddesa: commentary title: Saddhammapajjotikā Niddesavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Upasena Thera of Sri Lanka). English translations: none known.
- Paṭisambhidāmagga: commentary title: Saddhammappakāsinī  
Paṭisambhidāmaggavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Mahānāma Thera of Sri Lanka). English translations: none known.
- Apadāna: commentary title: Visuddhajanavilāsinī Apadānavavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (author unknown). English translations: none known.

- Buddhavaṃsa: commentary title: Madhuratthavilāsini  
Buddhavaṃsavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhadatta Thera of the Coḷa country). *The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning*, tr. I.B. Horner (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1978).
- Cariyāpiṭaka: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Cariyāpiṭakavaṇṇanā, Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Dhammapāla Thera). English translations: none known.
- Maṅgalatthadīpanī Maṅgalasuttavaṇṇanā (composed by Ven. Sirimaṅgalācāriya of Chiang Mai in circa 2000 BE – 1487 CE).

### ***Abhidhamma Piṭaka***

- Dhammasaṅgaṇī: commentary title: Atthasālinī  
Dhammasaṅgaṇīvaṇṇanā, Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). *The Expositor*, tr. Pe Maung Tin (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2 volumes, 1920, 1921, reprinted as one volume 1976).
- Vibhaṅga: commentary title: Sammohavinodanī Vibhaṅgavaṇṇanā, Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). *Dispeller of Delusion*, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, revised by L.S. Cousins, Nyanaponika Mahāthera and C.M.M. Shaw (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2 volumes, 1987, 1991).
- Dhātukathā: commentary title: Paramatthadīpanī  
Dhātukathādīpaṇcapakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā<sup>46</sup> (composed by Ven. Buddhaghosācāriya). English translations: none known.
- Puggalapaññatti: commentary title: Pañcapakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā  
Puggalapaññattivaṇṇanā. *A Designation of Human Types*, translated from the Pali by B.C. Law (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1922).
- Kathāvatthu: commentary title: Pañcapakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā  
Kathāvatthuvaṇṇanā. *The Debates Commentary*, tr. B.C. Law (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1940, 1989).
- Yamaka: commentary title: Pañcapakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā  
Yamakavaṇṇanā. English translations: none known.

<sup>46</sup>Trans.: PTS spelling: Pañcappakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā.

- Paṭṭhāna: commentary title: Pañcapakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā Paṭṭhānavañṇanā. English translations: none known.
- Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha (composed by Ven. Anuruddha Thera of Sri Lanka). *The Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma and Exposition of the Topics of Abhidhamma*, tr. R. P. Wijeratne and Rupert Gethin (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2002).
- Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī Abhidhammatthasaṅgahaṭṭikā (composed by Ven. Sumaṅgalācāriya of Sri Lanka). *The Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma and Exposition of the Topics of Abhidhamma*, tr. R. P. Wijeratne and Rupert Gethin (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2002).
- Pañcīkā Abhidhammatthavibhāvinīatthayojanā (composed by Ven. Ñāṇakitti of Chiang Mai).
- Dhammasaṅgaṇī Mūlaṭṭikā (composed by Ven. Ānandācāriya of India).
- Dhammasaṅgaṇī Anuṭṭikā (composed by Ven. Culladhammapāla Thera).

### **Grammar**

- Rūpasiddhipakaraṇa (composed by Ven. Buddhappiya Thera of south India).

N.B. In some of the footnotes quoting texts in Burmese or Roman script there is a comment in parentheses stating that these texts have not yet been translated into Thai. These footnotes are from the first edition of the revised and expanded edition of *Buddhadhamma*, from 1982. Since then some of these texts have been translated into Thai, but I have not yet edited the footnotes accordingly.

*P. A. Payutto*  
*(Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya)*



Original name: Prayudh Arayangkoon.  
Born 12 January 1939 at Si Prachan District,  
Suphan Buri Province, to Mr. Samran and  
Mrs. Chun-Ki Arayangkoon.

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LIFE AND WORK

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**PRIMARY EDUCATION**

1945-1947: elementary education at Chai Si Pracha Rat School.

1948-1950: secondary education at Wat Prathoomkongkha Middle School  
(he was awarded an academic merit scholarship from the Ministry  
of Education).

**MONASTIC EDUCATION**

1951 (May 10): novice ordination at Wat Ban Krang, Si Prachan District,  
with Phra Kru Medhi-Dhammasarn as preceptor.

1952: resided at Wat Prasat Thong, capital district, Suphan Buri Province. Engaged in formal Dhamma study (*pariyatti-dhamma*) and practised insight meditation (*vipassanā*). His meditation teacher urged him to reside at the Vipassanā centre, but his father did not give his consent.

1953: went to live at Wat Phra Phiren in Bangkok.

1951-1953: passed the exams for the first, second, and third levels of Dhamma studies (*nak tham*).

1955-1961: passed the exams for levels 3-9 of Pali language studies (*parian tham*), while still a novice.

1962: obtained a Bachelor's degree in Buddhist Studies (with first-class honours) from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

1963: obtained a 'Piset Mathayom' (Special Secondary School Teacher's Certificate).

Higher Ordination: ordained under royal patronage as a royal ordination candidate (*nak luang*) at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram) on 24 July 1961.

#### **ECCLESIASTICAL TITLES**

1969: ecclesiastical title of common rank: Phra Srivissuddhimoli

1973: ecclesiastical title of 'Rāja' rank: Phra Rajavaramuni

1987: ecclesiastical title of 'Deva' rank: Phra Debvedi

1993: ecclesiastical title of 'Dhamma' rank: Phra Dhammapitaka

2004: ecclesiastical title of 'Vice Somdet': Phra Brahmagunabhorn

2016: ecclesiastical title of 'Somdet': Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Full title: Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya Nāṇa-adulyasundaranāyaka Pāva-canatilaka Varānusāsana Arayangkoon Vilāsanāmānukkama Gambhīrañāṇa-uttamavisiṭṭha Tipiṭaka-pañḍita Mahāgaṇissara Bowonsaṅghārāma Gāmaṇāvāsī Araññāvāsī. (Trans.: this is my own transliteration; the Thai version is pronounced quite differently, as the Thai language often uses the Sanskrit versions of words and frequently abbreviates Pali and Sanskrit words. Please

**RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

- 1962-64: taught classes in the Pali Pre-university Department at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- 1964-74: taught undergraduate Buddhist Studies at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (during this time he would occasionally lecture at the Faculty of Archaeology at Silpakorn University and at the Program in Comparative Religion at Mahidol University).
- 1964-74: took up the position as Assistant Secretary-General, and later held the post as Deputy Secretary-General of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- 1972-76: appointed the abbot of Wat Phra Phiren.
- 1972: lectured on 'Buddhism and Thai Culture' at the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.
- 1976: lectured on Buddhism at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania.
- 1981: was invited as a Visiting Scholar at the Center for the Study of World Religions, and lectured on Buddhism at the Divinity Faculty and the Arts Faculty, Harvard University.
- 1994: took up the position as abbot at Wat Nyanavesakavan, Bang Krathuk, Sam Phran, Nakhon Pathom.

note that transliterating the Thai ecclesiastical title พุทธโฆษาจารย์ into the Roman alphabet can be done in different ways, including: Buddhaghosacariya, Buddhaghosacharya, and Phutthakosajarn. To quote Dr. Somseen from his recent translation *Dhutanga...*: 'Ostensibly, the name in this particular monastic title is modeled after that of the Elder Buddhaghosa ... the Indian Buddhist monk in the fifth century CE who was the greatest Theravada Buddhist commentator and scholar.')

## HONOURS RECEIVED

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### HONORARY POSITIONS

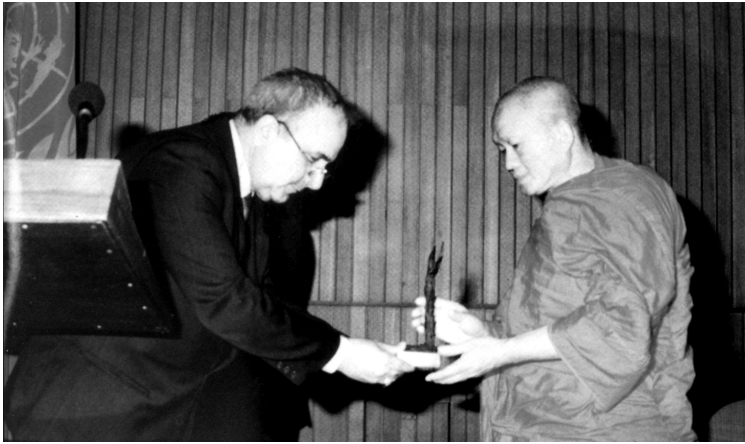
- 1981: Research Fellow in World Religions, Faculty of Divinity, Harvard University
- 1995: awarded the honorary position as Tipiṭakācariya (‘Professor of the Tipiṭaka’) by Navanalanda Mahavihara, India
- 1995: awarded honorific title ‘Savant of Culture’ by the National Council of Cultural Affairs
- 1996: Honorary Fellow of The Royal College of Physicians of Thailand
- 2001: Special Professor of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
- 2004: Most Eminent Scholar by the World Buddhist University
- 2006: Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of Thailand

### DECORATIONS OF HONOUR AND AWARDS

- 1982: decoration of honour as ‘Benefactor of Buddhism’ at the Bicentennial of the Rattanakosin Era
- 1982: first-place prize for prose literature for the literary work *Buddhadhamma* from the Bangkok Bank Foundation
- 1989: Royal Mahidol Varanusorn Award
- 1989: Promoter of Education Award at the Vicennial of the Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University
- 1990: Honorary ‘Silver Conch’ Award in the field of Buddhist Propagation



### 1994: UNESCO Prize for Peace Education



*In 1994 he was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in Paris.*

1998: TTF Award in the field of sociology and anthropology for the outstanding literary work ‘Sustainable Development’ (การพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน) by Thammasat University and Toyota Thailand Foundation

2001: Sarot Buasri Virtuous Scholar Award from Srinakharinwirot University

2007: Distinguished Alumnus Award by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

2009: awarded the honour ‘Savant of the Thai Language’ by the National Council of Cultural Affairs

2012: Sastra Methee Award (Outstanding Scholar Award) by the Professor Mom Luang Pin Malakul Foundation

2012: Promoter of Buddhism Award on the 99th birthday celebration of the Supreme Patriarch Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara

### HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREES

1982: honorary doctorate degree in Buddhist Studies from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

- 1986: honorary doctorate degree in Liberal Arts (Philosophy Department) from Thammasat University
- 1986: honorary doctorate degree in Education (in the field of Curriculum and Instruction) from Thammasat University
- 1987: honorary doctorate degree in Liberal Arts (in the field of Education and Teaching) from Thammasat University
- 1988: honorary doctorate degree in Arts and Literature from Chulalongkorn University
- 1988: honorary doctorate degree in Liberal Arts (Linguistics Department) from Mahidol University
- 1990: honorary doctorate degree in Education (Philosophy of Education Department) from Srinakharinwirot University
- 1993: honorary doctorate degree in Philosophy (Education Department) from Ramkhamhaeng University
- 1994: honorary doctorate degree in Education from Prince of Songkla University
- 1995: honorary doctorate degree in Arts and Literature (in the field of Education Ethics) from Mahidol University
- 1998: honorary doctorate degree in Science from Chiang Mai University
- 2001: honorary doctorate degree in Religious Studies from Mahamakut Buddhist University
- 2002: honorary doctorate degree in Pedagogy from Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University
- 2002: honorary doctorate degree in Liberal Arts (in the field of Organizational Administration) from Sripatum University
- 2009: honorary doctorate degree in Philosophy (department of Religion and Philosophy) from Burapha University
- 2009: honorary doctorate degree in Philosophy (department of Education) from Naresuan University

2009: honorary doctorate degree in Communication Arts (department of Religion and Philosophy) from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

2010: honorary doctorate degree in Philosophy (in the field of Human Resource Development) from the National Institute of Development Administration

2011: honorary doctorate degree in Education from Hatyai University

His *magnum opus*, ‘Buddhadhamma’, was first published in 1971; this first edition is known as the Wan Waithayakon (or ‘original’) Edition and contains 206 pages. In 1982, the author added more material; this edition is known as the Revised and Enlarged Edition and contains 1042 pages. In 2012, more material was added; this current edition is known as the Expanded Edition and contains 1330 pages.

In 2009, a group of dedicated people began the sincere and steadfast effort to create a full 23-chapter audio recording of ‘Buddhadhamma’. This task was completed in 2016. This recording is now freely distributed as a 20-disc set of MP3 CDs; it is also shared through other mediums, e.g. through a website and by way of an app.

Many Dhamma CDs of the venerable author’s talks have also been made available in MP3 format. They are organized into sets, e.g.:

Arranged into topic (although designated as sets, some of the individual CDs cover a unique topic):

- Accompanying Newly Ordained Monks in Dhamma Study (20 parts)
- From Mental Science to Mental Development
- Conversations with Novices Leading to Dhamma Insight
- The Great Vogue of the ‘Catugama’ Amulet Is No More
- Every Day is Crucial; Encourage Each Other to Cultivate the Dhamma
- By Developing Wisdom One Need Not Search for Universal Ethics
- By Reaching This Stage One Begins to Access the Heart of Buddhism
- Looking at Ten Stages, Seeing Ten Dimensions
- The Buddhist Teachings Must Be Clearly Examined

- How to Respond to Present Day National Crises
- Practising Dhamma Correctly: Cultivating Goodness, Realizing Nibbāna
- Ordinary Love is Truly Good, But True Love Is Better
- Helping Each Other to Safeguard Thailand
- Knowing the Path Leading to Genuine Happiness
- An Abode of Truth: High Lady Poonsuk Banomyong
- Stories for Laypeople 1-2
- Buddhist Wisdom Training (1-8)
- The Dhamma and Spiritual Training
- Quelling Lord Brahma Through Homage
- From India to Asia
- Fledgling Democracy
- Truth Inherent to All Stages of Life
- Heedfulness and Happiness
- Happiness Seen from All Angles
- Holy Pilgrimage – Dhamma Documentary
- Repeated Listening, Repeated Joy
- Dhamma for Politics
- Uncorrupted Buddhist Discipleship
- Happiness from Fruitful Work
- Present Day National Crises
- Buddhism as a Foundation for Science
- Developing Happiness
- Guidelines for Buddhists

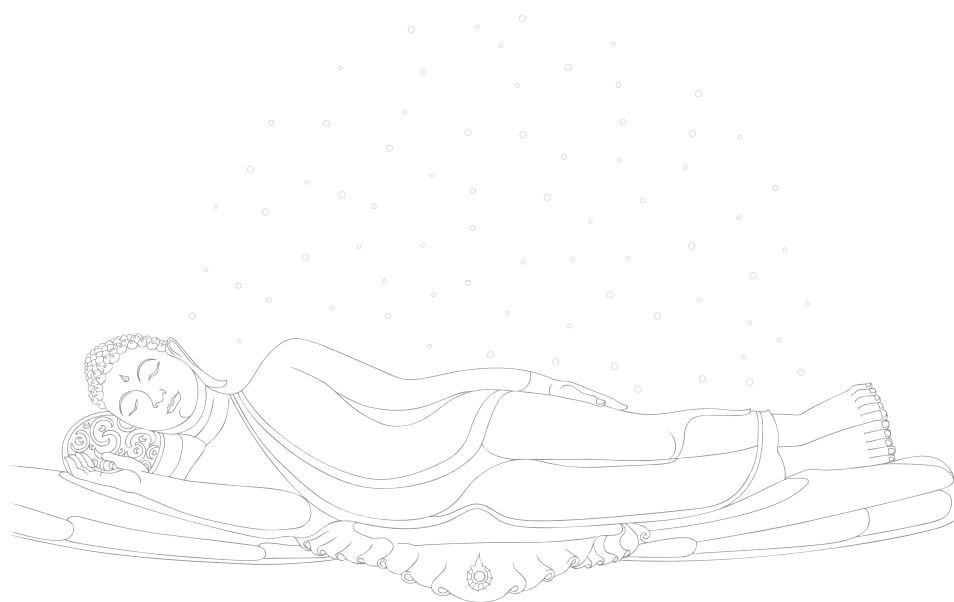
Arranged chronologically:

- Teachings Related to Specific Situations – 2001
- Timely Listening to the Dhamma – 2002
- Assorted Teachings – 2003

- Teachings in Relation to the World – 2004
- Comprehending the World, Realizing the Truth – 2005
- The Dhamma Does Not Reject the World – 2006
- The Dhamma Is Near at Hand – 2007
- The Progressive Nature of the Dhamma – 2008
- Recollections Leading to Truth – 2010

Furthermore, beginning in 1987, Ven. P. A. Payutto was invited by Mahidol University to be a consultant in the creation of an International Tipiṭaka Computer Edition in Multi-scripts (BUDSIR for Windows); now complete, this is the first such computer program of its kind in the world.

N.B. Although many universities and institutions have invited the venerable author to receive honorary doctorate degrees, decorations, and awards, due to poor health and to living in remote provincial areas, since 2004 (i.e. beginning with the receipt of the distinction as Most Eminent Scholar conferred by the World Buddhist University), Ven. P. A. Payutto has asked to be excused from going in person to the respective ceremonies of honour. Instead, he has expressed his gratitude to everyone involved for their kindness and their appreciation and support for the pursuit of knowledge.



# *President of the Buddhadhamma Foundation*

Name: Yongyut Thanapura

Born: 10 March 1951 at Udon Thani City, Udon Thani Province, to Mr. Ruengrung and Mrs. Kurab.

## **EDUCATION**

1968: High school education, Amnuay Silpa School, Bangkok.

1975: Bachelor's degree, the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

## ***Activities During Study at University***

1970: Entered to study at the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University.

1971: Became a member of the Student Rural Development Volunteer Club; Vice Chairman of the Student Rural Development Volunteer Camp, Sao Hai District, Saraburi Province.

1972: Became a committee member of the Student Rural Development Volunteer Club; Vice Chairman of Promotion of Youth Employment, Sao Hai District, Saraburi Province.

1973: Joined the student movement to fight against the military dictatorship government.

1975: Graduated from Chulalongkorn University.

**LIFE AND WORK**

- 1977: Founded Tap Kwan Co., Ltd., an architecture company; owner and managing director.
- 1979: Joined with Professor Dr. Pravej Vasri to found and direct Moh-Chao-Ban, a Thai health magazine for promoting self-healing and home remedies. (In 1981, Moh-Chao-Ban magazine became Moh-Chao-Ban foundation.)
- 1986: Founded Synchai Development Co., Ltd., a housing estate company; partner and a member of the executive committee.
- 1987: Founded the Buddhadhamma Foundation, published and distributed Dhamma books, in particular those written by Ven. P. A. Payutto; president.
- Offered 11 rai of land (4.35 acres) for constructing Wat Nyanavesakavan at Nakhon Pathom Province, with Ven. Debvedi (P. A. Payutto) as the abbot. During the early stages of development, assisted in designing and laying out the monastery, covering land with soil, and supervising the building work, including construction of driving piles, parking lots, monastic residences, and water tanks.
- 1988: Submitted the application to the Department of Religious Affairs for authorizing Wat Nyanavesakavan to be a monastery, and received the formal authorization on 11 January 1989.
- 1993: Cooperated with Dr. Apa Suvarna-apa, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University, and Mr. Bruce Evans to compile the biographical data and list of accomplishments of Ven. Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto) and presented this to the Committee of Teacher Training, the Ministry of Education (now called the Rajabhat Institute) for submission to UNESCO. As a result, Ven. Dhammapitaka (P. A. Payutto) was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in Paris.
- 1998: Became a member of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. (Headquarters at 616 Benjasiri Park, Sukhumvit 24, off Soi



Medhinivet, Sukhumvit Road, Klong Toey, Bangkok 10110, Thailand.)

2002: Cooperated with Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Sompone Punyagupta (the owner of Vichaiyuth Hospital) to found the Assembly of Buddhist Organizations of Thailand. Acted as a secretary-general to organize the Magha Puja celebration at Sanam Luang for eight years, from 2002-2009.

2004: Organized the Asalha Puja ceremony at Sanam Luang, in association with Phra Depmedhi (Ven. Peesucharto), the Provincial Monastic Official of Bangkok and the abbot of Wat Mahathat. Assisted with this task for three years.

Became a committee member of the National Buddhism Office's Printing House.

2005: Became a member of the executive organization committee for reviving and developing the Visakha Puja ceremony at Sanam Luang, under the auspices of the Center of Promoting Thai Buddhism, under Wat Bowonniwet Vihara with Phra Depdilok (Ven. Rabaep) as secretary-general.

Became a consultant of the Commission for Religious Affairs, Arts and Culture, House of Representatives, Parliament, with Lieutenant Dr. Kudeb Saikrachang, as president. Assisted with this task for two years, from 2005-2006.

2006: Became a committee member of the Dharma Association of Thailand (under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromarajajonani); performed this task for four years, from 2006-2009.

2012: Initiated the translation of *Buddhadhamma* from Thai into English for the second time, hiring Mr. Robin Philip Moore, USA nationality, as a translator. This task took five years, from 2012-2016.

2017: Published the first printing of the English edition of *Buddhadhamma*, 5,000 copies, as a gift of the Dhamma, for distribution around the world.



*In 1994 he was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in Paris.*

This English translation of *Buddhadhamma* was originally authored in Thai by Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya). In this book, the venerable author draws upon the Buddha's teaching on the Four Noble Truths and explains them in detail — comprehensively and profoundly. He describes them step-by-step, in an ordered sequence, so that readers can gain a clear and precise insight into this pivotal teaching. They will understand the true nature and essence of the Four Noble Truths, and recognize how a realization of these truths enabled the Buddha to become a *Sammāsambuddha*: a perfectly enlightened Buddha.

Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya) is widely acknowledged as Thailand's foremost Buddhist scholar. He has taught extensively in Thailand and also in the West. His experience and interest in both Eastern and Western cultures provide him with a rare scope for presenting Buddhist principles to modern mentalities. In 1994 he was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in Paris.

**B**UDDHADHAMMA<sup>®</sup>  
The Laws of Nature and Their Benefits to Life

BHIKKHU P. A. PAYUTTO  
(SOMDET PHRA BUDDHAGHOSACARIYA)

TRANSLATED BY ROBIN PHILIP MOORE



BUDDHADHAMMA FOUNDATION